
Stage Management

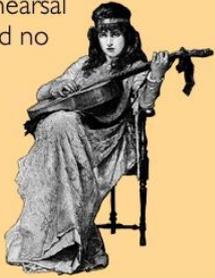
Tech Week

Tech Week

Tech Week refers to the last stage of a rehearsal before opening. It is the time when technical elements such as lighting, sound, and projections is added to the show.

Tech week can very easily get very chaotic and out of hand. A good stage manager and a well prepped team can help to make it a smooth(er) time for everyone.

"Wow, that tech rehearsal was really short", said no one ever.



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When tech week turns into
"lets make more changes to
everything" week.



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Tech Week

Tech week has, in itself, a few different steps along the way.

- Paper Tech
 - Dry Tech
 - Cue to Cue
 - Wet Tech (or just normal tech days)
 - Final Dress
 - Previews
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Paper Tech

Paper tech is a time where all the designers, the director and the stage manager sit down, go through the script and set each cue.

This is mostly so the stage manager can fill in their **production script** with all of the lighting and sound cues in it, so they know where to **call cues**.

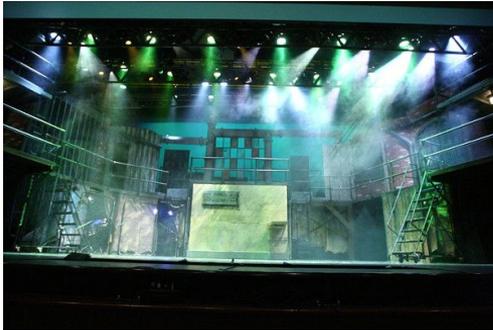
This also helps get everyone on the same page.

Calling Cue

Calling a Cue is one of the primary jobs of a stage manager during tech and also during the run of the show. Calling the show is when the stage manager tells the various operators when to do their cue (ie, when a light cue goes, when the rail moves, etc).

Typically, the SM gives a standby a few seconds prior to a cue followed by the word “**GO.**”

“Standby lights 34... Lights go.”



Calling a Cue



This can become very complicated when there are a lot of actions happening in a small amount of time. In this case, one can call standby and call many cues at the same time.

“Standby sound 5, lights 10 through 15, rail 5 and projections 7...
Sound and lights GO. Rail GO. Projections and Lights GO. Lights GO.”

An SM will typically be calling cues over **headset**, which is a system of communicating with anyone else also wearing a headset (usually anyone operating something)



Dry Tech

Dry tech is a technical rehearsal with no actors, only crew.

Some shows have very complicated scene changes involving a lot of moving parts as well as rail moves, projections and lights. Rather than deal with and waste actor time, these can be run by themselves.

Transitions and other technical aspects can be run repeatedly until they are smooth.

Often, a dry tech will happen before or after a normal tech the same day.

Cue to Cue

Cue to Cue is like a dry tech with actors. This involves running parts of the show to make sure the lights, sound, projections and other cues time well or look correct with actors.

During this time, parts of the show will be skipped because there are no cues there. Other parts of the show may be run over and over again to try and get things perfect.

This is also an important time for designers to first see what their design looks like with real actors.



Wet Tech

Wet tech is what the other rehearsals are from there on. These rehearsals are generally spent running through the whole show from start to finish, pausing occasionally to work out a technical glitch.

You may also run more difficult parts of the show multiple times.



Final Dress

One of the last days of tech, this rehearsal should be as close to being a real show as possible.

This means no stopping for notes, dealing with any problem as it arises and full running every aspect of the show.

Afterword, this is the last chance for last minute changes to any part of the show (though major changes should be avoided).



Previews



Previews are special shows that are full productions with (usually) paying audiences. Previews are special in that the audiences are aware this is not always a final product that they are seeing.

These performances are a chance to see how the show works with a real audience. Changes may still be made at this point.

Many theatres don't have preview nights, or they may only have one or two.

The SM



So what is a stage manager doing?

First of all, calling the show, but that's the tip of the iceberg.

The SM is also in charge of fixing any catastrophe that happens during a show. If a transition isn't running well or if some quick changes are too long, the SM needs to facilitate (not necessarily think of) a solution to the problem.

During this time, they are also keeping rehearsal on track, actors in check and tending to designer egos.

Calls

Calls are when something is supposed to happen.

Call time is when actors are to arrive.

Dance Call is when actors will go through a dance.

Fight Call Is when actors go through the motions of a fight or stunt. This should be done every rehearsal and show before it starts to make sure everyone is comfortable with it.

The Paperwork

Before, and during tech there's a lot of paperwork to be done.



- **Tracks:** These follow every move a costume, prop or scenery piece does and each piece should have one. Where a prop is at any moment should not be a mystery.
 - **Cue Sheets:** These have a breakdown of what and where each cue is. Usually designers will generate this, but sometimes it falls on the SM.
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The Paperwork

Reports are arguable the most important paperwork. A rehearsal or production report have the things that happened during that show (when it started, when it ended, what they did) as well any notes for any department (The windowsill broke, the paint is chipping, Robert forgot a line).

These *have* to be clear and communicatory.

Like audition forms, stage managers usually make and use their own reports.

A Little Exercise

Take out a pencil and paper.

We are going to watch the first little bit of a Broadway musical a few times through. The first time, I want you not any scenic transition you see. Write down any set piece you notice anything it does.

A Little Exercise



This time through, I want you to count how many lighting cues there are in this sequence. Tally them or write down the final number you think there are.

Now, this last time through, note down every call you think the SM is making as it goes along.

A Little Exercise

Now, on the back of this paper, write down the kind of challenges you suspect they faced when they were in tech for this show.

What elements do you think they had to slowly work through with tech?

What kind of problems did they face?

Are there any challenging moments you saw in this sequence?
