
Stage Management

The Art of Herding Cats



What is a stage manager?

Of the roles in theatre, this is the hardest to define. An Stage Manager's (**SM**) role is huge and completely changes as a show progresses.

They fall mainly into 3 steps:

- Pre-production
- Rehearsal
- Production

Note: A stage manager in the USA is different than what a Stage manager is in Europe. A “stage manager” there is more like a production manager here.

Pre Production



A stage manager is one of the earliest people to be hired for a production.

At this point, they are a scheduler and a liaison. They are to orchestrate **pre-production meetings** with the designers, producers and director while also dealing with the audition and actor side of things.

Pre Production



Before anything else, there is the show itself.

The Stage manager needs to know the show front to back. What characters are in what scene, what props will be needed, specific set needs, specific lighting needs; all things you should know.

The designers will also be doing this for the respective fields.

Pre Production



Pre-production meetings happen long before there are even auditions for a show. During this time, the designers and directors come up with a concept or theme for the production. They will also make preliminary designs for the sets, lights, costumes, sound, etc.

Aside from arranging these meetings, an SM also leads them. They keep the conversation on track and take notes of what was said. Keep in mind, this gets way crazier with singing and dancing in the mix.

Pre Production



The acting side has a lot more going on. The SM is more or less in charge of the auditions. They typically will schedule the dates for the auditions, create **audition forms**, and then, during the actual audition, be the one calling people into the room, keeping things on time and maybe even throwing their own opinion about actors.

Paperwork



Audition forms are just one of many, many forms and paperworks a stage manager is responsible for. There isn't really a standard for these and most managers generate their own that they use during their whole career.

Paperwork, primarily, has to be clean and clear. There should be no confusion when looking at a page.

Take out a sheet of paper. You will be creating your own audition form.

Paperwork



Include the following on your audition sheet. Be sure to structure and order them sensibly. Make boxes and page breaks if you'd like. Feel free to add whatever you deem needed :

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certifications• Contact information (address, phone number, etc)• Height• Preferred role• Playable age range• Known conflicts• Vocal Range• Other skills or talents | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their willingness to take other parts• A place to list experience• Name of show• Union Status• Actors Name• Hair Color• Typical availability |
|--|--|

Pre Production



So the Audition happens and you now have 60 filled out audition forms. Now we pick out the forms of just those the director, SM, producers, etc. liked and arrange a second, more intensive audition: **Callbacks.**

Unlike the first round of auditions, which are generally one or two days for a few open hours, callbacks are scheduled with the actors. The director may want all of them at the same time, pairs or solos once more. Your job is to make that happen.

Pre Production



We have 6 people who need to be called back. We are holding their audition forms. What do we do?

1. Compare everyone's typical availability.
2. Compare those against the known conflicts.
3. If there's a date and time that works out, call the actors and arrange a meeting.

It will hardly ever be that easy, as most people have strange schedules.



Pre Production

Dealing with Schedules:

There will rarely be a time when everyone can get together. This is not just for auditions, but for meetings, rehearsals and sometimes shows.

One needs to prioritize. If an actor can never rehearse on a wednesday, try to schedule scenes the actor is not in to be rehearsed on wednesdays.

It's a little easier to deal with an MIA designer. They can be e-mailed relevant notes which they can respond to, they can skype in, or they can simply be put on speaker phone.



Pre Production



Let's say in our callback scenario, all but one actor, Bob, can make it. The times Bob *can* make it, 3 actors can not. The director still wants to see Bob that and, aside from this week, his schedule is pretty clear. What do you do?

- Schedule a separate callback with Bob, seeing if some of the other available actors can join to play off of.
 - Schedule the callback with the actor, but have him read solo.
 - Wait until after the first round of callbacks. S/he may not be needed (cold, bro).
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Pre Production



So the meetings have been done. The sets are mostly designed, the lights have a plot, the costumers are starting their fabric picking but sound is running a little behind because he was working in Beijing for two weeks and ignoring his other show* and the callbacks have been done. The cast is picked.

Next is organization of the very first rehearsal. This will typically have the full cast, all the designers, producers, choreographers, etc. So that's a scheduling nightmare there.

Pre Production

With that meeting underway, a stage manager transitions from pre-production mode into rehearsal mode, which utilizes a whole new set of skills.

There are a couple of small odds and ends involved with Pre-Production I want to hit before we move on...

Pre Production

During auditions (and rehearsals), the SM typically will read the part of other people in the scene and **stage directions**.

While doing so, the stage manager is not “acting.” Being close to neutral is the preferred read. This makes sure the actor is not influenced by your performance (rather than the actor who would normally read).

Stage Directions are actions characters do in the script like “exits” or “picks up glass” and the like.
