

Nutley Little Theatre

Production Guidelines Handbook

Revised April 2017

Production Responsibilities

DIRECTOR

The director is ultimately responsible for all activities surrounding the production of his or her show. These responsibilities extend from the auditions through the striking of the set, and may be delegated by the director as he or she feels fit.

The stage manager and the production manager are the director's key aides, and they are critical to the success of the production. The director should also select, as needed:

Set designer/props captain

Light designer

Sound designer

Costume designer

With regard to set construction and running crews, NLT will publicize the show's needs at meeting and in the newsletter (the Prompter), and officers will seek volunteers. However, the theatre cannot guarantee crews to build the set or run the show. These responsibilities rest with the director and production manager.

Scheduling auditions – The first available dates for auditions at the theatre are usually the Sunday and Monday following the opening of the preceding show. Earlier dates may be negotiated with the director of the previous show. Rehearsals can begin immediately after casting, as long as they are scheduled around run-throughs for the current show. Each show therefore has about six weeks for preparation.

Publicizing auditions – In order to publicize audition dates, directors should notify the publicity chair and the Prompter writer of the dates at least six weeks in before the auditions. Press releases are sent to local newspapers and the Star-Ledger. A director may choose to place advertisements in publications like Backstage, but the director must assume the cost of these ads.

Casting – NLT practice requires open auditions, meaning that no one may be barred from auditioning for a role. Non-members have the same rights at auditions as members. It's considered bad form to "pre-cast" a show. NLT has no casting committee to advise directors and does not require directors to use NLT members in any parts. Open and fair auditions are important to the group as a source of new members.

Budget – NLT acquires the rights and scripts for the production. Beyond that cost, each show has a production budget to cover set construction materials, costumes and props. In 2016-2017, that budget will be \$850 per show. The budget for a musical will be higher to cover costs of a musical director and musicians. While most shows stay within this amount, and many have been produced for less, NLT recognizes that special needs or problems may arise that can't be

met within this budget. In this event, the director should notify the board liaison; the theatre will absorb any reasonable charge.

Receipts – It is advisable to designate one person (usually the stage manager) to keep track of all expenses and to turn in all receipts on behalf of those spend money out of pocket. Receipts should be presented only to the treasurer, no later than one week following the close of the show. No compensation will be made without an original receipt to document it. All receipts should be annotated with the name of the production and the name of the person to be compensated.

Costumes and props – any costumes or props purchased for a production become the property of NLT and must remain at the theatre. An actor may keep a favored costume or prop if he or she absorbs the cost.

Workshop Rehearsals – NLT policy reserves the stage for a workshop rehearsal on the Thursday night preceding each (monthly) general meet8ng, unless there are two general meetings within a show’s rehearsal period, in which case the mainstage production will yield to one (but not both) workshop rehearsals. Workshop directors and mainstage directors may negotiate other arrangements privately for the use of the stage. However, if an agreement cannot be reached, this policy will prevail.

STAGE MANAGER

The stage manager, together with the board liaison, serves as the main contact person between NLT and each production.

While the production manager is responsible for seeing that the set is built, the stage manager is in charge of everything else except directing, acting and the designing of lights, sound and costumes.

The stage manager:

- Opens the theatre before rehearsals and performances and closes it afterwards.
- Is responsible for the comfort and safety of the cast and crew.
- Supervises the gathering of props (with the assistance of the props captain, if necessary).
- Makes all phone calls about scheduling.
- Assists the director with some notes (to be negotiated with the director before auditions).
- Runs all the line rehearsals & brush ups, keeping the show faithful to the director’s vision
- Supervises all light and sound technicians (after the designers have written down the plots).
- Supervises all fast changes.

- Calls the cues.

When the show has opened, the stage manager is in control of the production. The stage manager is in charge of the efficiency and the productivity of the show and generally only answers to the director, who answers only to the Board.

Keeping the Calendar – the stage manager should block out dates on the calendar in the green room to reserve the stage area for auditions, rehearsals and construction. The current show in production has priority in reserving the stage from auditions through opening night (and for brush ups following the opening), except as specified for workshops, above.

Clean-Up – throughout the rehearsal period the stage manager is responsible for the condition of the barn. All garbage is to be properly bagged and not left lying out. Bags are available on the shelves in the light room. Garbage and recyclables should be placed on the curb to the left of the end of the sidewalk. The nights when garbage and recyclables should be left for pickup are posted on the interior of the barn doors, next to the box office entrance. The Town of Nutley should be contacted when any large pieces, like furniture or scenery section, are to be left for pickup.

Heat and air conditioning – before locking up after rehearsal or performances, the thermostat should be adjusted appropriately. In winter it should be set to 55°; this will prevent the water in the pipes and sprinkler system from freezing. In summer it should be set at 72°; this should keep the theatre reasonably cool for when it is next used, and keep the system from straining to cool an overheated structure.

Preparing for a general meeting – if a general meeting falls during the rehearsal period, the stage manager must see to it that on the Wednesday before the meeting the house is cleared and cleaned sufficiently to allow the Thursday workshop rehearsal and the Friday meeting to proceed. (Also so see notes on “Production Manager”.)

Preparing for opening night – prior to the opening night, the stage manager should see that the house is reasonably clean. It is not the job of the opening night house manager to clean up after the cast and crew. Prior to opening night, others will clean the bathroom, but cast and crew are responsible for the condition of the green room and the house.

Relations with NLT’s neighbors – our relations with our neighbors have waxed and waned over the years, but we always strive to keep them good.

- Parking: the stage manager, supported by the director, should see that cast and crew keep the peace in the neighborhood. That means cars are to be parked only in the NLT lot, on Brookfield Avenue, or in the lot adjacent to Yantacaw School. No cars are to be parked on Erie Place, which is for residents only. At performances, the NLT lot is reserved patrons; cast and crew must park elsewhere.

- Noise: voices carry at night and exuberant post-rehearsal discussion in the parking lot are not acceptable. After performances, cast and crew may visit with audiences in the lobby, the green room, or the back of the house but not outdoors. Protracted conversations in the parking lot after performances are not acceptable. The stage manager, supported by the director, is responsible for the production's adherence to this policy.

Keys – keys will be provided to the director and the stage manager before auditions. Within one week after the show has closed, all keys are to be returned.

Running crew – the stage manager is responsible for enlisting running crews and loft crews (sound and lights) for the show. This responsibility may, of course, be delegated or shared as desired. Recruiting can be done from friends and associates of the director, stage and production managers and the cast, as well as by calling NLT members. The stage manager should advise the Prompter writer and the board liaison of the show's staffing needs, so volunteers can be sought through the newsletter and at meetings. The stage manager should try to have crew assignments made at least a month before opening night. If these recruiting alternatives have been exhausted and the show still requires a crew, the stage manager should ask for help from the board liaison.

Traffic and house managers – the stage manager should obtain from the House & Traffic Committee Chair a list of house and traffic volunteers for each performance. If those volunteers are late or absent, the stage manager should phone them of the House & Traffic Committee Chair if the volunteers cannot be located.

Added performances – the stage manager is in charge of contacting the cast & crew if an additional performance is added to the schedule. The stage manager should also coordinate with the House & Traffic Committee Chair to insure that the house and traffic are covered for the added performance.

Additional Rehearsal Space – if rehearsal space is unavailable at the theatre, the stage manager should work with the board liaison to locate an alternate rehearsal space. Such a list should be provided prior to rehearsals.

Musicals – in the case of musicals, it will be the responsibility of the Stage Manager to number and distribute the scores and librettos to the cast, keeping a list of which actor received which script and libretto. At the end of the show's run, the Stage Manager will collect all scores and librettos, make sure the cast has erased all markings, then repackage said scores/librettos and place them in the green room. The Stage Manager shall then notify the show's Board Liaison/Producer that the score/librettos are ready to be returned. If scores/librettos are not returned shortly after the production closes, NLT is fined, so this is very important. (If, for some reason, the production does not have a Stage Manager, then the above responsibilities fall to the director.)

PRODUCTION MANAGER

The responsibility of the production manager is to oversee set construction and painting, unless the director defines the job otherwise. The production manager is not responsible for finding set pieces or for dressing the set. Each director must assign these duties.

The production manager should recruit a set construction crew. As with the stage and loft crew (see above), recruiting should be done among associates of those involved in the production and the NLT members. Cast members should be invited and encouraged to help build the set.

The production manager:

- Is responsible for construction supplies and materials.
- Sets work dates.
- Recruits and supervises set builders and painters.
- Assigns tasks and is responsible for coherent construction scheduling.
- Is responsible for the security of all tools and equipment belonging to NLT.
- Supervises the set strike.

Charge accounts – NLT has charge accounts at the following area stores:

1. Viola Brothers, Washington Avenue, Nutley
 - Anyone can sign
 - They will deliver to the theatre
 - Sign the bill with your name and indicate the name of the show on the bill
 - Send a copy of the bill to the treasurer
2. Norcosco, Route 46, Fairfield – charge privileges are restricted. If supplies from Norcosco are needed, consult the Board liaison for a list of approved signatures.
3. Ricciardi Paints, Washington Avenue, Nutley – anyone may sign; indicate the name of the show on the bill.

NOTE: In the event that purchases are being made for the building, and not for a particular production, permission must be received from the Building Committee Chair. Be sure the receipt clearly notes that the purchases should be charged to building.

Preparing for a general meeting – while the stage manager is responsible for seeing that the cast and crew have left the theatre clean before a general meeting, the production manager is responsible for clearing away all debris and tools. This is especially true when a general meeting occurs during a set construction and at the completion of construction. No one will come into clean up after the production crew. Once set construction is complete, it is the production manager's responsibility to see to it that all building materials and equipment are properly stored downstairs and that all debris is removed.

Set Strike – ideally, sets should be struck on the Sunday following closing night. If a delay is unavoidable, the incoming director and production manager should be consulted. The outgoing and incoming production managers and stage managers, with their directors, should coordinate set strike to avoid duplication of effort (i.e., so that nothing is removed from the stage that will be wanted for the next show). All debris is to be properly disposed of and all flats and set pieces properly stored downstairs unless the next show intends to use them. The loft area should be cleaned and the wiring restored to its original configuration. Set strike includes cleaning of the green room, dressing rooms and downstairs storage areas. A fair rule for set strike is that, as courtesy to the theatre and incoming production, the facilities should be left in better condition than at the start of the production.

BOARD LIAISON/PRODUCER

It is understood that the theatre itself is the “producer” of the show. The Board of Directors will assign one person to act as board liaison for each show. Usually the board liaison will be a member of the previous years’ season planning committee, and therefore be familiar with the script and the director.

The board liaison will visit the rehearsal as necessary to answer questions and offer assistance to the director, stage manager and production manager. The board liaison will report to the Board of Directors with any concerns or problems on behalf of the show. The board liaison will be the link between the show and the Board of Directors and will facilitate communications between the show and the club to their mutual benefit. If a show needs support from the club in areas apart from those addressed in this booklet, the board liaison will assist in find resources and solutions to problems.

Musicals – in the case of musicals, once the run of the show has finished, the Stage Manager will collect the scores and librettos, prepare them for shipping, and place them in the green room. It will then be the responsibility of the Producer (possibly in conjunction with the Treasurer) to see that the scores/librettos are returned to the licensing company. If scores/librettos are not returned shortly after the production closes, NLT is fined, so this is very important.

HOUSE RESPONSIBILITIES

HOUSE MANAGER

The house manager should arrive at the theatre no later than 7:00 (evening performance) or 1:00 (matinee). House manager responsibilities are as follows:

- Sweep outside stairs and house.
- Empty any garbage cans in the house.
- Tidy up the bathrooms and see that they have sufficient toilet paper, paper towels and soap.
- Bring refreshments upstairs before the show.
- Have coffee brewed before house opens.

- Get money from the metal case in the light room and return after show.
- Ensure that patrons have playbills (their tickets) and assist with seating if necessary.
- A brief, prepared curtain speech will be available, and should be delivered to the audience, as written, just before curtain on the stage manager's cue (unless other arrangements have been made).
- Certain production may require special assistance from the house manager. The house manager should defer to the stage manager and readily comply with requests for help or consideration.
- Sell refreshments before the show and at intermission.
- Have a flashlight handy in case of emergency. (Bring your own, please, in case one cannot be located at the theatre.) Be prepared in the event of a patron's illness. First aid kit at the bottom of the interior stairs. Stay with the patron; send traffic person to call for assistance.
- Close door and all shades at start of performance.
- Tidy the house following the performance. See that the house lights are off, windows closed, and house door is locked.
- Bring house garbage to the cans near the front of the barn doors. If it is a night when garbage can be placed at the curb, please do so.
- Be sure that the guest book is available at the door.

Patrons; comfort – the stage manager will have turned on the heat or air conditioning as appropriate; **during the performance the house manager will control the heat and air conditioning with the patrons' comfort as the paramount consideration.** In the event of a disagreement about the heat and air conditioning between the house manager and the director or stage manager, the house manager's decision is final.

If for any reason you have committed to house manage and are unable to fulfill that commitment, it will be appreciated if you find a substitute for yourself, then notify the House & Traffic Chair. If you cannot find a substitute, please notify the House & Traffic Chair as soon as possible, and also tell him or her whom you have contacted already so calls are not duplicated. If your conflict with house managing responsibility arises less than one hour before the curtain, call the stage manager.

TRAFFIC PERSON

The traffic person should arrive at the theatre no later than 7:00 (evening performances) or 1:00 (matinee). A reflective jacket and flashlight should be found just inside the barn door near the entrance to the box office.

This person is responsible for seeing that no one parks on Erie Place. If the NLT lot is full, patrons are to be directed to park in the Yantacaw School lot on Brookfield Avenue, or on Brookfield Avenue itself.

The traffic person should remain outside until at least 8:05 (2:05 on matinee days) at which time he or she can go into the house to watch the show. (They should come in via the storage shed and green

room.) If anyone becomes ill or is injured during the performance, the traffic person should call for help while the house manager remains with the individual.

If for any reason you have committed to do traffic and are unable to fulfill that commitment, it will be appreciated if you find a substitute for yourself, then notify the House & Traffic Chair. If you cannot find a substitute, please notify the House & Traffic Chair as soon as possible, and also tell him or her whom you have contacted already so calls are not duplicated. If your conflict with house managing responsibility arises less than one hour before the curtain, call the stage manager.

GENERAL THEATRE INFORMATION

Stage Dimensions – the NLT stage measures 23 feet wide by 16 feet deep by 8.25 feet high. A clearance of one foot must be made from the front lip of the stage if the curtain is used.

Materials and equipment – NLT owns a number of hand tools and power tools, as well as miscellaneous hardware, which are stored in the “work room” outside the green room. Production managers and stage managers should familiarize themselves with the theatre’s supplies before purchasing hardware for a show.

NLT has scrap lumber, several standard sized platforms and standard flats. These are all stored downstairs.

Miscellaneous

Cancellation – a show will be canceled only due to severe weather conditions or illness in the cast. NLT policy is that the decision to cancel is made only by the president (or in his or her absence, the vice president) by mid-afternoon of the show in question. The president notifies the stage manager and the ticket person of the cancellation, and these people alert the cast and crew or advise patrons with reservations.

Group Sales & Special Performances – it is possible that a group sale could be made that would require adding a performance, either on an open Sunday afternoon or Sunday or Thursdays evening. Should any additional performances be proposed after a show goes into rehearsal, the stage manager will advise the cast and crew, and will immediately communicate any obstacles to the board liaison.

Programs & Photographs – information for the playbill (show notes, cast and crew credits, bios, etc.) will be communicated by either the stage manager or the director to the person responsible for assembling the playbill. It is possible that during rehearsals that a photographer will stop in to take publicity shots. If so, please cooperate to have it done quickly and efficiently.

Safety – the Barn is equipped with an automatic sprinkler system. Any problems with this system should be reported to the board liaison immediately.

First aid kits are located on the wall at the foot of the interior stairs and the rear bathroom.

Fire extinguishers are located throughout the theatre, including on the wall by the ladder to the loft and in the Green Room.

The doors to the theatre are not locked during rehearsals or performances, and the dressing rooms have no locks. Cast and crew should not leave personal possessions unattended downstairs during rehearsals and performances. The stage manager should establish a safe place for wallets, pocketbooks, etc., to be kept during performances.

Housekeeping Supplies – paper towels, toilet paper, plastic garbage bags, cleaning supplies and soap are stored in the light room under the interior stairs.