

A HANDBOOK FOR THE INEXPERIENCED PLAY DIRECTOR

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
SPEECH AND THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF THE KANSAS STATE
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THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Approved for the Major Department

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Approved for the Graduate Council

by

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Karl C. Bruden

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Need for the work. There are many high school and college level textbooks dealing at length with the basic problems of play production; other highly technical works have explored separately the various problems in great detail. However, the inexperienced play director, faced with the immediate problem of getting a play produced, has need of a simple, easy-to-read guide to advise him of the problems involved, how he can go about meeting these problems, and where he can get the basic supplies he needs.

This handbook has been prepared in order to meet the needs of two types of inexperienced directors: (1) the elementary or secondary teacher who is academically qualified to direct plays but who lacks experience in dealing with the overall aspects of play production, and (2) the community

PREFACE TO THE THESIS

The Problem

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this work is (1) to set forth what the basic problems of organizing a play for production are; (2) to suggest a method of dealing with each problem; and (3) to provide information for obtaining theatrical supplies and to provide references to volumes which pursue the study of play directing beyond the scope of this work.

Need for the work. There are many high school and college level textbooks dealing at length with the basic problems of play production; other highly technical works have explored separately the various problems in great detail. However, the inexperienced play director, faced with the immediate problem of getting a play produced, has need of a simple, easy-to-read guide to advise him of the problems involved, how he can go about meeting these problems, and where he can get the basic supplies he needs.

This handbook has been prepared in order to meet the needs of two types of inexperienced directors: (1) the elementary or secondary teacher who is academically qualified to direct plays but who lacks experience in dealing with the overall aspects of play production, and (2) the community

organization or club member with neither academic training nor previous experience who finds himself responsible for directing a play.

Limitations of the Handbook

It is not the aim of this work to deal exhaustively with the principles of casting, directing, and the several technical areas of play production (Chapters III, VI, and VII). Here, as throughout the handbook, the aim will be to bring to the attention of the inexperienced director the fact that these problems need to be included in his overall organizing. Some suggestions regarding procedure will be made in order to furnish the director with an awareness of what each problem involves. However, a thorough discussion of various theories of directing and a detailed survey of the principles of stage lighting, set-building, sound effects, make-up, and the other technical problems will not be attempted. In each of these chapters is a section of references to recognized authorities in the area who treat the subject in detail; the director interested in further study will find his way to complete treatments of directing theories and technical methods there.

Qualifications of the Writer

Perhaps the most qualifying experience possible in writing for inexperienced play directors is to have been one yourself. This writer has certainly been that. Out of the problem of having to produce six plays in nine months' time with no previous directing experience came the realization that a single handbook, written in non-technical, "everyday" language, which laid out the problem of directing in clear style and gave a few tips on how to put together the simplest kind of production--such a book would be invaluable for that first directing attempt. Few new directors of school plays or directors of community plays have time to digest the countless books on the many areas of play production in order to get perspective on how to organize for that first play.

As for actual directing experience, the writer was drama director for a class A Kansas high school for three years, producing five to six plays per year. During two additional years of high school teaching, although not director of a full-time program, there were skits, one-act plays and assemblies to be presented from time to time.

Further theatre experience which provided most valuable training was the three summers in the Emporia State Summer Theatre company. Here much excellent training

in acting and in theatre operation in all its aspects was gained. Acting roles with the U. S. Army Special Services Entertainment Workshop in Yokohama, Japan, and the YMCA Camp in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado, have furnished familiarity with the organization and operation of two more theatres.

Rather incidental to the above experiences but of nevertheless great value have been the many talks with other directors, actors, and technicians. In long conversations with those who are also engaged in some aspect of theatre endeavor, it was possible to learn, compare, evaluate, theorize, and gain considerable perspective of one's own endeavors.

It will not attempt to turn you into a polished director; if this phenomenon occurs, it will be the result of any useful formula offered here. The book merely offers to the student a look at the essential problems of play directing.

As you're going to direct a play? "Well," you say, "what is there to be learned and how people together on a stage and how they receive each other's play?" Of course, there is quite a lot more to it than that. If you're the least beginner at directing, you've seen enough plays, movies, and television shows to have a general idea of some of the elements of play production, but you still

PREFACE TO THE HANDBOOK

To the Director

This handbook has been designed for a special type of play director--the inexperienced. It is hoped that teachers who have little or no training or experience in the field of drama but who nevertheless suddenly find themselves in charge of directing a play and members of community organizations with similar lack of preparation who are elected to lead their fellow club members in a dramatic presentation will find it useful.

The handbook endeavors to do one thing: to give to you, the beginner director, an idea of what your task involves. It will not attempt to turn you into a polished director; if this phenomenon occurs, it will be no fault of any magic formula offered here. The book merely offers to the newcomer at directing a look at the essential problems of play directing.

So you're going to direct a play? "Well," you may ask, "what is there to do besides get some people together on a stage and have them memorize parts from a playbook?" Of course, there is quite a lot more to it than that. If you're the usual beginner at directing, you've seen enough plays, movies, and television shows to have a general idea of some of the elements of play production, but now that

you're faced with the problem actually of bringing a play into being, you need to know exactly how it's done. ~~If you're really~~ Exactly how it's done? Volumes of opinions have been written by experts on every phase of play production, but the combined results won't tell you exactly how your play, on your stage, with your cast and your equipment, and ~~is~~ directed by you should be done. Even if you were able to get the best of these experts together to advise you on your unique situation, it is the belief of this writer that even then they could not tell you "exactly how it's done." Or even the very best way to do it. For the directing of a play is a creative act, an act involving many personalities and intellects, all of them guided by yours, the director's. So it's a highly personal problem of yours, deciding how the play will be interpreted, who will play the parts, for what overall effect you will all strive. But what about these experts and all their training and experience? Couldn't they help you at all? Yes, certainly they could. They could advise you in two ways. First, they could tell you of all the different things that need to be done, things of which you as simply an observer of plays and movies couldn't, up to now, have been aware. Second, they could give you ~~you~~ their opinion as to an efficient and effective way to do ~~is~~ these things. For this advice you would probably be most ~~likely~~ grateful.

Unfortunately, such a gathering of experts is not likely to materialize for any director. Of course, if you're really interested in what these scholars, directors, and technicians have to say about play production in general, you have but to read their books. Here you will find a wealth of information which will give you valuable insight into your problems. If you plan to do that reading before you begin your first directing experience, go no further in this handbook; you will eventually find in those volumes what you need, and the information will have come straight from the minds and experiences of the world's richest authorities on the subject.

What, then, is the raison d'etre, the justification, in fact the need for this handbook? Its purpose is three-fold, and its writer wishes to propound a favorite theory in the hope that the purposes, if realized, and the theory may prove helpful to the beginning director.

First, its purposes. By far the most important of these is simply to enumerate the several different problems of play production, to offer to the beginning director in one volume an organizational outline of the various problems of producing a play. For the new director a concise written statement of this elementary information under one cover is often hard to come by, and lack of it makes his job infinitely

more complex. He is often left to discover the need for some rather important provisions at the exact moment when they are needed. For instance, few people without previous experience would be able to foresee the need for a special table or out-of-the-way backstage area reserved especially to hold actors' hand properties during final rehearsals and performances. Yet without this small bit of organizing, unnecessary strain is put on the cast, crew, and director, and the play itself is needlessly jeopardized.

By reading the list of chapter titles in the Table of Contents the director can get an overall picture of what these production problems are. He should realize, however, that when a play is put into production, these problems are not tackled one at a time in the exact order in which they are listed here. A director familiar with the entire production process simultaneously copes with many of these problems. They have been separated into ten different chapters here so that they can be clearly discussed. They are presented in this particular order simply because it is as logical as any, not because the order shows a proper sequence in which to attack the problems. This overlapping of production problems has necessitated some repetition, many times for the purpose of clarifying theatre terminology when it was necessary to use terms before they were fully discussed in their appropriate chapters.

The second aim of the handbook is to offer--again, under one cover--practical suggestions for dealing with each of the problems. These suggestions intend to point out to the beginner some factors involved, some angles to be considered, in the handling of each of the production problems. In some chapters, such as Chapter IV, ORGANIZING THE BACK-STAGE AREA, the handbook presents a workable plan of organization which the reader may use intact, merely in part, or not at all.

The handbook's final purpose is--once again, in one volume--to provide the beginner with names and addresses of theatrical agencies which he may need to contact in ordering materiel such as playbooks, make-up, costumes, paint, and lighting equipment. References to authors who give each area of production a much fuller discussion than is the scope of this handbook are also included after many chapters.

At last, the writer wishes to offer to all inexperienced directors her favorite theory regarding play directing. It is simply this: the director's biggest assets are (1) his imagination, (2) his common sense, and (3) his willingness to use and trust both. As stated previously, play production is a creative act. The results of creativity are interesting because something unusual is brought into being. Therefore, rules governing creative acts are few, if, in fact, any. Thus any imaginative person can

direct plays that will be interesting to an audience. Of course, if he is familiar with the "tools of the trade," his task becomes easier and perhaps the result is a bit more refined and complex, but exciting drama is basically simple. Unfamiliarity with rules of acting, principles of lighting, staging, costuming, and so forth, need not hold anyone back from his first attempt, for all of us already have in some degree the necessary assets--imagination and common sense. What we need to do is have faith in these qualities, give them a chance to operate, and "the show will go on!"

Is this play or drama intended entirely appropriate for the audience which it is to be performed? Or is it suitable for the drama group which is to furnish the actors and the stage crew? Perhaps it would be wise to get a copy of this play and read it again before deciding definitely to do it. In fact, it might be a good idea to read some other plays, too, just in case this one seems unattractive. It even the choosing process may assume tremendous dimensions.

It is at this point in play production, here at this very first step, that the first need for "entrepreneurship," or thoughtful planning, arises. This is not to say that there are others of value which a director may follow in order to move up with the right selection. The point to be made is simply this: if a director chooses a play against a

CHAPTER I

CHOOSING A PLAY

At first glance the new director may think that at least this first step in directing, merely selecting a play to produce, will present no problems. Everyone has seen or read plays, and almost everyone has two or three favorites that he remembers as being especially outstanding. Why not give one of these?

On second thought certain dim, half-formed obstacles may rear their heads. Is this play so fondly remembered entirely appropriate for the audience before which it is to be performed? Or is it suitable for the drama group which is to furnish the actors and the stage crew? Perhaps it would be wise to get a copy of this play and read it again before deciding definitely to do it. In fact, it might be a good idea to read some other plays, too, just in case this one seems unsuitable. So even the choosing process may assume troublesome dimension.

It is at this point in play production, here at this very first step, that the first need for "theatre-thinking," or thoughtful planning, arises. This is not to say that there are scores of rules which a director must follow in order to come up with the right selection. The point to be made is simply this: if a director checks a play against a

few common-sense factors before he begins rehearsals, he may save himself a lot of wasted time and effort later.

Following are a few factors in play selection and ordering which may help in deciding upon a desirable and suitable play.

Obtaining Reading Copies of Plays

Unless the director has his play already selected, he probably will want to investigate as many different scripts as time and circumstance will allow. Single copies of plays to be used for reading purposes only may be obtained from various sources.

Library card catalogue. If the director knows the titles of specific plays he can, of course, look for them in the card catalogue of a community or school library, as well-known plays are sometimes published in single bound volumes. Libraries of high schools and colleges that have active dramatics departments are a good and often overlooked source of scripts. He can also look in the card file under the name of a playwright and find all the works of that writer which the library houses.

Anthologies. For general reading with no certain play in mind, anthologies are useful, for they bring a number of possibilities to hand under one cover. There are

various kinds: collections of plays of one playwright; collections of famous plays of the professional theatre during designated years; collections of mystery plays, of comedies, of tragedies, and so forth; collections of one-act plays. A list of anthologies, their authors, and their contents appears at the end of this chapter.

Theatre periodicals. Some theatre magazines publish plays in each issue. Theatre Arts carries the complete text of a recent Broadway hit every month. Also a monthly, the magazine Plays contains several one-acts.

Publishing company catalogues. A rather more expensive method of browsing is to obtain copies of publishing company catalogues. Here each play published by the company is listed alphabetically by title, and a paragraph of pertinent information follows which acquaints the reader with the play. The royalty charge, the number of men and women in the cast, the number of sets required, and a brief description of the plot is usually included. The director can select several scripts that seem appropriate and attractive and order one copy of each. Besides furnishing a wide choice at the moment, eventually this procedure builds up a sizable library of plays for future reference.

State university loan services. Many state universities offer a convenient plan of playbook rental, such as the one at the University of Kansas. Called the K. U. Drama Loan Service, it prints a catalogue listing the plays it has for rent, along with a description of each such as a publisher's catalogue contains. Eight plays may be borrowed for a period of seven days at a charge of twenty-five cents plus whatever postage is required for mailing. Write to

Extension Library

University of Kansas

Lawrence, Kansas

for a K. U. Loan Service bulletin or the Extension Service of any other university for a pamphlet which provides complete information about the service and a listing of available plays from which to order.

The Most Important Deciding Factor

When the choice of a play is left up to the director, probably the most important deciding factor in making a choice is whether or not the play excites him when he reads it. In the choosing process, he will probably investigate several different scripts. He needs to consider some practical aspects of production as he contemplates them, but he will probably eventually select the one which most stimulates his imagination. Perhaps it appeals to him because of its

humorous situation, its witty dialogue, its cleverly designed plot, its suspense, its skillful character portrayal, its thought-provoking treatment of an idea, or a combination of several of these. At any rate, he is enthusiastic about it, he understands it, and he probably can, even after reading it once, visualize its exciting scenes. In short, this is the one he is eager to see come to life on the stage.

Practical Considerations

Are there plays that are beyond the reach of amateurs? If the supply of money, time, equipment, people, and energy is unlimited, probably not. But most directors weigh their desire to produce a certain play against their situation regarding these factors just mentioned. Let's look at a few of the problems most directors take into consideration.

Royalty. Some plays have a royalty charge and some are entirely royalty free. For his own protection, a director should always check either the playbook itself or the play catalogue put out by the publishing company for information concerning the royalty of a particular play, for publishers' requirements vary widely.

One can usually expect well-known three-act plays written during the last twenty years to require payment of from twenty-five dollars to fifty dollars for performance rights for one evening. Less well-known three-acts are

available for fifteen to twenty-five dollars, and older plays, including the classics, may now be produced with no charge from the publisher. Thus, lack of funds need not prevent any group from producing a good play.

One-acts have royalties of ten dollars, five dollars, and nothing. Some publishers require purchase of a certain number of playbooks in addition to or instead of payment of a royalty.

If the play is to be performed for more than one night, some publishers offer a reduced rate for any performance after the first, but usually some fee must be paid for each performance of a royalty play.

Many publishers will lower the royalty fee for amateur groups who are operating on low budgets and who expect very moderate profits from ticket sales. In order to get this reduction, it is necessary to write to the publisher and request the proper forms to fill out for application for reduced royalty rates. Sometimes a fee of twenty-five dollars for first performance and fifteen dollars for subsequent nights will be reduced, for instance, to fifteen dollars for the first and ten dollars for other performances.

Characters. The number of characters in the play should be noted when a director is thinking of producing it. Does he have enough prospective actors to fill all the

parts? It is also well to note the number of men and the number of women required. In some groups the director will be faced with a large excess of men and a shortage of women, or vice versa, so that he may be forced to make the ratio of men and women in the cast his first consideration in selecting a script. By doubling roles--that is, having one actor play two or perhaps more small roles--and by cutting other minor roles from the play, he can sometimes use scripts otherwise out of reach.

Every play has its heavy roles which demand that the actors be onstage much of the time and which are most instrumental in putting the play across. Because of the importance of these parts, many directors find it helpful to have in mind specific people from among their group, provided they know who their actors will be, who could fit these roles. Perhaps later on in actual tryouts another actor will show more promise of portraying the character, but it is comforting to know that the potential is on hand. For example, if we suppose that a certain play's central character is an irascible old man, energetic, flamboyant, and dominating, and the group from which the actors are to be selected includes only women and a couple of boys, both of whom are very shy and slow-moving, the difficulty of this group's doing this play well becomes obvious.

Level of audience's theatrical sophistication. Often

when a group presents a play, its main reason for doing so is purely selfish. The people in the producing group are interested in the theatre, and they want to give a play. However, as they make preparations for production, they cannot continue to be purely selfish, for if the public is to be invited, then their tastes and the level of their abilities to appreciate various types of plays must be considered.

In a small town, the director may realize from his knowledge of people's reactions to public happenings from time to time that as a play audience, these same people would most appreciate light family comedies and entertaining mysteries. A director in a well-to-do suburban community may be able to give the most sophisticated and thought-provoking of plays with the assurance of having them enthusiastically received.

There is no need for a director to let uneducated audiences dictate forever the type of literature he must use. He can, from play to play, train his patrons to appreciate an increasing variety of literature. It is better to do so gradually, however, by selecting plays which will not seem shocking to their standards or "above their heads," but which each time reach a little beyond the level of their accustomed dramatic fare.

Special problems. Some scripts are difficult to produce because of such things as special skills required of the actors and the use of live animals onstage. In many plays actors must sing, dance, play a musical instrument, or speak in a dialect. These requirements often complicate the casting. In other plays some of the funniest or most impressive scenes depend on the use of live animals. In Bell, Book and Candle the show opens on a scene played by the central character and a cat. Since the cat makes another appearance later on, it must be kept backstage in the meantime. Keeping animals quiet and calm so that they will behave properly onstage is many times a real problem.

Of course, the director may be able to solve problems of this kind by cutting or revising scenes. On the other hand, requirements of the type just mentioned do not always present difficulties. The point is that the director should take note of them when considering plays for production.

Technical problems. Before deciding definitely to do any play, most directors study the script from the technical angle to see if, with their equipment, it is physically possible to produce it. Probably the first thing the director considers is the number of sets (or scenery units, such as a room in a house, a garden scene, a clearing in a forest, and so on) called for and whether or not his group can build them.

It should be mentioned here that many directors operating with limited staffs, money, and equipment do not always let a complex staging plan in a playbook deter them if they really want to do a show, for there are ways to simplify the settings of many plays. The following three suggestions may bring to mind other ways to streamline setting requirements.

- (1) If the script consists of many scenes, leave out small ones of lesser importance that require a complete set change, or combine small scenes with larger ones and play them in the same setting. In so doing, the dialogue may have to be altered somewhat.
- (2) It is sometimes possible to change the lines of dialogue slightly and eliminate the need for a major set change. For instance, in the play, Dracula, the script calls for three different sets. But by changing a few lines of the second act, it can be played in the same set as Act I and Act III, Scene 1, thus eliminating the need for one of the sets. The Act III, Scene 2 set is a comparatively simple one to construct.
- (3) When several settings are absolutely necessary, the use of set pieces--bits of scenery which attempt only to suggest the surroundings to the

copies of the audience, not recreate them in detail, such as a
 publishing a painted tree standing here and there to suggest
 of the sub a forest, a section of low brick wall to suggest
 on the title a garden, one part of a wall with a painted fire-
 place to suggest a living room--instead of
 author, most complete sets are often just as effective. In
 but a better fact, many plays lend themselves well to por-
 catalogue a trayal on a bare stage or with nothing except a
 loose inside set of draperies behind the actors and a few
 more conveni properties for them to use.

special Besides the settings, the director surveys the list
 of properties needed, the period of time the play is set in
 and the type of costumes thus called for, the lighting, the
 sound effects, and the make-up needs in an effort to get a
 rough estimate of the entire production requirements. As he
 does in planning the sets, he very often makes departures
 from playbook suggestions in all these technical phases if
 by so doing he can visualize the production of the play by
 his group. But if the problems, even with alterations, are
 too complex, he may decide against doing the play for this
 reason.

Ordering the Scripts

No matter where the director has found reading copies
 of plays, when he finally chooses one and is ready to order

copies of the script for production, he must deal with a publishing company which handles the play. Usually the name of the publishing company appears on the playbook cover or on the title page of a play which is in an anthology.

Orders can be made by letter stating the title, author, number of characters, and number of copies desired, but a better method is to write the publisher for a company catalogue and use the order blank which is usually found loose inside the catalogue. Not only is the order blank more convenient, but the director also needs to read the special requirements the company demands of anyone wishing to produce one of its plays. These requirements appear in the front or the rear sections of the catalogue; they concern ordering, permission to produce the play, payment of royalty fees, program acknowledgments, mailing specifications, and so forth. Companies vary in their rules concerning these procedures, and for his own protection the director should read them and follow them carefully. Some companies, for example, require that the royalty be paid in advance of the opening of the play, but this still does not constitute permission to produce it. Such permission is given only after receipt of a play program, to be received at least five days before opening date and containing the name of the playwright and the publishing company.

Cohen, At the end of this chapter a list of publishing companies is provided. The new director may want to order catalogues from several companies--they are sent free of charge--to keep for future reference.

ANTHOLOGIES

Following are lists of anthologies of well-known one-act and three-act plays for library reference. The contents of the first two collections of each type are listed to give the director an idea of what to expect from anthologies. There are, of course, many other good collections of plays. Those below have been selected because they will furnish the new director with a varied background of play reading.

One-Act Plays

Cerf, Bennett, and Van H. Cartmell, Thirty Famous One-Act Plays

- | | |
|--|---|
| Beach, <u>The Clod</u> | Houghton, <u>Dear Departed</u> |
| Brooke, <u>Lithuania</u> | Jacobs, <u>The Monkey's Paw</u> |
| Barrie, <u>The Twelve-Pound Look</u> | Kaufman, <u>If Men Played Cards As Women Do</u> |
| Quintero, <u>A Sunny Morning</u> | Langner, <u>Another Way Out</u> |
| Chekov, <u>The Boor</u> | Maeterlinck, <u>Miracle of St. Anthony</u> |
| Coward, <u>Fumed Oak</u> | Millay, <u>Aria da Capo</u> |
| Dunsany, <u>A Night at the Inn</u> | Moeller, <u>Helena's Husband</u> |
| Gerstenberg, <u>Overtones</u> | Odets, <u>Waiting for Lefty</u> |
| Gregory, <u>Rising of the Moon</u> | O'Neill, <u>In the Zone</u> |
| Galsworthy, <u>The Little Man</u> | Saroyan, <u>Hello Out There</u> |
| Glaspell, <u>Suppressed Desires</u> | Schnitzler, <u>Green Cockatoo</u> |
| Goodman, <u>Game of Chess</u> | Shaw, <u>Bury the Dead</u> |
| Hall, <u>The Valiant</u> | Synge, <u>Riders to the Sea</u> |
| France, <u>Man Who Married a Dumb Wife</u> | Strong, <u>Drums of Oude</u> |

Cohen, Helen Louise, One-Act Plays

Brighthouse, <u>Maid of France</u>	Marks, <u>Welsh Honeymoon</u>
Down, <u>Maker of Dreams</u>	Milne, <u>Wurzel-flummery</u>
Dowson, <u>Pierrot of the Minute</u>	Peabody, <u>Fortune and Men's Eyes</u>
Egerton, <u>Masque of the Two Strangers</u>	Rogers, <u>Boy Will</u>
Galsworthy, <u>Little Man</u>	Synge, <u>Riders to the Sea</u>
Gregory, <u>Spreading the News</u>	Tarkington, <u>Beauty and the Jacobin</u>
MacKaye, <u>Gettysburg</u>	Young, <u>Twilight Saint</u>
Maeterlinck, <u>Intruder</u>	

Other Anthologies of One-Act Plays

Armstrong, William, Eight New One-Act Plays of 1939S. French, publisher, One-Act Plays for Stage and Study, Series 1 through 9Griffith, Francis, and Joseph Mersand, Modern One-Act PlaysKozlenko, Illiam, Twenty-five Non-Royalty One-Act American ComediesMayorga, Margaret Gardner, Representative One-Act Plays by American AuthorsWebb, Marie Amette, One-Act PlaysZachar, Irwin J., and R. A. Kimball, Plays as Experience

Three-Act or Full Length Plays

Gassner, John, Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre, Second series

Barry, The Philadelphia Story
 Gow and D'Usseau, Tomorrow the World
 Hart, The Man Who Came to Dinner
 Hellman, Watch on the Rhine
 Kanin, Born Yeaterday
 Kesselring, Arsenic and Old Lace
 Kingsley, The Patriots

Cass: Laurents, Home of the Brave
 Lindsay, Life with Father
 Patrick, The Hasty Heart
 Rice, Dream Girl
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CHAPTER II

THE DIRECTOR'S REHEARSAL PREPARATIONS

Any efficient workman--be he carpenter, auto mechanic, painter, or what have you--assembles the equipment necessary to his task before he plunges into action on the job itself. If he didn't, he might eventually get it done anyway, but it would entail a lot more work and, therefore, a waste of effort, time, and money.

This philosophy certainly applies to the play director, and the results of poor preparation, or lack of it at all, are even more serious because the efforts of the entire drama group are dissipated as well as those of the director alone.

In order to make use of precious rehearsal hours and to avoid the frustrating experience of having several people trying to get things done on the spot, some careful planning by the director is necessary before he calls the actors together for even the first rehearsal.

Some practical suggestions follow which, if acted upon, may free the director and the actors to rehearse during rehearsals.

Studying the Script to Understand the Theme

A most important function of the director is to interpret the play. A play is more than a series of

conversations and adventures which are enacted on a stage. Behind every script is a dominating thought, or opinion, perhaps a moral question, or maybe simply an amused comment on human behavior--but the playwright has something to say, and he uses the lines of his characters and the episodes of the plot to illustrate this "something," whatever it is. Thus, before the director can plan any of his technical effects or guide the actors through rehearsals, he must study the script and interpret the author's theme. Then each technical effect can be designed to forward this idea, and in rehearsals characterizations can be developed and scenes planned so that the theme is clearly and effectively dramatized.

Preparing the Prompt Book and Instructing the Stage Manager

If the prompt book were to be used only to prompt actors when they forget lines, the playbook in its original form as it comes from the publisher would suffice. A far more useful prompt book is the one which carries a detailed account of the movement of each actor, the placement of the stage properties, a sketch of each of the settings, when technical cues are coming up--in fact, everything that will happen as it is planned to happen by the director.

The director's instructions may closely follow those already printed in the playbook, but very rarely does a director follow book directions to the letter. Nearly all of them find it advisable to omit some of the printed directing suggestions, change others slightly, and add still others of their own devising. All such variations from the script should be plainly pencilled in the margin. The small margins in playbooks are not wide enough to accommodate thorough notations--thus the need for a specially prepared prompt book.

The backstage worker usually put in charge of the prompt book is the stage manager. By carefully following the book throughout all rehearsals and performances, he can do much toward keeping the show going smoothly, enabling the director to avoid the task of prompting actors and technicians and handling minor backstage problems, and allowing him to concentrate on the acting and the effectiveness of the total production as it progresses.

Since the stage manager does have a clear picture of the entire proceedings onstage and backstage, most directors make this person responsible for coordinating the production during both rehearsals and performances with authority for making decisions and giving orders second only to his, the director's. The coordinating aspect of the stage manager's job will be explained at length in Chapter IV; of immediate

concern during the director's rehearsal preparations are the stage manager's preparation of the prompt book and his instruction in the use of it during rehearsals. As he will be the one to use it, he will be able to read it better if he, rather than the director, prepares it and records the pertinent information. Thus he needs careful instruction in what to do and how to do it from the director before rehearsals begin if he is to be of most value to the director.

Preparing the prompt book. One tried and proven way of making a prompt book with plenty of margin space and extra pages is to cut the pages out of the playbook and paste or tape them onto the loose-leaf pages of a notebook, preferably the 8½" by 11" size or larger. In order to make a prompt book from just one playbook, rectangles just the size of the printed part of the playbook page can be cut in the notebook pages, making a window in them so that when the playbook pages are pasted onto one side of the notebook pages, both sides of the playbook pages can be read. If every page of the playbook is to be pasted against a whole sheet of notebook paper, two playbooks will be needed. Plenty of extra blank notebook pages should be allowed for set diagrams, light plots, stage prop plots, notes, and so forth.

Stage manager's rehearsal duties concerning the prompt book. His duty of first importance is to follow the play-book constantly while rehearsal is actually in progress. In so doing, he is always instantly able to give actors lines, to correct their errors in blocking (or movement on the stage), and to tell the director where they were in the scene after he has stopped the action for a moment for conference and wishes to resume it again. An alert, dependable stage manager can save hours of time and endless nervous strain for the director and the entire company.

During the blocking rehearsals when the actors are learning when and where to move, stand, and sit, the stage manager must not only follow the book every moment, he must also write in all the stage movement of each actor as soon as the director has decided upon it. Blocking rehearsals usually move slowly, since each actor needs to make notes of his own movement in his playbook, so the stage manager usually has plenty of time. It is most important that he record each actor's every move (every crossover, rise, and sit, not every single gesture or shifting half-step) and on or after what line it occurs, so that when the actor is rehearsing without his book, he can be prompted in his movement as well as his lines. The stage manager should also be very careful to cross out lines and single words of the script that the director decides not to use and to write in

any lines the director decides to add, so that the prompt book carries the actual dialogue that is to be used. If any special business (action by the actors which they or the director invent that may accompany lines or may be done during a break in the dialogue) is devised which the director decides to keep in the performance, a note of it should go into the book. Also, the italicized or bracketed instructions in the playbook should be underlined if they are to be used or marked out if discarded.

Sometimes for a heightened effect, the director will instruct an actor to pause deliberately in the course of delivering a long line before he resumes speaking, before he makes a stage cross, or before he picks up a cue (says his line which immediately follows the last speaker). Such a pause is unusual; ordinarily the lines and movements should follow each other smoothly and quickly. This planned pause is called a "legitimate" pause and should be marked in the book with a couple of parallel vertical lines.

Electricians, sound effects men, and other technicians ordinarily follow their own personal cue sheets on which they have written a line or two of the stage movement which immediately precedes their own action, so that they will be sure to make their moves at exactly the right moment. Occasionally, however, a technician is located where he cannot see the action or hear the lines clearly and must act

when some other person standing where he can see and hear and be seen by the technician gives a hand signal. Perhaps this other person is another technician, an actor waiting in the wings, or the stage manager; regardless, a note of this cue should be made in the prompt book so that it is certain to become part of rehearsal routine. The stage manager should also mark warnings for technical cues a few lines in advance of the line on which they are to be executed.

Throughout the above paragraphs the point has been made repeatedly that one of the stage manager's main functions is to cue actors (prompt them when they forget lines or movement). This is a seemingly simple task. However, the experienced director knows that a stage manager must be trained to cue so that he is a help and not a hindrance. The director's preference is the only rule as to how and when cues should be given. Many directors instruct their stage managers in the following manner: in blocking rehearsals or whenever the actors are using their books, give cues only when an actor momentarily loses his place or makes a wrong move; in rehearsals without books, give the cue immediately whenever needed.

As is perhaps obvious by now, a carefully written prompt book will enable the stage manager to help the actors and the technicians be consistent in rehearsals. Thus they will, after the trials and changes of the early rehearsals,

be practicing somewhat the same version of the play time the after time. In design are likely to be necessary later, and less confusion is likely for actors, confusion caused by

Preliminary Technical Planning

Many directors would probably advise a great deal of preliminary technical planning. In fact, some prefer to have the set, lights, costumes, make-up, props, sound effects-- in other words, the complete show down on paper before one rehearsal is called. In this section of the handbook, the aim is to suggest that previous planning which needs to be done in order that actors can have the information necessary to make the best use of rehearsal time, the director to

see to effect the imagined set will have when it is built.

Planning the set. The director may or may not see fit to have the set planned in complete detail before he begins rehearsals. The main reason for any previous planning

is to enable actors to begin to think in terms of the sur-

roundings of the sets in which they will be acting, to know

where the entrances and exits of the set will be, and to be

adequately prepared for or avoided; and the actor, aware

of what imaginary offstage room or area the exits give

access. With this information they can more easily imagine

the influence of their surroundings, learn lines, and remem-

ber their movements. Another advantage of this planning is

that more time is available to the construction crew, and

partially (that is, if flats, or pieces of scenery, are to

be built) a careful scale drawing of the desired size of

the set is to be built completely from scratch or even

if more than one set is involved, the time will be needed.

be built a careful scale drawing of the desired size of

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the set is to be built completely from scratch or even

The more carefully the set is planned in advance, the fewer changes in design are likely to be necessary later, and less confusion is likely for actors, confusion caused by having to adjust their movements to a change in the length of a wall, the location of a doorway, fireplace, window, or the like. Because of this factor, many experienced directors plan the set completely before rehearsing begins.

To test the results of their plans, many such directors build a scale model of the set out of stiff paper or cardboard, putting in all the exits, windows, irregular angles, walls, and even coloring the model the colors planned for the actual set. Such a model allows the director to see what effect the imagined set will have when it is built. Undesirable effects can, at this stage, be very cheaply corrected.

There are other advantages to be had from building a model: many construction problems will come to light from the making of this paper miniature, problems which can then be adequately prepared for or avoided; and the model makes it much easier for the director to plan the actors' blocking.

A scale drawing of the set is another planning device. If the set is to be built completely from scratch or even partially (that is, if flats, or pieces of scenery, are to be built) a careful scale drawing of the desired size of

each piece is certainly advisable. If the planning of the set involves merely selecting flats already on hand, a detailed drawing perhaps need not be quite so thorough. Even in the latter case, however, the director will save himself possible trouble later if he takes the time to be accurate in planning what pieces will fit into the set.

A copy of the set diagram put into the prompt book makes a valuable reference for actors during rehearsals and for the stage manager to use in marking off rehearsal space.

Placing stage props. Actors need to know what stage props (chairs, tables, lamps, benches, or other set furnishings) will be used in the set, exactly where they will be, and in some cases what type of objects will be used. For example, if an actor is to play or sit at a piano, he will need to know whether to rehearse his movements with the straight chair he'll probably be using in rehearsals as if it is a rigid rectangular piano bench or a round spin-top stool. A floor plan of the set with the stage props sketched in should be included in the prompt book. Most playbooks provide such a sketch in the back or front pages which the director may use as is or with minor changes.

Planning the light sources. Other helpful advance information for the actor is to know what time of day each scene is supposedly taking place. In daytime scenes, he

may be able to add realistic touches to his performance if he knows which window or door the sun is shining through. During night scenes, it may be important to his action to know where the lighted lamps will be. Some directors like to plan the complete lighting plot in advance, but at least a simple outline should be put into the prompt book previous to rehearsals.

Deciding what sound effects to use. The director should check through the script and decide what sound effects he will use. Often actors will need to know about them in order to allow time for them or to practice reacting to them.

Blocking the Action

Although the first rough blocking is done before the director ever meets his cast in a rehearsal, this is the first phase of the actual directing process. Perhaps to the new director it seems like a hopelessly complicated business; it truly can be that! But lack of planned blocking can lead to even more hopeless confusion at rehearsals unless someone has some idea of what everybody on the stage should do with themselves. It doesn't take a Samuel Goldwyn to perceive that that someone had, for the good of the play, better be the director rather than an aggressive actor.

Perhaps a definition of blocking would be in order here, as it is sometimes confused with gesturing. Blocking is generally understood to include stage crosses (that is, movement of an actor from one spot to another), rising from a chair, and sitting down. Gesturing with the hand, leaning toward another actor, even taking a step toward another actor in the act of speaking to him--these motions are not usually thought of as blocking which a director plans in advance. He concentrates on the more gross positions and movements which, in aggregate, make up the constantly changing stage picture.

Probably there are as many methods of planning blocking as there are directors, for the best method is the one which enables the individual to visualize the play in action and to keep track of the positions of all onstage actors all the time. One theme upon which there are undoubtedly countless variations is the method of drawing a floor plan of the set and using a different chess man to represent each actor. Then as the actors are placed in position after position, the director writes their moves into the prompt book. If a scale model of the set has been made, the chess men, or whatever objects are being used, can be maneuvered within it.

Most of the moves can be indicated in the prompt book beside the line on which the move is to be made by a brief

note such as: "X to sofa," meaning "Cross to sofa," or "X U of lamp table to LC," meaning "Cross upstage of lamp table to left center stage." If each actor's moves are recorded in this way, the traffic on stage will take care of itself in orderly fashion. However, sometimes the director may want to draw in the margin a quick sketch showing the position of the actors after a scene with an unusually large number of actors and many moves.

The more actors there are onstage, the greater is the blocking problem, for of course the moves and rises and sittings of twenty people are harder to keep track of than the activities of two. Fortunately, even in plays with large casts the scenes involving many characters at once are in the minority.

A few commonly used blocking terms and their symbols which may aid the new director in writing his planned moves into the prompt book follow at the end of this chapter. Actors should be instructed in the use of these terms and symbols during blocking rehearsals so that they can quickly write their blocking into their scripts.

Playbooks do provide blocking instructions for the set suggested by the playwright and with the stage props arranged by him. If the director wishes, he can use this blocking altogether. Then his advance planning is merely a study of the script directions in order to have a mental

picture of the movement and to make whatever minor changes may be desired. The two steps are sizable and vital tasks in themselves, each of them is treated at length in a succeeding chapter.

Planning a Rehearsal Area

For many drama groups, locating rehearsal space is something of a problem. School auditoriums and civic auditoriums equipped with full-size stages are apt to be tightly scheduled. Until the last few rehearsals, a stage is not absolutely necessary. Any floor space large enough to represent the floor plan of the set and private enough for concentration makes a good rehearsal area.

As soon as such a space is located, the director or the stage manager should get proper authorization for the use of it for whatever times rehearsals have been planned.

Before each rehearsal, the outline of the set's floor plan should be marked on the floor with tape or chalk. Each exit should be indicated by a couple of marks the exact width of the set exit. These marks will enable the actors to keep their movements gauged uniformly from rehearsal to rehearsal. Also, the stage manager or prop manager should arrange stand-in stage props in the set area--straight chairs usually can be made to represent living room chairs, sofas, tables, and the like.

Besides the points just discussed in this chapter, a director's preliminary planning also includes the preparation

of a rehearsal schedule and the casting of the characters.

Because these two steps are sizable and vital tasks in themselves, each of them is treated at length in a succeeding chapter.

With these preparations completed, rehearsals can go forward with a minimum of confusion, interruption, and delay.



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BLOCKING TERMS

mind that these positions are general areas, not a certain point on the stage floor.

U --- upstage. Upstage means away from the footlights.

D --- downstage. Downstage means toward the footlights.

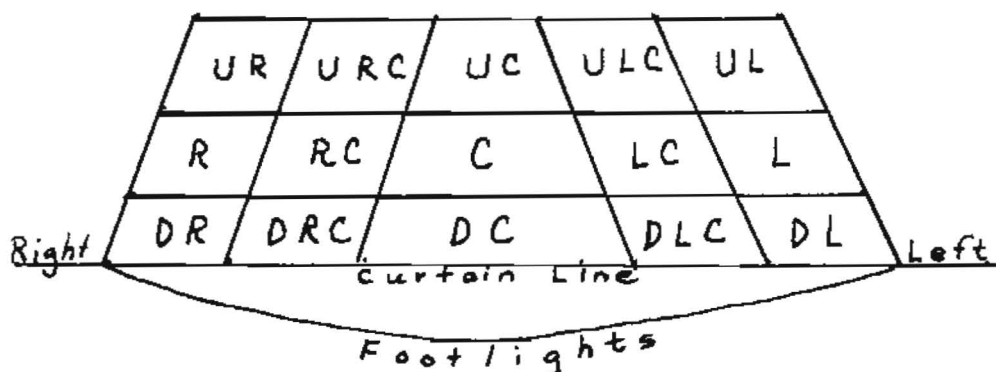
L --- left stage. In stage terminology, left is the actor's left as he faces the audience.

R --- right stage. As above, right means the actor's right as he faces the audience.

C --- center stage.

X --- cross. To cross means to go from one place to another.

Chart of Stage Positions



Blocking rehearsals go much more smoothly if the director and the actors are familiar with the stage positions and their abbreviations. For example, if the director wants an actor to go to a certain place along the back wall, he can be fairly specific about where this place is by telling the actor to cross to "up right center" stage, or perhaps "up left," as the case may be. However, it should be kept in

Note: This page and its reverse side are replicas of pages 17 and 18 of the prompt book used by Dr. Kuba C. Bruder of Kansas City, Mo. in his book "The Family Portrait" through M. I. C. Co. Mind that these positions designate a general area, not a certain point on the stage floor.

The terms up, down, left, and right are also useful when directing an actor where to cross in relation to some other person or object onstage. To cross "up" of a chair which is facing the audience means to go behind it. Or a director may want an actor to sit on the "down right" arm of a sofa. Use of these stage position terms saves time and confusion in giving such directions.

Sample Page of Prompt Book

Note: This page and its reverse side are replicas of pages 77 and 78 of the prompt book used by Dr. Karl C. Bruder of Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, Kansas, in the production of Family Portrait given February 11 through 14, 1959.

ACT II FAMILY PORTRAIT 77

HEPZIBAH. (*With a shrug*) We're just being neighborly.

DANIEL. (*DANIEL comes out of house—stops short. Half closes door*) Oh, I didn't know you were here—

ANNA. (*Embarrassed*) Is anyone home?

DANIEL. Mother and Aunt Reba have gone to the country, but Grandmother's home. Shall I call her?

HEPZIBAH. (*Crosses L. to pat DANIEL's hair—he pulls away*) Yes. We'd like to see her. (*DANIEL exits into house—closes door. To ANNA, crosses down* ~~X~~ *R*—*in a lower voice*) Anyone seen Mary since Sunday? (*Runs front of fig tree.*)

ANNA. (*Shakes head "no"*) I think she took it pretty hard. She'd bought a new shawl. I talked to her the day he was coming home—and my, was she excited!

HEPZIBAH. I know. I loaned her my dishes.

ANNA. Your *best* dishes?

HEPZIBAH. Not my best—but better than Mary has. The fuss that went on here in this house—you'd think no other mother in Nazareth ever had a son!

(*MARY comes out of house, closes door, carrying HEPZIBAH's dishes. She is pale and making an effort to be composed, and braces herself for the taunts she knows are coming. ANNA nudges HEPZIBAH, who does not turn until MARY speaks.*)

MARY. (*R. of HEPZIBAH and ANNA (hears end of speech)*) I'm sorry I'm so late returning your dishes—I meant to do it before—

HEPZIBAH. (*Takes dishes*) It's natural you should forget—with all your other troubles—I mean—so much to do, straightening things after—

MARY. Yes—I've been quite busy—getting the house tidied up—I sent the girls away for a little

X to Hepzibah

X to Mary

Pause on edge of porch

Marginal notes in red were made prior to rehearsals by the director. Black pencil markings were done by the stage manager during blocking rehearsals.

Notes: This page and its reverse side are replicas of pages 77 and 78 of the prompt book used by Dr. Karl G. Brubaker of Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, Kansas, in the production of Family Portrait given February 11 through 14, 1959.

rest—they've taken Esther with them. And then Judah came home late last night—

HEPZIBAH. (*Surprised, looks at ANNA*) I thought he was staying away another month?

MARY. No, he left his job and hurried home hoping to see his— (*Breaks off.*)

ANNA. (*Covering her slip—below HEPZIBAH*) —to see Miriam? I suppose they'll be getting married before long—

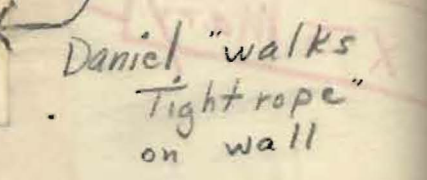
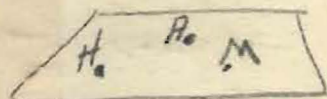
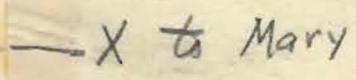
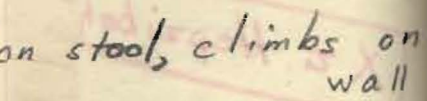
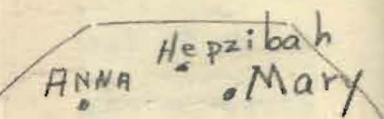
MARY. Yes. It's all settled—I'm working on his things now. (~~*Above to r. of chair c. indicates sewing on chair.*~~)

(*DANIEL enters from house with boat—crosses to wall, gets on stool and climbs up.*) *sits on stool, climbs on wall*

ANNA. (*With relief in her voice*) Oh, well—with a good match like that, people are bound to look up to you again— (*Breaks off, embarrassed*) Oh— (~~*Crosses to r. of chair c.*~~) I'm sorry, Mary. I didn't mean to say that. Jesus might do better another time. We all have our off days. Ezra, the singer, tells me that sometimes he can't get a full note.

HEPZIBAH. But he doesn't blame it on other people's lack of hearing! I don't like to hurt your feelings, Mary—but I'm not one to hold back anything. And I must say you always spoiled him. Made him think he was something special—

ANNA. It's not easy to bring up a lot of boys without a man in the family. (*To MARY—not unkindly*) You know, Mary—Jesus really ought to have known better than to come back here where everyone knows him. (*JOSEPH enters stairs l.; stands on landing until he speaks. When ANNA crosses, HEPZIBAH puts dishes on fig tree bench and crosses down l.*) When a man's hammered on your cupboard doors and mended your roofs, you're not going to believe he's turned into a prophet over night.



*to bench
of table
put dishes
on it*

Marginal notes in red were made prior to rehearsal of the director. Most small markings were done by the stage manager during blocking rehearsals.

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Making Lighting Plots

The books listed in Chapter VII of this handbook under "Inclusive Works Covering Acting, Directing, and Stagecraft" also contain sections on making lighting plots.

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Making Prop Lists and Layouts

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that the world beings he CHAPTER III certain roles will behave and develop precisely as he would wish.

CASTING THE PLAY

...return to the new director as he faces his first

casting. At this stage of play production, the new director may feel keenly his lack of experience in dealing with the total process of directing, for he must now, without ever having had the experience of helping actors to achieve stage characterizations, judge them for their ability to do this. He must also predict their ability to further develop their present capabilities without having seen many or perhaps any of the actors perform on a stage.

The new director can perhaps take heart from the fact that an old hand at casting and directing is just about as much at sea as the rankest beginner when he deals with actors who are strangers to him, and most school and community directors face unfamiliar actors at each new production. The problem still is to judge people's abilities to make all the complex adjustments and adaptations of their own characteristics that we call acting, and in appraising these unknown personalities, the veteran director, as well as the fledgling, must use a certain amount of guesswork. Of course, having seen in the past what others have been able to do from their early indications in tryouts, his "guessing" is likely to be somewhat more accurate than it was his first time at casting, but it is far from scientific certainty

that the human beings he places in certain roles will behave and develop precisely as he would wish.

To return to the new director as he faces his first casting experience, he is dealing with a task that requires all the understanding of human nature and the perception of individuals' abilities that he can bring into play, a creative process in which experience along these lines would give him more confidence and a certain amount of skill, but in which he will always rely heavily on his sensitivity and common sense.

The beginner may find it helpful to examine some factors that many directors consider important when casting. It should be stated here that the points which follow are not the only ones which bear on the matter; they may not be even the most vital in the opinion of some directors. They are offered to point out some of the fundamental aspects of casting that apply to nearly every casting situation but which the beginner might not be able to foresee.

These casting criteria are dealt with below in two sections: (1) Choosing the Individual Actor for a Role, and (2) Maintaining Significant Relationships Among the Cast. These two headings alone bring an important point into sharp focus, the fact that an actor must be evaluated not only for his suitability for a specific role, but also for his relationship to the rest of the cast of actors.

Choosing the Individual Actor for a Role

Probably the term "type casting" is a familiar phrase to everyone. As has been stated before, this handbook does not presume to promote theories or methods of casting, directing or stagecraft but merely to offer suggestions based on practical experience for one way of dealing with these problems. This "one way" may or may not be a manifestation of one or another of the traditional principles of drama; it is offered simply as workable, useful suggestion.

At this point, nonetheless, a brief survey of two opposing theories of casting is in order, but not for the purpose of championing either; rather, it is offered because the new director may find valuable ideas in both theories as he approaches the casting process. Indeed, although these two theories are many times presented as being poles apart in their ideas and directors are sometimes said to operate strictly according to one or the other, it is probably just as often true that directors draw upon both ideas as the situation demands and blend these two so-called opposing theories into their own quite workable philosophy.

Of the two theories in question, only one is called by a generally familiar term. That one is type casting. It is generally understood to mean that when a director selects an actor to play a role, he chooses some person who

naturally is like the character in the play. If, for example, he is casting the part of a gay, giggly, flighty teenage girl character, he would choose the girl among his actors whose personality and characteristics are most nearly like those of the play character. If he's casting the part of a treacherous, cruel villain, he chooses the man who can at tryouts most easily and readily suggest these characteristics "cold," that is, without study or experimentation. In other words, for the portrayal of a given type of character, he chooses either an actor with a similar type of personality and characteristics or a person who can already easily assume them.

The other theory will be referred to here as the developmental theory of casting, whereby a director assigns a part not because the actor already exhibits the characteristics called for by the role, but because the actor demonstrates sufficient sensitivity, flexibility, and general acting ability that the director feels that this actor can, during the rehearsal period, develop the characteristics of the role and, in the end, portray it convincingly.

In examining the merits of each of these theories, it is fairly easy to understand the advantages of type casting, as seen by the proponents of this theory, which apply to both the director and the actor. The actor's task, they

maintain, of bringing to life a character in a playbook is greatly simplified if the play character is designed to speak and act much in the manner that is natural already to the actor. Thus, the director's task of coaching the actor in his rehearsals is likewise apt to be greatly simplified. As a consequence, more time can be spent on polishing both the actor's individual performance and the show as a whole.

Proponents of the developmental theory, on the other hand, would point out its several distinctive merits. For one thing, directors of educational theatres, such as those of high schools, colleges, and professional training institutions, feel that a person grows as an actor only when he is challenged to portray a variety of roles; therefore where the emphasis of the theatre program is on the education and the training of the actors, many directors lean heavily on the developmental casting principle.

Other directors favor this procedure because they feel that an actor is truly creative only when he is building mannerisms and expressive qualities unlike his natural ones, that when an actor is type cast, his performance demands only the mechanical tasks of learning lines and memorizing when to do what he already naturally does as far as movement is concerned.

Still other directors contend that developmental casting, not type casting, is the kind that makes the actor's

job easier. They feel that, at least for the amateur, it is very difficult to portray with conviction, freshness, and vitality a character very like the actor's own, that it is much easier for the amateur to bring enthusiasm and interesting emotional qualities to bear on a role which requires and enables him to give leash to his imagination.

From this sketchy perusal of two popular and differing beliefs, perhaps the beginning director will gain some insight into his own feelings as to what are the important aspects of casting. He may find, as many directors do, that some situations call for one kind of casting; other situations are best met by casting the other way.

At any rate, whatever a director's theory, when he is considering an actor for a role, there are specific criteria by which he judges the actor's fitness. Following are some points which are representative of many directors' thinking at this point.

Essential criteria for casting the individual actor.

The primary quality the director looks for is the general ability of the actor to portray the character convincingly. Can he, the actor, project the special traits of this character so that the character will seem to be a real person on the stage, so that the audience will understand what kind of person the character is meant to be and will feel about him as the author, the director, and the actor intend?

A second important quality the director seeks is appropriate physical appearance for the role. Is the actor's height, weight, voice, and coloring such that he will be able, perhaps with the aid of make-up and costuming, to suggest the role visually and audibly?

Some practical considerations. If an actor possesses both the essential qualities mentioned above, it might seem that without further investigation the director can safely, indeed jubilantly, cast the role (many times no actor answers both these qualifications for a role adequately, and the director must alter or reinterpret the role to fit his available actors). Experienced directors know, however, that sometimes an actor fails to contribute what he might to a role and to the quality of the play itself because of factors quite apart from his talent and his appearance. The veteran director further considers the actor in light of his probable ability to be a positive rather than a negative contribution to the rehearsal situation.

For one thing, will he be able to attend the required rehearsals? This seems an elementary point, but the need for one hundred percent punctual attendance from cast members becomes quite evident and indeed of primary importance the moment it is lacking. The absence of even one actor with a relatively small role can waste the time, energy, and enthusiasm of everyone else.

Secondly, will the actor be able to respond to direction? That is, can he take suggestions on the interpretation of lines, movement, and so forth, and incorporate them into his portrayal? Many persons, although they understand what the director means, cannot command their vocal inflection, volume, or quality or their movements well enough to translate this understanding into a modification of their actions. Other persons are very reluctant to accept anyone's ideas about effectiveness or interpretation other than their own. Both of these kinds of persons can delay rehearsals and seriously impair the progress of the play.

It should be known especially of actors considered for leading parts whether they are capable of handling heavy roles. Can they memorize well enough to learn the many lines? Do they have the energy and the drive to see them through long, perhaps strenuous rehearsals and exhausting performances? Some roles require actors to be onstage most of the time; these roles require a great deal of concentration and stamina from actors, particularly during the starting, stopping, and repeating of rehearsals.

Finally, the actor needs to be able to work harmoniously with the rest of the group--the director, the other actors, and the backstage crews. Two kinds of behavior could be harmful here: spiteful, petty actions and remarks which disrupt the harmony and discipline necessary to play

production; and the extreme shyness of an adolescent, otherwise apparently "right" for the role, who cannot yet bring himself (or, just as likely, herself) to be expressive and effective when the eyes of his peers are upon him. Perhaps a job on a backstage crew during the run of one play would enable such an adolescent to become more at home with stage proceedings and make it easier for him to assume an acting role later.

Maintaining Significant Relationships Among the Cast

Another important aspect of casting is attaining certain relationships among the actors chosen for the roles. Since few plays are written so that characters may appear on the stage alone, perform, and exit one by one, each actor must display qualities and characteristics in keeping with whatever relationship his may have to the other characters.

For example, if an actor is to portray a handsome young man of twenty in love with a pretty young girl of seventeen and the pair supposedly represent the American ideal of youth and beauty just meant for each other, then the young man should have, in the first place, those personal qualities which enable him to portray a handsome young man of twenty. But it is also necessary that these qualities remain obvious when he appears on the stage with the actress playing the pretty young girl and with the other men

in the cast. If the handsome young man proves to be several inches shorter than the girl, an undesirable effect may result when they stand together. Again, if the handsome young man is fairly attractive but his average good looks become completely overshadowed by the extraordinary, striking appearance of a minor character, let's say a very handsome best friend, the audience's sympathies may be diverted from the leading man, and the impressions the director had planned may go awry. Thus, maintaining appropriate physical relationships can be an important casting consideration.

Another such relative factor may be age. An actress playing an old woman should show promise of appearing to be much older than the actress portraying a teen-ager.

Members of special groups should have common qualities or at least should not appear to be drastically unlike each other. All the members of a famous basketball team, for instance, should look as if they could be basketball players. Here an extremely short, heavy-set man would seem out of place.

Special characters may need to be in strong contrast to the rest of the cast. Perhaps make-up and costuming can achieve the necessary effect, but many times the actor himself must be able to provide the peculiar quality of voice, movement, energy, or personality. An actor cast as the

hunchback in The Hunchback of Notre Dame must be able to develop personal traits which make him seem grotesque as well as devise a make-up and a costume which make him look hideous.

Types of Tryouts

Directors use a variety of systems of trying out actors for roles. Below are three commonly used methods which the new director may find useful as such or in combination.

Auditions. This procedure is particularly valuable when the director is entirely unfamiliar with large numbers of actors. It is also useful in giving familiar actors an opportunity to display their abilities in playing types of roles other than those they have handled in the past.

The audition may consist of a scene taken from the forthcoming play, or it may be a scene taken from any other play of the actor's choosing. Usually the director specifies the number of actors to work together in presenting the audition, the time limit, the properties restrictions, and the method of introducing the scene to the audience. Then the actors themselves choose a scene, take parts, memorize their lines, and present it on the stage before the director and perhaps the other actors. Thus the

director gets a realistic sampling of each actor's stage appearance, voice, movement, gestures, interpretative ability, and the way he reacts to other actors. If the audition scenes have been taken from plays other than the one to be cast soon, the director may want to follow up the audition by a reading tryout of parts in the forthcoming play, calling to this tryout only those actors who seem to be possibilities for the roles in the play.

General reading tryouts. Before the tryout session is held, the director makes available to the actors copies of the play to be cast so that they can become familiar with the story and the various characters. Also previous to tryouts he chooses several scenes for reading, scenes which somewhere include good dialogue for all the major characters.

During the reading tryout, actors volunteer or are chosen by the director to take parts and read the scenes aloud. The director may also want the actors to act out the scene as best they can as they read the lines.

It may be possible to cast the play from one reading tryout, or the director may take notes on all actors whom he feels could play each role, then call just those actors back for a second and perhaps a third reading before he decides on a final cast.

Limited reading tryouts. For one reason or another, the director may be able to cast most of the characters merely by mentally considering his actors' abilities. The cast of characters may be very small, or the director may have actors who obviously fit nearly all the roles. Another condition directors sometimes face is one wherein there are barely enough actors to fill all the parts, so casting becomes a matter of juggling people and parts to find the most suitable combination.

In any case, even though there is little change possible, it is usually advisable to hold a reading tryout to test the casting done on paper. Instead of summoning all the potential actors, he can call only those he is seriously considering for a role. Perhaps in the reading process, an actor will show more or less aptitude for a role than the director had been able to imagine. Also, seeing and hearing the actors together may bring to light flaws in physical, age, group, or character relationships of tentatively cast actors.

Until a director has had experience in judging actors, at least one reading tryout is advisable to test or perhaps only to confirm the choices before the final cast is announced.

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CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZING THE BACKSTAGE STAFF

Important as actors are to the performance of a play, they could not get the job done alone. What goes on backstage is just as essential to play production as what the audience sees and hears onstage.

The cast of any play endeavors to create an illusion, to catch up the audience in the spell of the story it has to unfold. As long as what the audience sees and hears is consistent with the imaginary world being created for them from the moment the curtain rises, this spell will hold their attention, make them forget that they are watching an artificial situation. But let one actor strike an inconsistent note, and the spell is broken, at least momentarily. Likewise, let a light go on at an unexplainable time, a sound break into the scene at a wrong moment, a stage hand in work clothes wander into view past a set window, and a drama can be turned into low comedy in a twinkling, a comedy into unintended farce, and a farce into a fiasco.

Probably the newcomer to directing is inclined to underestimate the need for careful backstage organization--the first time he produces a play. After that first one, he will readily see the wisdom in assigning backstage positions with just as much thought as he casts the actors. The stage

manager needs to be as alert and responsible as the hero needs to be talented in the acting field. If it is important that the maid make her entrance at exactly the right moment, it is also vital that her tea tray be ready for her offstage on the prop table when she needs it. The hundreds of details involved in backstage jobs need to be in the hands of capable, imaginative, reliable persons who understand that they have been assigned to important jobs, not handed busywork tasks as consolation for failing to get cast in onstage roles.

The "hundreds of details" mentioned above are no exaggeration, as any experienced director knows. It is, if anything, an incomplete description of the complexity of the many jobs to be done. Thus the need for a competent staff member to be responsible for each of these different backstage positions is clear. The director himself cannot do them all; neither can one or two willing volunteers expect to do everything there is to do. Each of the technical problems calls for a different staff member to accept complete responsibility for getting that particular job done. He needs to understand clearly what his duties are and what overall effect the director desires in this area. He may need a crew of workers to help him if the plans are too involved for one person to execute. In short, clear

allocation of responsibility for backstage jobs to capable persons is an essential factor in play production.

Since the backstage work is composed of so many details, the staff needs to maintain a standard of procedure during final rehearsals and actual performances. Many of the technicians must listen for a certain actor's line in order to make an important technical move; split-second timing is necessary quite often. Also, property men often must concentrate on getting props in proper location throughout the entire play. Discipline backstage, therefore, is only sensible. There is not much time nor opportunity for games, conversation, or practical joking nor is there room for people other than staff members and actors behind the scenery in a well-organized production group, for they realize the interdependence of each person and each task in the presentation of a play.

Exactly how the backstage staff is to be organized is dependent, of course, on the requirements of the play and the preferences of the director. What the situation calls for in the way of staff positions may vary from play to play. Below are listed staff positions that directors often appoint; the duties outlined beneath each position are responsibilities that may be assigned to this member. This organizational plan is presented to give the new director a fuller understanding of what each technical position may

involve and to offer a basic method of organization which he should freely adapt to his own needs.

The Duties of a Suggested Staff

Stage manager. His duties may be thought of as falling into two categories: (1) his duties regarding the prompt book, and (2) his administrative duties during the final rehearsals and the performances. These former duties regarding the prompt book were outlined in Chapter II. Following are suggested administrative duties.

- a. Checks attendance of actors and working crew members. All actors and backstage staff who are involved in running the show should check in with the stage manager as soon as they arrive at the theatre for all final rehearsals and for all performances. If by a specified time someone has not reported, the stage manager should telephone him or try to locate him in some way. If he cannot be found, the director should be notified.
- b. Gives actors and technicians time calls. He sees that everyone is kept aware of the time by notifying the entire group of the one hour call (this means that it is one hour before the curtain will go up), the thirty minute, the fifteen minute, and the five minute call. At the five minute call actors and

technicians should have assumed "places"--that is, they go to the spot, offstage or onstage, where they are to be when the curtain rises.

- c. Checks "places" after five minute call. He checks offstage and onstage to see that actors are all in place.
- d. Gets "all set" signs from technicians at five minute call. Technicians should not only be at their places, but all equipment should be tested and in working order, ready for the opening curtain.
- e. Starts the play. When curtain time arrives, provided that all actors and technicians are all set and the director has not ordered the curtain held for any last-minute occurrence, it is usually the stage manager's responsibility to give the signal to raise the curtain and begin the play.
- f. Maintains order backstage. He sees that all unnecessary noise and activity is eliminated, and he allows only those actors and technicians who are involved in the show admittance to the backstage area.
- g. Gets word to the house manager shortly before the end of intermissions that the curtain is about to go up on the next act.
- h. Takes charge of any backstage emergencies, such as actors becoming ill, during the run of the show. It

is his duty to decide the fate of the show in such instances. If the actor's role is a very small one, he may instruct the actors to go on with the show and perhaps have another actor say any necessary plot lines. If the illness is extremely serious or if an accident occurs either onstage or backstage, the stage manager may decide to stop the show. To do so, he signals to the curtain man to bring down the curtain. Then he summons the director and aids him in dealing with the situation. As soon as a plan of action has been decided upon, the audience must be told whether or not to remain.

- i. Regulates curtain calls. When the curtain falls on the last scene and the actors have arranged themselves for curtain calls, he signals the curtain man to raise the curtain. He also listens to the applause and decides when to end the calls.
- j. Dismisses actors to dressing rooms. The director may want to talk to the cast before they leave the stage area, or backstage visitors may want to meet the actors personally after the show; for these reasons many directors prefer that actors stay onstage until the stage manager dismisses them. The stage manager does so on word from the director. Thus it

is the stage manager who opens and closes each performance. He is the handbag which the leading lady carries onstage in the second act or is it a prop, Construction chief.

- a. Assembles the set. He carefully studies the set designs with the director, then directs the building and the assembling of the set on the stage.
- b. Organizes any scene shifts. If more than one set is to be used, the construction chief organizes his crew so that the changes can be made as quickly and as quietly as possible.
- c. Checks the set before each performance. When there is more than one performance, he makes sure that the set is ready before each performance. If there have been scene shifts, the first act set must be put in place again after the previous performance. Sometimes minor repairs are needed.
- d. Directs the set strike. ("Strike" is the term given to the clearing of the stage and the storing of all equipment after the final performances.) He directs his crew in the disassembling of the scenery and the storing of it and the tools they have used.

Prop manager. Properties are generally understood to mean objects that an actor uses or handles onstage. Sometimes

confusion may arise over the classification of certain items. For example, is the handbag which the leading lady carries onstage in the second act a prop or is it a costume, and therefore which technician should be responsible for it? It little matters who takes charge of it; the important thing is that someone does.

- a. Gathers props. He discusses the prop list with the director in order to understand what kind of items are desired. Then he directs the making, the altering of items already on hand, and the borrowing of the props.
- b. Cares for props. He sees that props are handled only by him and his crew except when it is time for the actors to use them onstage.
- c. Organizes prop tables. He sees that there is a prop table near each set entrance equipped with the hand props actors will need when using these entrances. If the set has entrances on the left side and the right side of the stage, there should be a left and a right prop table properly equipped.
- d. Checks props before performance. He sees that all hand props are in place on the set and on the prop tables and that all stage props--such as tables, chairs, and divans--are in the correct place and are in the correct condition.

- e. Organizes any prop shifts. If props need to be changed between scenes or acts, he organizes the shifts so that they are accomplished swiftly and quietly, yet carefully. After the shift he quickly checks the set to make sure everything is in place, then signals the stage manager that the shift has been completed.
- f. Stores props between performances. He takes care that all fragile, valuable, or borrowed props are adequately covered or, if possible, stored until shortly before they are needed.
- g. Directs props strike. He organizes the storing of all theatre props and the returning--in good condition--of all borrowed props after the final performance.

Electrician.

- a. Assembles lights. He studies the light plot with the director, then organizes the lights so that the desired effects can be attained and controlled during the run of the play.
- b. Directs the operation of the lights.
- c. Directs lights strike. Any temporary riggings are dismantled and all loose equipment such as portable spotlights, cables, and so forth, is stored.

Sound technician.

- a. Collects sound effects equipment. After studying the sound effects to be used, he locates records, gathers ready-made items such as whistles, bells, or sound effects machines, or invents ways of producing special sounds.
- b. Directs the operation of the sound effects equipment during rehearsals and performances.
- c. Directs any use of public address systems. If there is to be any pre-curtain or intermission music or announcing, he checks this sound equipment well before curtain time and stores any portable microphones after each use.
- d. Directs sound effects strike.

Costume mistress.

- a. Collects the costumes. She studies the costume requirements with the director so that she knows what style, color, and fabric each costume for each actor should be. She then directs the making, renting, or borrowing of the costumes and the fitting of them to the actors.
- b. Maintains correct appearance of costumes before each performance. Because of make-up stains or other factors, some costumes may need to be washed or spot

- b. cleaned before each performance. Badly wrinkled costumes should be pressed.
- c. Checks placement of costumes before performance. If a costume change is to be made in an offstage area other than the dressing room, she sees that the costumes are placed there before each performance. Also, she checks each actor's dressing room rack and the prop table if she's responsible for any accessories being placed there.
- d. Helps make costume changes. She provides an assistant for any actor who needs help with changes. Some costumes are elaborate and difficult to get into; sometimes changes must be made very quickly, and the assistant and the actor must plan their moves carefully.

Curtain man.

- e. Keeps mending equipment handy. She should keep a small sewing kit backstage in case a costume rips or a button pops off during performance.
- f. Directs costume strike. She oversees the storing of all theatre costumes and sees that rented and borrowed costumes are returned in good condition.

Make-up manager.

- a. Assembles make-up. He checks make-up needs with the director and stocks the make-up area.

b. May direct the application of make-up. Some directors have each actor apply his own make-up. Others prefer to train the make-up manager and his crew and have them apply make-up to the actors. In the latter case, the make-up crew discuss characters and desired effects with the director, and the manager assigns certain actors to each of his crew members.

- c. Informs actors on make-up procedure. Actors may be asked to provide towels or other equipment. The manager instructs them on the use and care of the make-up.
- d. Directs make-up strike. He sees that the make-up is in good condition before it is stored and that the make-up area is cleaned.

Curtain man.

- a. Raises and lowers curtain. His presence is needed at the final rehearsals so that he knows exactly how the director wants the curtain managed. He also needs to understand curtain call procedure.

Writing Cue Sheets

A technical procedure which many directors require of all staff members and assisting crew members who have responsibilities or moves to make during the performance is

if the actors go over it CHAPTER V, they will perform it well.

THE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

As stated above, each director has his own theory about Although probably no two directors would agree on what is the best kind of rehearsal schedule, it is safe to assume that they would all emphatically agree that some sort of plan should be followed in order to make good use of rehearsal time.

Kinds of Rehearsals

During their total rehearsal period, actors must master a number of different kinds of problems, problems such as learning where to move, memorizing lines, properly timing their speeches and moves, using the properties and wearing the costumes correctly--problems that are vital parts of the process of portrayal of character. Experience seems to indicate that actors cannot concentrate on all of these problems at each rehearsal. The rehearsal schedule is, then, a plan for taking up these problems one, or a few, at a time. The blocking of that section has been completed, most directors. The schedule also indicates how much time is to be spent on each problem. Most directors plan the schedule in advance of rehearsals and post it so that actors can know when to be prepared to deal with the next problem. In this way the rehearsal period becomes a process of gradual, systematic development of the cast's performances instead of a blind practicing of the play regularly in hopes that

if the actors go over it enough times, they will perform it well. is dependent mainly upon such factors as the number of characters. As stated above, each director has his own theory about the order in which the rehearsal problems should be attacked and how much time should be spent on one before going on to the next. Below are described five kinds of rehearsal in an order which many directors use, and allow more rehearsal time for these sections. Usually an act of

Kinds of Rehearsals

average blocking activity can be blocked and reviewed once in from Blocking rehearsals. Actors come to rehearsals equipped with scripts and pencils. The director describes the set, pointing out the entrances and exits and the location of the stage props. the rehearsal period, the director or the When actors are thoroughly oriented to the set, the director guides them through the blocking of a portion of the play. Each actor writes his moves into his own script; the stage manager records all moves in the prompt book.

After the blocking of that section has been completed, most directors think it wise to have the actors repeat that portion immediately in order to "jell" the blocking in the actors' minds and to enable the director to view it again enough with what to say and where to go that he can begin to make sure it is the way he wants it. Then the next section is blocked and reviewed, and so on until the entire play moves. In other words, he begins to interpret the meaning of his lines and moves, to develop his characterization. He

The length of time necessary to block one act of a play is dependent mainly upon such factors as the number of characters involved in the scenes, the complexity of the movement, and the kind of props which must be manipulated. Some plays are much easier to block than others, and they can therefore be done faster. The director should read each act, locate the most difficult blocking spots, and allow more rehearsal time for these sections. Usually an act of average blocking activity can be blocked and reviewed once in from two to three hours. For three-act plays of ordinary difficulty, then, it would be well to plan to use approximately ten hours of rehearsal time for blocking.

At any time during the rehearsal period, the director or the actors may want to make minor changes in this early blocking. If it is well planned, relatively few changes will be needed, and the actors can now begin to memorize their moves along with their lines.

Shaping rehearsals. By the time blocking has been completed, each actor has been over all his lines and movement in actual rehearsal at least twice. Now he is familiar enough with what to say and where to go that he can begin to consider how to say his lines and how to execute his moves. In other words, he begins to interpret the meaning of his lines and moves, to develop his characterization. He

experiments with bits of stage business (gestures, glances, or perhaps pantomimes which are intended to make a character or a scene more dynamic) and various vocal qualities in an effort to bring his character to life. The director can now begin to guide the play in the direction he wants it to take. By helping actors interpret their characters and key lines he can begin to shape the scenes of the play so that as rehearsals progress, important ideas will receive proper emphasis and the major theme of the play will eventually emerge, clear and dramatic. periods of rehearsal will be the most time-consuming.

Polishing rehearsals. It would be artificial to make a sharp distinction between what are here termed the "shaping" and the "polishing" rehearsals, for many of the same problems receive attention during these two periods. However, it may prove helpful to the new director to use the two terms, for they reflect an important shift of purpose.

After each act has had two or three intensive shaping sessions, most directors feel that it is time for actors to begin to "set" their characterizations and interpretations.

By now the actor should have a rough conception of his character. Now, during the polishing rehearsals, he devotes his energy to developing it further.

As for the director, he continues to help individual actors with the fine points of character portrayal. He

also begins to work on the overall effectiveness of the scenes, seeing that each one builds to its proper climax. The bulk of the total rehearsal time is spent on shaping and polishing. If the director has planned to have eighty rehearsal hours in all, he may set aside ten for blocking, fifteen for technical and dress rehearsals together, and fifty-five for this vital shaping-polishing period. Of course, these figures are used entirely for the sake of illustrating but one possible apportioning of time. Each play requires its own special schedule, depending on which of these final practices, the technical and the dress rehearsals, are used mainly to bring the technical departments into operation and to coordinate them with the acting. Actors often find that although the director is no longer helping them with specific suggestions, they make great strides in schedule he can notify actors by writing "No Books" by the their acting during these somewhat hostile rehearsals even deadline rehearsal. During these practices it is good

About halfway to two-thirds of the way through the shaping and polishing periods, the director must designate certain times for each act to be memorized. On the posted then with specific suggestions, they make great strides in schedule he can notify actors by writing "No Books" by the their acting during these somewhat hostile rehearsals even deadline rehearsal. During these practices it is good policy to insist that everyone rehearse entirely without his stage and hand props, and the sound effects make it easier to become fully absorbed in their roles, and they are able this time the performance date is drawing too near to dally to do with enthusiasm and conviction the things they had with memorization.

been struggling with previously. In order to accomplish correct timing and to perfect stage business which will work in performance as well as sound effects, and the curtain are used at the technical rehearsals, hand props need to be available for use during these polishing rehearsals, but this matter depends on how many technical and dress rehearsals are planned. Some directors have one

Late in the polishing period, the director schedules run-through rehearsals, sessions which begin at the beginning of the play and go straight through until the end. Until now actors have been concentrating on only a few scenes or one act at each practice. Now they get the feeling of the continuity of the whole play.

Technical care is taken to see that every technician makes detailed and accurate cue sheets during the Technical rehearsals. When rehearsals reach this point, most of the director's work with actors in helping them interpret and portray their characters must be done. Every technical move is definitely assigned to some person, and that person writes the move and the cue for it on his cue sheet.

These final practices, the technical and the dress rehearsals, are used mainly to bring the technical departments into operation and to coordinate them with the acting. Actors also grasp the continuity of the show. Technical rehearsals are most valuable if the entire play is run through at one time so that the technicians can also grasp the continuity of the show. Actors often find that although the director is no longer helping them with specific suggestions, they make great strides in their acting during these somewhat hectic rehearsals even so, for the addition of the set, the lights, all the actual stage and hand props, and the sound effects make it easier to become fully absorbed in their roles, and they are able to do with enthusiasm and conviction the things they had been struggling with previously.

Usually only the set, the lights, the props, the sound effects, and the curtain are used at the technical rehearsals, but this matter depends on how many technical and dress rehearsals are planned. Some directors have one

of each, some two of each, and others have one of one and two of the other. If only one dress rehearsal is planned, directors usually require make-up and costumes be worn at a technical rehearsal so that any problems can be overcome before final dress rehearsal. errors, before they appear before an

audience. The director takes special care to see that every technician makes detailed and accurate cue sheets during the technical rehearsals. Every technical move is definitely

Apportioning Rehearsal Time

assigned to some person, and that person writes the move and the cue for it on his cue sheet. the play to be produced and

the six. Technical rehearsals are most valuable if the entire play is run through at one time so that the technicians can also grasp the continuity of the show. one-act play and from

sixty to ninety hours for a three-act play, with seventy-five hours being a comfortable norm for a play of average difficulty. Experience alone will enable a director to estimate with any degree of accuracy how much time he will need. Cue sheets from the technical rehearsals are thereby tested, and any necessary corrections can be made. Make-up and

costumes can be viewed under the acting lights and in the set, and any needed alterations can be made. Several factors affect the length of required time.

First of all is the director's personal method of working. During preliminary dress rehearsals, interruptions in the action are held to a minimum, but if actors or technicians run into trouble, most directors feel it is wise to stop and solve the problem. Final dress rehearsal conditions, however, are almost universally made as much like an

actual performance as possible. Few directors stop a final dress rehearsal unless an accident occurs which might endanger someone, for they feel that the entire production company needs the experience of one nonstop performance, be it ever so fraught with errors, before they appear before an audience. Tasks such as singing, speaking in a dialect or with a foreign accent, or learning speeches written in a foreign language.

Apportioning Rehearsal Time

Total time spent in rehearsal and the length of each practice session will depend on the play to be produced and the circumstances surrounding the drama group, title, and so forth. Many directors feel that they must have at least twenty hours of rehearsal time for a one-act play and from sixty to ninety hours for a three-act play, with seventy-five hours being a comfortable norm for a play of average difficulty. Experience alone will enable a director to estimate with any degree of accuracy how much time he will need, plenty of time to study lines and characterizations.

Several factors affect the length of required time. First of all is the director's personal method of working. Some directors can accomplish their objectives more easily by working constantly at full tilt. Others prefer to take longer and go at a steady, leisurely pace. Another factor is the size of the cast. When many actors must be blocked, order to accomplish anything constructive, a rehearsal needs

helped with characterizations, and welded into an acting unit, extra hours will be needed. Also, rehearsal time must be lengthened if the play contains much intricate movement, complicated handling of properties, difficult technical operations, and unusual acting stunts such as singing, speaking in a dialect or with a foreign accent, or learning speeches written in a foreign language. Most directors feel that it is possible to allow too much rehearsal time. Amateur actors, especially, eventually reach a point beyond which they advance very little, and further rehearsals only tend to dull their enthusiasm and general effectiveness. School and community directors who hold evening performances vary in their preferences as to how many weeks rehearsals should span. Some advise taking six weeks or more of somewhat infrequent practices in order to give actors plenty of time to study lines and characterizations. Others think that it is better to begin rehearsals four weeks or less from the performance date and hold them as often as possible, feeling that the smaller the time lapse between practices, the better.

Ideas also vary about the desirable length of the rehearsal session, but most would probably agree that in order to accomplish anything constructive, a rehearsal needs

to be at least two hours long. With enough breaks for relaxation, a group can continue to benefit from rehearsals that last for many hours.

By John Patrick

Few directors find that they can adhere strictly to the schedules they plan, and indeed it is unimportant that they do so. The schedule is just an estimate of how the time will be spent. The director should, if necessary, rearrange it freely to suit the cast's needs as rehearsals progress.

Following are some actual rehearsal schedules drawn up by Dr. Karl C. Bruder and Mr. Charles R. Hill, directors of dramatics at Emporia State Teachers College. Some of these schedules were used for plays presented during the regular fall and spring semester productions. Others were used for summer theatre productions where rehearsal time was limited to one week in all, but nearly all mornings and afternoons of that week were used for rehearsals.

21	Mon.	7:00	ATH	Tryouts
26	Wed.	7:00	SUB	Block Act I
28	Fri.	7:00	ATH	Block Act II
4	Tues.	7:00	SUB	Block Act III
6	Thurs.	7:00	ATH	Review Acts I & II
10	Mon.	7:00	SUB	Acts I & II
12	Wed.	7:00	SUB	Act II No Books
13	Thurs.	7:00	SUB	Acts II & III
14	Fri.	7:00	ATH	Act III No Books
15	Sat.	7:00	ATH	Run through
16	Sun.	7:00	ATH	Run through (All Props, Costumes)
17	Mon.	7:00	ATH	First Tech
18	Tues.	7:00	ATH	Second Tech
19	Wed.	9:15	ATH	Late Run through
20	Thurs.	5:00	SUB	Clean up scenes
21	Fri.	7:00	ATH	Run through (partial dress)
22	Sat.	7:00	ATH	Full Dress and Make-up
23	Sun.	7:00	ATH	Final Dress
24	Mon.	7:00	ATH	Performance

SAMPLE REHEARSAL SCHEDULES

The Hasty HeartThe Tempest or the August Moon

By John Patrick

By John Patrick

Note: All three plays referred to by these schedules were produced on the campus of Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, Kansas, in Albert Taylor Hall, the college theatre. February 19, 20, 21, and 22, 1958, and was directed by Dr. Karl C. Bruder.

The abbreviations in the following schedule stand for Albert Taylor Hall (ATH) and the Student Union Building (SUB). The play was performed March 24, 25, 26, and 27, 1958. Curtain time was 8:15 each evening.

The director was Mr. Charles R. Hill.

Date	Day	Time	Place	Business
Jan. 27	Mon.	7:00		Block Act I
28	Tues.	7:00		Scene 1 and 2
29	Wed.	7:00		Act I, Scene 3
Feb. 23	Sun.	7:00	ATH	Tryouts Act II
24	Mon.	7:00	ATH	Tryouts II, Scene 2 and 3
Feb. 25	Tues.	7:00	ATH	Reading II, Scene 1 and 4
26	Wed.	7:00	SUB	Block Act I
27	Thurs.	7:00	ATH	Review Act I Books
28	Fri.	7:00	ATH	Block Act II
Mar. 3	Mon.	7:00	SUB	Review Acts II & I
4	Tues.	7:00	SUB	Block Act III
5	Wed.	5:00	ATH	Review Acts III & I
6	Thurs.	7:00	ATH	Review Acts I & II 2 and 3
7	Fri.	7:00	ATH	Act I No Books
10	Mon.	7:00	SUB	Acts I & II
11	Tues.	7:00	SUB	Acts II & III No Books
12	Wed.	7:00	SUB	Act II No Books
13	Thurs.	7:00	SUB	Acts II & III
14	Fri.	7:00	ATH	Act III No Books
15	Sat.	7:00	ATH	Run through
16	Sun.	7:00	ATH	Run through (All Props, Costumes)
17	Mon.	7:00	ATH	First Tech
18	Tues.	7:00	ATH	Second Tech
19	Wed.	9:15	ATH	Late Run through
20	Thurs.	5:00	SUB	Clean up scenes
21	Fri.	7:00	ATH	Run through (partial dress)
22	Sat.	7:00	ATH	Full Dress and Make-up
23	Sun.	7:00	ATH	Final Dress
24	Mon.	7:00	ATH	Performance

The Teahouse of the August Moon

You Can't Take It with You

By John Patrick

By Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman

Note: All rehearsals were held in Albert Taylor Hall. The play was presented February 19, 20, 21, and 22, 1958, and was directed by Dr. Karl C. Bruder. All rehearsals were held in Albert Taylor Hall. Director was Mr. Charles R. Hill.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Business</u>	
Jan. 26	Sun.	7:00	Reading
27	Mon.	7:00	Block Act I
July 28	Tues.	7:00	Act I, Scene 1 and 2
29	Wed.	7:00	Act I, Scene 3
30	Thurs.	7:00	Block Act II
31	Fri.	7:00	Act II, Scene 2 and 3
Feb. 1	Sat.	7:00	Act II, Scene 1 and 4
2	Sun.	7:00	Act I Acts I & II
3	Mon.	7:00	Act I No Books
4	Tues.	7:00	Act II Act II
5	Wed.	7:00	Act II No Books
6	Thurs.	7:00	Block Act III
7	Fri.	7:00	Act III, Scene 1
8	Sat.	7:00	Act III, Scene 2 and 3
9	Sun.	7:00	Act III No Books
10	Mon.	7:00	Act II rough
11	Tues.	7:00	Act III No Books
12	Wed.	7:00	Act III Tech
13	Thurs.	7:00	As called
14	Fri.	7:00	First Tech
15	Sat.	7:00	Run through (full dress)
16	Sun.	7:00	Second Tech
17	Mon.	7:00	First dress
18	Tues.	8:15	Final dress
19	Wed.	8:15	Performance

CHAPTER VI

REPORTING THE PLAY

You Can't Take It with You

By Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman

Note: This play was produced July 8 through July 12, 1958, during the Emporia State Summer Theatre season. All rehearsals were held in Albert Taylor Hall. Director was Mr. Charles R. Hill.

Date	Time	Business
July 1 Tues.	9:00	Block Act I
2 Wed.	9:00	Block Act II
	11:00	Review Act I
	1:00	Block Act III
	3:30	Publicity Pictures
3 Thurs.	9:00	Review Acts I & II
	1:00	Act I No Books
	4:00	Review Act II
4 Fri.	9:00	Review Act I
	11:00	Review Act II
	1:00	Act II No Books
	4:00	Review Act III
5 Sat.	9:00	Act III No Books
	1:00	Run through
6 Sun.	2:00	Scenes as needed
	7:00	First Tech
7 Mon.	9:00	Run through
	1:00	Second Tech
	7:00	First Dress (full dress)
8 Tues.	2:15	Final Dress
	8:15	Performance

CHAPTER VI

DIRECTING THE PLAY

characters and watching a script gradually come to life in their comings and goings provide an adventure which may be ranked high among exciting, enriching human experiences.

In general conversation and throughout this handbook the term "directing" is often used in a broad sense to refer to the entire range of a director's duties. Used in that inclusive sense, directing covers every step of production from choosing the script to seeing that the stage is returned to its normal condition after the final performance.

At this point, however, "directing" will be used in its more limited meaning. In this chapter it will mean specifically that process whereby the director helps the whole production crew, but especially the actors, to interpret and to enact the script.

As such, it will also refer to what is for most directors and actors that phase of theatre where the real magic happens--not the flashy, showy, sleight-of-hand magic of make-up, sound effects, and lighting tricks which unfaillingly cast spells over audiences, but the truly mysterious magic that sometimes very slowly, sometimes laboriously, often unexpectedly, but in some way and degree nearly always does transform real-life persons with scripts in their hands into other equally real-life persons who live in the very narrow time and special bounds of a few performances on a stage. Seeing a group of actors mold themselves into their

characters and watching the ideas of a script gradually come to life in their comings and goings provide an adventure which may be ranked high among exciting, enriching human experiences.

(2) Acting is largely a process of learning. If the transformation of an actor's personality into a convincing portrayal of a play character is mysterious, so is the part the director plays in this process. Successful directors of the legitimate theatre, movies, and television certainly do not agree on how a director should guide actors in the interpretation of a role or in the development of a characterization. Many of them feel that there are certain, definable steps that an actor must take in order to come up with a good characterization, and that it is the director's job to interpret the character and lead the actor carefully through these steps. Others contend that each actor must be allowed almost complete freedom to interpret and express the role in his own way.

Nearly every experienced director has his own unique procedure, formed gradually from many directing experiences in which he has learned how his own personality, sensitivity, and temperament can be best utilized in drawing out the acting ability in others and in emerging with desired results from an entire cast.

From the differences of opinion come two generally recognized concepts, both of which, most experts agree, help

to explain the nature of acting and thus also shed light on directing method. The two concepts are that (1) acting is largely a process of developing emotionally into the character of the role, and (2) acting is largely a process of learning the mechanics of effective stage behavior and, for a specific role, perfecting those characteristics which best suggest that role. A director who believed exclusively in the first concept would recommend that actors concentrate on understanding the unexpressed thoughts, the philosophy, the previous experiences, the emotional drives, the desires of the character in order to portray him. On the other hand, a rabid exponent of the second concept would advise actors to learn how to sit, walk, speak, gesture, react facially, enter, and exit on the stage effectively; when working on a role, they should, according to him, observe or recall to mind persons similar to the character to be portrayed and study and then adapt to use their walks, their voices, expressions, gestures, and so forth. Most directors, as stated earlier in the paragraph, do not subscribe exclusively to one or the other concept, but feel that an actor can make use of elements of both these procedures, and when directing, they pay attention to both the emotional development of actors' characterizations and to the mechanics of acting which will help actors project their interpretations clearly.

In this chapter on directing, only the second concept, mechanics, will be discussed. By not dealing with the emotional side of character development there is not the slightest intention to make it seem any less important than the other. The reason emotional development will not be discussed is that recommended procedures here are highly personal, highly controversial, and there are many of them, making a full discussion of them beyond the limits of this organizational outline of play production. On the other hand, most experienced directors agree on the elementary mechanics of acting, and certain do's and don't's can be offered to the inexperienced director which will enable him to see specific ways he can better his actors' performances. The new director would do well to read up on several of these differing ideas on character development. Sections dealing with this aspect of directing which appear in books by recognized authorities on play production are listed at the end of this chapter.

Chapter V of this handbook, THE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE, divided rehearsals into five groups, each with specific goals. Hence, the directing hints which follow are given under the headings of these same five types of rehearsals. At some time during the period of rehearsals of each type, the director is encouraged to see that the points mentioned under that heading receive attention. Of course, it must be

understood that this chart of when to do what is not to be adhered to rigidly. For example, under Polishing Rehearsals it is recommended that the director be sure that everyone's voice is loud and distinct enough so that it can be heard throughout the auditorium. It is hoped, however, that many actors' voices will have these two qualities from the very beginning. The point is mentioned under Polishing Rehearsals so the director will remember at that time to take special note of voices as he listens to rehearsals. He can then work with any actors who cannot be understood. The same principle applies to many of the other suggestions.

There is an old saying that warns: "Rules were made to be broken." This thought applies also to these principles of acting. Nearly any director will emerge with an interestingly presented play if he will rely first of all on his own judgment of what is effective and only secondly on rules and principles. It is generally believed that the principles which follow produce good results in the ordinary scene, but occasionally, when a special effect is desired, perhaps it would hamper the actor to observe the pertaining rule. However, plays have many average, ordinary scenes in which the actor and director can make good use of these principles.

strong, positive ~~Blocking Rehearsals~~ scene. Perhaps his is

a very small part of the scene, but there is a reason for his

By the time blocking rehearsals are called, the director should already have his actors' moves planned. He already knows that in the opening scene the worried young man is to rise from his chair at the desk and walk rapidly

to the fireplace, get a cigarette, and go sit on the sofa.

However, when the actor goes through these moves, he may

for some reason be doing them in such a way that he looks awkward, his facial expression cannot be seen as he gets up from the chair, or in some other way he may fail to give the desired impression in these moves. The director can use

the following list of general principles of acting to check

his blocking as the actors walk through their moves and

perhaps gain insight into how he can help them make the

moves smoother and more effective.

The blocking principles are given under two head-

ings: those that apply to every individual actor as he moves

about the stage, and those that help establish certain rela-

tionships actors need to maintain when they are part of an

acting group.

Blocking the individual actor. The underlying purpose

of rules guiding the moves of the individual actor is to

keep the actor in the best possible position for being seen

and heard at all times when onstage so that he can make a

strong, positive contribution to each scene. Perhaps his is a very small part of the scene, but there is a reason for his being there, nevertheless, or the playwright would not have bothered to write in the part. Therefore, each actor onstage must be positioned so he can carry out his role effectively.

Now to contradict, seemingly, a statement made earlier that rules were made to be broken, for here is one that should always be observed. In a larger sense, though, the thought about to be offered is not so much a rule of acting as it is a psychological theory or, to venture a not unsupported opinion, even a psychological fact. It is the belief that there is a reason, an explanation, either physiological or psychological, for every human act. People don't say and do things accidentally; behind every action there is a cause.

In acting, then, this theory demands that every move of every actor be clearly motivated. Furthermore, in order for this motive to be obvious to the audience, the actor himself must be fully conscious of it. If the father moves to the fireplace, it should be obvious to the audience at the time or perhaps explained in succeeding dialogue or action why he does so, or the audience will be confused and the scene will be thus weakened by an action which contributes nothing and may even appear unnatural and therefore

distracting. Actually, many times a director's real purpose for moving actors is to get them out of the way for the next bit of action. In this case, he may need to invent reasons for the moves. The above father, for example, could indicate that he is bored by his companions and wander listlessly to the fireplace to stare into the glowing coals. Another way might be deliberately to leave his keys on the mantle earlier in the scene; then his motivation for the cross to the fireplace would be to retrieve them. The experienced director and actor automatically search for a motive for every stage movement.

Avoids shifting his weight from foot to foot.

This motivation factor should be kept in mind as the director studies the following elementary blocking principles which ordinarily apply to an actor's common stage moves.

Standing positions

- a. Keeps his face toward the audience as much as possible. An actor should face full front for most emphasis. During his less important scenes a side or three-quarter view of the actor takes him out of the center of attention but still allows a partial view of his face.
- b. Stands in front of props as a rule rather than behind them. He especially avoids lamps and tall objects which obscure the face.

Facing an actor who is speaking.

- c. "Sneaks" into visible position when another actor gets in front of him. Sometimes after much movement one actor unintentionally blocks another from view of the audience. It is the responsibility of the upstage or blocked actor to move slightly to the left or right into a good position. This slight movement is called "sneaking," for it is not a definite, planned move.
- d. Stands still (unless a sneak is necessary). Avoids shifting his weight from foot to foot, aimless side-stepping or rocking-chair forward steps on lines, and backing up--unless definitely directed to make those moves.

Crosses

- a. Ordinarily makes a cross while giving his line, instead of crossing, then speaking, or speaking, then crossing. Sometimes, however, it may be better to walk while another actor is speaking if the director wishes to focus attention on this move rather than on the other actor's line. Other times it may facilitate a difficult shifting of positions if the actor makes an unobtrusive crossover behind an actor who is speaking.

- b. Starts walking with upstage foot. If he is standing on the actor's left half of the stage facing toward center stage, his upstage foot is his right foot. By leading with this foot, he keeps his body faced more toward the audience. Leading with the other foot would throw the left side of his body forward into action and hide the rest of him. All stage movement should begin on the upstage foot.
- c. When turning, turns so that the arc he makes swings his face toward the audience. When he rises from a chair and walks around behind it, he rises and goes in the direction which will present his face to the audience instead of his back.
- d. Goes from one spot to another in a straight line, as a rule, for in real life it is the natural route to take to a destination. But if the actor wishes to show that he is mulling over a problem, wandering restlessly, or is emotionally disturbed, he may better project his feelings by going around furniture or by starting off in one direction, changing his mind, and striding away in a different direction.

- e. Crosses in front of props and other actors so that his move will be in full view of the audience. However, he should not go completely out of his way to do so. If a cross behind someone or something would be easier

Blocking a group of actors. Guiding the director in

and more natural, he should by all means take his blocking of two or more actors is his conception of that path if he can at the same time maintain where the emphasis of the scene lies. His goal is to position his desired prominence in the scene.

tion and reposition actors so that attention is continually

Sitting positions

focused on the actor who has the key lines or action. He

- a. Sits so that he is still in plain view of the audience, not hidden by a prop or another actor. He does so by (1) placing actors in a deliberate relationship to each other, and (2) using the entire stage area to give variety and emphasis to actors' positions, realizing that

the actors are viewed against the background of the whole

stage as if they were a picture in a frame.

Entrances

a. Enters in front of props and goes in a straight line usually to center stage or the center of the action. Avoids entering and standing

just inside the doorway; he may not be noticed there.

- b. Enters with upstage foot leading.

a. When two actors converse, they face each other, presenting side views to the audience.

b. When three actors converse, they form a triangle. The upstage apex of the triangle is the position of strongest emphasis.

Exits

- a. Exits in a straight line in front of props and other actors.

b. Exits with upstage foot leading.

c. Usually exits while giving a line. There are many possible exceptions to this rule. He

may exit after making a strong reaction to another actor's line but saying nothing himself. Or he may exit with a group without having a line to speak, together conversing,

Blocking a group of actors. Guiding the director in his blocking of two or more actors is his conception of where the emphasis of the scene lies. His goal is to position and reposition actors so that attention is continually focused on the actor who has the key lines or action. He does so by (1) placing actors in a deliberate relationship to each other, and (2) using the entire stage area to give variety and emphasis to actors' positions, realizing that the actors are viewed against the background of the whole stage as if they were a picture in a frame.

Positioning actors relative to each other

- a. When two actors converse, they face each other, presenting side views to the audience.
- b. When three actors converse, they form a triangle. The upstage apex of the triangle is the position of strongest emphasis.
- c. When more than three actors are in a scene, they form a rough semicircle. They should not stand or sit in a straight line. Neither, however, should they be lined up in a

symmetrical half circle like the girls' all as choir. Any perfect symmetry of position should be avoided. It is natural when two

- d. When two or more enter together conversing, the actor speaking should enter last. Otherwise he would have to throw his words over his shoulder to his companions, thereby weakening his entrance.

Making use of the "stage picture"

- a. Use the entire stage area at some time, not just the center spot.
- b. Use all stage props at some time if possible.
- c. Vary positions of actors often enough to keep the stage picture interesting and natural.
- d. Play important scenes downstage.
- e. Use spacial relationships to symbolize various emotions. Dr. Milton Smith, associate professor of dramatic arts and director of Brander Matthews Theater at Columbia University, in his book, Play Production, lists the following five psychological, intellectual, or emotional situations of drama and suggests that these situations can be made quite graphic to an audience by translating them

ladies are leaving a public house

into symbolic physical situations as well as through stage movement. and a third char-

(1) Opposition. It is natural when two people fist-fight for them to stand opposite each other to start swinging. Psychic opposition or "fighting" can be dramatically illustrated by arranging actors with conflicting ideas or desires opposite each other, also. During a scene perhaps a family discussion is taking place and a difference of opinion arises. The idea of conflict and opposition will be much clearer and more interesting if the actors of one opinion are grouped in one area and the other group is arranged together opposite them.

(2) Intervention. When a scene contains a physical struggle of some kind and calls for another actor to break it up, nearly every director would have the intervening character place himself between the two antagonists in order to stop their struggling. Psychic intervention can be illustrated in this same way. If two ladies are having a quite composed

conversation which nevertheless contains a difference of opinion and a third character interrupts them to offer a compromise, his intervention is much stronger if he actually moves between them. ~~that, and~~

(3) Change of mind. Change of mind has quite clearly taken place when during a ^{Shaping Rehearsals} gang fight a boy leaves his old pals and

With these lines up with the enemy to fight with them.

actors' character, Change of mind which does not involve ideas of the play, physical violence can be illustrated by an mechanics of scene, appropriate change of position. If a the actor in his mother sides with one child against another, tive grouping of the change can be made dramatic if she

will go stand beside the child with whom Building scenes. Every play is a series of small she agrees.

scenes, each with an idea to put forth or an event to enact. The complete series of these small ideas and events together fully explain the theme of the play. Hence, it is essential that the actors understand the underlying purpose of each scene and interpret it clearly so its idea is obvious to the audience. Psychic enmeshing can be shown by a group of relatives surrounding a very rich and

very old uncle whose favor they seek.

Of course, everything an actor does and says affects the scene positively or negatively, but there are some rather standard general ways of bringing the main idea of a scene into sharp focus.

(4) Enmeshing. An obvious example of this enmeshing movement occurs when policemen surround a criminal and close in on him. (5) Pounding. A physical example of this situation is seen when one person runs to another, hits him, then runs away out of

Lines reach. Many arguments involve this pounding idea. If the victim is seated, his attacker may step close to him to deliver some stinging remarks, then back away, think of an even more biting epithet, and stride back to fling this speech at him. Silence afterwards.

Shaping Rehearsals

b. Group the sentences of long lines into para-

With these rehearsals begins the formative stage of actors' characterizations and the interpretations of the ideas of the play, scene by scene. A knowledge of the mechanics of scene building will enable the director to aid the actor in his character portrayal and to achieve effective grouping of thought and action.

a. Be sure that individual actor blocking and Building scenes. Every play is a series of small scenes, each with an idea to put forth or an event to enact. Group blocking emphasize the most important moments of the scene. This is one way to make The complete series of these small ideas and events together the climax of the scene strong and outstanding. Hence, it is essential that the actors understand the underlying purpose of each scene and interpret it clearly so its idea is obvious to the audience. Use bits of pantomime or other stage business

to point up important lines and moments. For Of course, everything an actor does and says affects the scene positively or negatively, but there are some rather standard general ways of bringing the main idea of a scene into sharp focus. the late relative's estate announces to the

Lines assembled survivors that, contrary to every-

- a. Search for the key thoughts in lines and for key lines and give them special emphasis, maybe by increasing the intensity of the voice, preceding the line with a pause, or having a period of stunned or reflective silence afterwards.
- b. Group the sentences of long lines into paragraphs of thought. When beginning a new such paragraph, indicate transition to a new

In this thought by a change of voice pitch, rate, or major problem, intensity, or by a gesture or change of position. In this thought by a change of voice pitch, rate, or major problem, intensity, or by a gesture or change of position. In this thought by a change of voice pitch, rate, or major problem, intensity, or by a gesture or change of position.

Movement play constantly moves forward, is always interesting. Be sure that individual actor blocking and

group blocking emphasize the most important moments of the scene. This is one way to make lines, movement, and business a part of the polishing process. In addition, the director further develops his scenes by concentrating on pacing and on thought transitions.

Business

- a. Use bits of pantomime or other stage business to point up important lines and moments. For example during a scene in which the executor of the late relative's estate announces to the late relative's estate announces to the

assembled survivors that, contrary to everyone's belief, there is no fortune to be divided, the characters can make the announcement seem more astounding and illustrate their surprise by such pieces of business as sinking back into chairs slack-jawed, dropping objects they are holding, and staggering to tables for support.

As has already been suggested, a change of the pace of the lines can show transitions. A

Polishing Rehearsals

In this phase of the rehearsal period, the director's major problem, as far as acting mechanics are concerned, is to see that the central ideas of the scenes are brought out clearly and that the play constantly moves forward, is always interesting and vital.

Further scene building. Continued close attention to lines, movement, and business is a part of the polishing process. In addition, the director further develops his scenes by concentrating on pacing and on thought transition.

Pacing is a instinct for effectively coordinating his lines. See that the action and lines move along at these qualities a speed appropriate to the mood of the scene.

Another If the scene is an argument which gets more and more violent, climaxing in one character's

prevent dead slapping another, the effect of the slap will be heightened if the preceding action moves faster and faster to the climax. Then during the following period of remorse or reconciliation a slow, deliberate tempo can accentuate this mood.

Transition that he is striding in, or strolling in,

- a. Make the beginning of a new scene clear. As has already been suggested, a change of the
- b. pace of the lines can show transition. A pause, movement, a change in emphasis, a change in vocal pitch, or even a gesture can indicate the end of one train of thought
- c. involving everyone onstage and the beginning of a new situation.

General timing. Timing is a very necessary part of dynamic acting. The pacing of a scene has already been mentioned as being a vital element in putting across its proper emphasis. An actor's sense of just the right moment to perform a gesture, his instinct for effectively coordinating his lines and his movement in the atmosphere of the scene-- these qualities illustrate his personal timing ability.

Another aspect of timing is keeping entrances, exits, and cues moving along smoothly and quickly in order to

prevent dead spots and a general bogging down of action. Directors can caution actors about the following points.

Entrances

- a. Make entrances definite movements into the scene. Attention will be on an entering actor immediately, so he should clearly indicate that he is striding in, or strolling in, or thoughtfully wandering in, not simply coming onstage to get into the act.
- b. Be in character when entering, not a few moments later. An actor should assume the facial expression, posture, and mental attitude of his character while still offstage.
- c. Make entrances early enough so that the entering actor is onstage on time. There should be no wait for his lines. If the sight of him is to interrupt dialogue, he must be there so that onstage actors can react without awkwardly pausing until they can see him.

Exits

- a. Make exits a definite kind of movement. As in making entrances, actors should stride, stroll, wander, sneak, and so forth, from the stage, not simply go into the wings.

- b. Maintain character until completely out of sight.
- c. Time exits so that the actor gets off the set at the desired moment. Actors left onstage should not have to wait to resume dialogue unless a pause is planned. On the other hand, all the exit line should be spoken before the actor gets out of sight unless the director wishes to give the impression of conversation being continued as the actor or actors leave the area.

Cues

- a. Lines should ordinarily follow each other with not the slightest pause between them. They should slightly overlap, if anything.
- b. When interrupting a speaker, begin to speak before the first speaker has stopped. The speaker who is interrupted should know what would have been said if he had been allowed to continue the line. This knowledge will give more meaning to the line, and, if sometime he is not interrupted in time, he can go ahead and ad lib until his fellow actor picks up his cue.

- c. There should never be a pause before sound effects, light moves, or other technical happenings which are supposed to break into lines or action.

Other polishing details. Much could be said about each of the following points. Because of the limitations of this handbook, they are given brief treatment in relation to their importance in producing interesting plays.

Group acting

- a. All onstage characters should constantly listen to the actor speaking and react to what is said and done. The entire group should always be acting, not just the person with the line. The speaking actor needs the support of his listeners to help make his lines meaningful.

Maintaining characterizations

- a. Actors should maintain their characterizations every moment that they are onstage. The moment they fail to speak or move in character, they risk breaking the illusion of the play's reality.

Stage Gestures

When actors are going through lines and blocking. Stage gestures should be big, wide, forceful and should be motions which can be seen plainly and unmistakably from the stage and interpreted by the audience. They can use in b. When gesturing and carrying objects with one hand, use the upstage hand so as not to cover the face or the body. c. Have a variety of gestures. Avoid use of any one gesture too often. The gesture should always be appropriate to the thought it accompanies. If the actor keeps this point in mind, his gestures will not become monotonous. Business of what has happened.

a. Make certain any stage business is performed in plain view and is emphasized so that the audience does not miss seeing it. Voice or turn to look frantically toward the stage manager. b. Make sure every actor is speaking loud enough to be heard everywhere in the auditorium. c. Check actors' voices for distinctness. Sometimes a loud voice is hard to understand because of sluggish enunciation, frequent mispronunciations, or perhaps because the voice is muffled by a costume or prop.

Memorization. When actors are going through lines and blocking for the first time without books, the director should see that they develop good habits in calling for a line from the stage manager. A good habit is one that they can use in actual performances should they need to do so, one which makes the memory lapse as undisturbing to the audience as possible. A very widely used system is for the actor to hold the position and facial expression of his character and simply say "Line" in an ordinary tone of voice that will easily carry to the stage manager in the wings. Usually as soon as he is given the first few words he can go ahead with the line and resume the scene so quickly that many times an audience is unaware of what has happened.

A moment of forgetfulness can completely shatter the mood of the play if the actor allows himself to exclaim, "Oh, my goodness!", or snap his fingers, or run his hand through his hair, or turn to look frantically toward the stage manager for help. The time to prevent spontaneous nervous reactions of this kind is during rehearsals. An actor can easily develop the habit of maintaining his characterization and calling "Line". Then if he should forget during performance, he will almost always automatically do as he has done in rehearsals.

At the final non-stop dress rehearsal, the director may find it valuable to invite a few people to attend to

Technical Rehearsals

All actual stage and hand props, sets, light moves, sound effects, costumes, and perhaps make-up are used during rehearsals for the first time at this stage of the schedule. The director's goals are two-fold. First, he must see that actors learn to use unaccustomed technical equipment naturally, that they appear at home with it. Perhaps scenes will have to be repeated to allow them to practice with difficult objects such as dainty tea cups and saucers, stubborn window latches, and the like.

Secondly, he must make sure that all technicians clearly understand their moves and that they write each move and its cue on a cue sheet. The director may need to pause during breaks in the action to give technicians time to straighten out their moves, decide who is to do what, and write down cues.

Dress Rehearsals

If two dress rehearsals are held, the first one can be used to make a final check and needed corrections of technical moves as well as a complete costume and make-up run-through.

At the final non-stop dress rehearsal, the director may find it valuable to invite a few people to attend to another procedure is to have the actors stationed in two

provide a practice audience. Their presence will make the rehearsal seem even more like a real performance, and this is precisely what the director wants. This rehearsal should be absolutely non-stop, with everyone maintaining performance conditions. Actors will thus get some experience in "covering" any mistakes, such as forgotten lines, technical blunders, or minor onstage accidents--knocking over a lamp, dropping a dish, or being left high and dry with a lighter which will not light. ~~Manager should signal the curtain man to end the~~ calls. They will also be able to get experience in holding for laughs, a most essential detail if the play is a comedy. ~~The Director's Duties Between Final Dress~~ Holding for laughs is the practice of freezing all lines and movement when the audience is laughing at the previous line or bit of action, then resuming the dialogue when the laughter has begun to subside and lines can again be heard. During this time actors must stay in character and remain where they are. The heartiest laughs rarely exceed six seconds; the audience will not be aware of stopped action. ~~out of the picture~~ Immediately following the final curtain of the last dress rehearsal is the time many directors choose to rehearse curtain calls. They have previously planned in what order actors should arrange themselves and what they should do during each call. Some directors like to have actors enter one at a time, bow, and line up along the front of the stage. Another procedure is to have the actors stationed in two

or three groups about the set when the curtain rises for the first call. Other directors prefer that actors simply line up for the calls and perhaps smile and bow when the curtain rises. Some vary their procedures, using the one which seems appropriate to the mood of the play.

Whatever kind is used, it should be executed swiftly. Actors should get in their positions immediately after the last act curtain, and, as soon as applause begins to dwindle, the stage manager should signal the curtain man to end the calls. The books listed in Chapter VII of this handbook

The Director's Duties Between Final Dress

Rehearsal and Strike

When final dress rehearsal is over and the director has completed making his comments to the cast and crew, most experienced theatre people, actors and directors alike, recommend a difficult task for the director. It is that he turn the show over to the stage manager and step out of the picture until time to direct the strike. This is an indirect way of suggesting that he keep "hands off" during performances. S. Crafts & Co., 1925.

His technical crew by now knows what to do backstage, the actors are as well trained as they ever will be, the house manager is taking care of the audience, and the stage manager has a grip on all the reins. It is the opinion of

experts that this staff can function much more efficiently without the director's nervous presence.

He is allowed, by these experts, to make a short pep talk to the cast and crew shortly before curtain time and to extend congratulations after performances, but his directing, in the limited sense of the word, should cease after final dress rehearsal.

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The books listed in Chapter VII of this handbook under "Inclusive Works Covering Acting, Directing, and Stagecraft" also contain sections on acting and directing.

This list is by no means exhaustive of the existing literature on either acting or directing. These references were chosen because of their special value to the inexperienced actor and director.

Selden, Samuel, First Principles of Play Direction. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1937.

Acting

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Dolman, John, Jr., The Art of Acting. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940.

Franklin, Miriam A., Rehearsal. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1949.

- Kjerbuhl-Petersen, Lorenz, Psychology of Acting. Boston: Expression Company Publishers, 1935.
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- Selden, Samuel, First Steps in Acting. New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1947.
- Strickland, F. Cowles, The Technique of Acting. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1956.
- Young, Stark, Theatre Practice. New York: Clark Scribner's Sons, 1926.
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- Dean, Alexander, Fundamentals of Play Directing. New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1946.
- Hunt, Hugh, The Director in the Theatre. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1954.
- Lees, C. Lowell, Play Production and Direction. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951.
- Selden, Samuel, First Principles of Play Direction. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1937.

In organizing each of the six technical areas--set construction, props, lights, sound effects, costumes, and make-up--the director should first of all study his script carefully to see just what are the technical needs of the

CHAPTER VII

THE TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

To many a first-time director the technical side of play production must seem absolutely to demand the services of six different highly skilled craftsmen. To one lone, inexperienced newcomer, the direction of these complex activities, many of which may be completely foreign to him, such as designing costumes of a certain period or getting a particular effect with make-up, must appear to be a staggering problem.

Here again, as in many of the other phases of direction, the new director must rely heavily on his imagination and native good judgment and realize that directors with vast experience with the stage arts have never learned enough tricks to allow them to quit using their full allotments of inventiveness in creating stage effects and common sense in deciding what looks good onstage. With these two qualities freely operating plus the help of some thoughtful organizing, the solving of technical problems can be one of the most fascinating phases of production.

In organizing each of the six technical areas--set construction, props, lights, sound effects, costumes, and make-up--the director should first of all study his script carefully to see just what are the technical needs of the

show. He determines these needs by reading through each act and noting the sets the author calls for, the type and number of props, the sound effects described in the italicized staging notes, the lighting suggested for each scene, the costuming and make-up needs of the special character roles, and also any unusual onstage tricks that need to be accomplished, such as those in the suspense-filled horror play, Dracula. In one scene the spirit of Count Dracula invades a framed picture on the wall and from there casts a spell over the maid by following her movements with an outstretched arm, causing her to do his bidding. Another example is in Blithe Spirit when the two dead wives of the leading man come back to haunt him. They become angry at him and, unseen by the audience, start throwing vases, ash trays, and lamps. Pictures fall off walls, objects crash to the floor, and general mayhem reigns as the final curtain falls.

After he has read the technical suggestions for the entire play, the director should then go through the script again and decide exactly which effects he will try to attain. He may decide to follow the script's suggestions just as they are, or, as is more often the case, he may find that with his theatre, equipment, and staff some changes are necessary. It should be remembered that many scripts are written with the professional theatres of Broadway in mind, theatres that are equipped to achieve intricate technical effects

with comparative ease. Most amateur directors find it possible to simplify many of the requirements described in scripts, eliminate others completely, and still give very interesting productions. For instance, to effect the final chaotic scene of Elithe Spirit mentioned above, the script suggests using a list of seven different tricks, one of which involves rigging a certain type of phonograph lid so that it can be slammed from offstage several times. This bit of action could easily be eliminated if this certain type of lid is not available, and the scene would not be seriously impaired. In another scene of Dracula it is suggested that Count Dracula's leap through a window be accomplished with wires attached to him which pull him up and make him seem to turn into a bat before the audience's eyes--a complicated bit of maneuvering for the average amateur group. This leap can be greatly simplified yet give the same impression if the Count merely stands upstage of and next to the window and takes a springing, Superman-type leap upward out the window in a downstage direction into the waiting arms of a couple of technicians (they catch him in order to prevent a disillusioning thud when he lands). It is far more important to master whatever stage effects are attempted and perform them smoothly during performances than it is to try to accomplish every fancy trick in the book.

Directors often find the special sections in the front or back pages of many playbooks very helpful in technical planning. Some scripts include suggestions for attaining any special effects called for in the course of the play. Other valuable aids are stage prop lists for each act and hand prop lists for each character, lighting plots, floor plans for sets, diagrams of arrangements of stage props, a list of the type and number of costumes each character needs, and sometimes a section describing the character roles and suggestions for their make-up. Some of these aids are quite valuable. Others are rather useless to the amateur director because they are not thoroughly explained or they suggest plans much too complex for a meagerly equipped theatre. However, the suggestions are certainly worth consideration, for they may provide ideas which can be adapted for use, if not followed literally.

Having considered all of the technical problems, the director should have a definite list of desired effects. He can now meet with the stage manager and outline in detail the sets to be built. He can present the prop manager with a final list of props to be gathered, the costume mistress with a description of each character's costume needs, a specific technician with each of the special onstage effects to be accomplished, and so forth. At this point it is most

important that each task be definitely assigned to someone for completion.

Part of the director's task, of course, is to advise the technicians in working out their problems. The new director will probably need to extend the same advice that an experienced director would: invent, borrow, and study. When a scene calls for an onstage trick, the technician should experiment until he comes up with a way of making it work. If a garden nose is needed in Act II and one cannot be located in the theatre building or among the possessions of the members of the drama group, the prop chairman may have to borrow one from a community resident. If some new scenery must be built and neither the director nor the stage crew has had experience in stagecraft, they will need to read a good explanation of how to construct and paint flats.

As was stated in the introduction to the handbook, this chapter will not go into a discussion of technical methods and principles. A treatment of any of the six phases thorough enough to be of help to the new director would be a task beyond the scope of this endeavor.

Following are references to some entire books and to sections of others which will give the new director valuable information in all six technical areas.

Cornberg, Sol, and Emanuel L. Gebauer, A Stage Crew Handbook. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941.

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Holms, Hiram. Inclusive Works Covering Acting, Directing, and Stagecraft

All four of the following books contain good material on the six technical areas. The director would find it very helpful to own the Dolman, the Gassner, or the Smith book to use as a reference for directing problems. The Shaffer book is not quite as thorough, but its value lies in its clear, brief explanations, its many big illustrations, and its samples of production charts and forms.

Dolman, John, Jr., Art of Play Production. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946.

Gassner, John, Producing the Play Together with the New Scene Technician's Handbook. New York: The Dryden Press, 1948.

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Philippi, Herbert, Stagecraft and Scene Design. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1953. Chap. I - V, pp. 1 - 163.

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Properties

Adix, Vern, Theatre Scenecraft. Anchorage, Kentucky: Children's Theatre Press, 1956. Chap. IX, pp. 139-154, and Chap. XI, pp. 165-192.

Cornberg, Sol, and Emanuel L. Gebauer, A Stage Crew Handbook. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941. Chap. IV, pp. 120-127.

Philippi, Herbert, Stagecraft and Scene Design. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1953. Chap. VIII, pp. 214-306.

Lighting

Adix, Vern, Theatre Scenecraft. Anchorage, Kentucky: Children's Theatre Press, 1956. Chap. XIII, pp. 201-222, and Chap. XIV, pp. 223-224.

Cornberg, Sol, and Emanuel L. Gebauer, A Stage Crew Handbook. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941. Chap. VI, pp. 137-168.

Philippi, Herbert, Stagecraft and Scene Design. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1953. Chap. IX, pp. 307-353.

Sound Effects

Adix, Vern, Theatre Scenecraft. Anchorage, Kentucky: Children's Theatre Press, 1956. Chap. X, pp. 156-164.

Cornberg, Sol, and Emanuel L. Gebauer, A Stage Crew Handbook. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941. Chap. V, pp. 128-136.

Philippi, Herbert, Stagecraft and Scene Design. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1953. Chap. X, pp. 354-369.

Within the classifications Make-Up companies are listed

by states. The director can therefore easily find his nearest

Crafton, Allen, and Jessica Royer, Acting. New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1928. Chap. VIII, pp. 240-279.

Corson, Richard, Stage Make-Up. New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1946.

Lane, Yoti, Stage Make-Up. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Northwestern Press, 1950.

Liszt, Rudolph G., The Last Word in Make-Up. New York: Contemporary Play Production, 1938.

Strenkovsky, Serge, The Art of Make-Up. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1943.

Below are listed the names and addresses of suppliers

Costumes

used by the Theatre Department of Kansas State Teachers

Barton, Lucy, Historic Costume for the Stage. Boston: W. H. Baker, 1935. (Highly recommended)

Brooke, Iris, and James Laver, English Costume from the Fourteenth Through the Nineteenth Century. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1937.

Wilcox, R. Turner, The Mode in Costume. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.

Hence, this list may be of slightly greater value to directors in the Mid West, but directors anywhere in the country

ADDRESSES OF THEATRICAL SUPPLIERS

A very useful catalogue of addresses for every play director is Simon's Directory of Theatrical Materials,

Services, and Information. The directory covers the entire

United States and Canada and lists where to buy, rent, lease, or find out about "everything needed for the production of stage attractions and the management of theatres." Addresses are classified under the various types of stage equipment. Within the classifications the supply companies are listed by states. The director can therefore easily find his nearest source of supply or information for anything in production material.

These directories sell for \$2.50. To order one, write Great Western Stage Equipment Co., 1324 Grand Ave., Kansas City 6, Mo.

Carpenter Bernard Simon

Belmont Jobbing Co., 3180 N. Clark St., Chicago 1784 Broadway

Hardware New York 19, New York

Below are listed the names and addresses of suppliers used by the Theatre Department of Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, Kansas. Some of the companies are used because they are located nearby, since mailing costs are a consideration when ordering large quantities of supplies. Others are recommended regardless of distance because they have proved to be the economical and reliable places to buy. Hence, this list may be of slightly greater value to directors in the Mid West, but directors anywhere in the country may find it of some use.

Tobacco cloth

Clinton Cotton Mills, Clinton, South Carolina

Set Construction

General Supplies

Great Western Stage Equipment Co., 1435 Grand Ave.,
Kansas City 6, Mo.

Leather

Canvas and muslin
Astrup Company, 39 Walker St., N. Y. 13, N. Y.

Novelt
Howe & Bainbridge, 220 Commercial St., Boston 13,
Opt. Mass.

Orient
Paramount Textile Mills, 34 Walker St., N. Y. 13,
N. Y.

Curtaining

Great Western Stage Equipment Co., 1324 Grand Ave.,
Kansas City 6, Mo.

Grommets

Belmont Jobbing & Supply Co., 3180 N. Clark St.,
Chicago 14, Ill.

Hardware

Bush, Mize, and Silliman Hardware Co., Atchison,
Kansas

J. R. Clancy, Inc., Syracuse, New York

Paint brushes

Gothic Color Co., 90 Ninth Ave., N. Y. 11, N. Y.

George E. Watson Co., 417 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago 5,
Ill.

Scenery Paint

Gothic Color Co., 90 Ninth Ave., N. Y. 11, N. Y.

Scrim

Premier Studios, Inc., 414 W. 45th St., N. Y. 36,
N. Y.

Theatre Production Service, 45 W. 46th St., N. Y. 36,
N. Y.

Tobacco cloth

Clinton Cotton Mills, Clinton, South Carolina

Properties

- Celastick**
Ben Walters, Inc., 125 W. 26th St., N. Y. 1, N. Y.
- Leather**
Wholesale Import Co., Box 12, Dept. S., San Gabriel,
Calif.
- Novelties** Costumes
Optican Bros., 300 W. 9th St., Kansas City 6, Mo.
- Oriental props**
Miya Company, Inc., 39 E. 28th, N. Y. 16, N. Y.
- Costumes**
Harris Costume Co., Lighting W. 46th St., N. Y., N. Y.
Kansas City University Costume Rental Service, c/o
General Lighting Needs Co., 51st and Holmes, Kansas City 10,
Capitol Stage Lighting Co., 527 W. 45th St., N. Y. 36,
N. Y.
Partnership Costume House, Inc., 413 Nicollet Ave.,
Century Lighting Co., 521 W. 43rd St., N. Y. 36, N. Y.
Columbia Stage Lighting Co., 341 W. 47th St., N. Y. 19,
N. Y.
- Costume** Kliegl Bros., 321 W. 50th St., N. Y. 19, N. Y.
Marilyn Arts Co. (for rhinestones, sequins, etc.),
3561 Larimer St., Denver 5, Colorado
- Gelatin**
Great Western Stage Equipment Co., 1324 Grand Ave.,
Kansas City 6, Mo.
Studios City Station, N. Holly-
wood, California
Paramount Cosmetics and Theatrical Supplies, 242 W.
27th St., N. Y. 1, N. Y. 640, Houston 1, Texas
- Costume** Roscoe Laboratories, 29 Moore St., Brooklyn 6, N. Y.
Red Wing Products, Bellerose 6, N. Y.
- Dyes** Sound Effects
Fenandie and Sperrle, Inc., 265 Fulton St., N. Y. 7,
N. Y.
Sound effects records for a specific play are usually
Fabrics
obtained from the playbook publishing company, Ill.
Bisen's, 2300 McGee, Kansas City, Mo.

Exp-pel Fabrics, Inc. Make-Up Broadway, Kansas City 5,
Mo.

General Needs Fabrics Corp., 150 S. Wabash, Chicago, Ill.
Paramount Cosmetics and Theatrical Supplies, 242 W.
South 27th St., N. Y. 1, N. Y. P. O. Box 640,
Houston, Texas

Theatre House, 412 Vine St., Cincinnati 2, Ohio

Feathers

Hamgrove Feather Co., Inc., 39 N. 39th St., N. Y. 18,
N. Y.

Costumes

Jewelry

Costume rental Stiefel Co., 700 - 709 12th & Walnut Bldg.,
Colorado Costume Co., 1751 Champa St., Denver,
Colorado

Notions

Eaves Costume Co., Inc., 151 W. 46th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Opera Kansas City University Costume Rental Service, c/o
Star KCU Playhouse, 51st and Holmes, Kansas City 10,
Mo.

Tights

Northwestern Costume House, Inc., 413 Nicollet Ave.,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Western Costume Co., 533 Melrose Ave., Hollywood 38,
Calif.

Robinson's, 1016 Main St., Kansas City 5, Mo.

Costume supplies

Marilyn Arts Co. (for rhinestones, sequins, etc.),
3561 Larimer St., Denver 5, Colorado

Philmar, P. O. Box 1216, Studio City Station, N. Holly-
wood, California

Southern Importers, P. O. Box 640, Houston 1, Texas

Costume rack markers

Red Wing Products, Bellerose 6, N. Y.

Dyes

Fezandie and Sperrle, Inc., 205 Fulton St., N. Y. 7,
N. Y.

Fabrics

Dazian's, 125 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago 2, Ill.

Eisen's, 2300 McGee, Kansas City, Mo.

Kap-pel Fabrics, Inc., 1026 Broadway, Kansas City 5,
Mo.

Maharam Fabric Corp., 150 S. Wabash, Chicago, Ill.

Southern Importers and Exporters, P. O. Box 640,
Houston, Texas

Feathers

Mangrove Feather Co., Inc., 39 W. 38th St., N. Y. 18,
N. Y.

Jewelry

Norman S. Stiefel Co., 700 - 709 12th & Walnut Bldg.,
Kansas City 6, Mo.

Notions

Frisby's, 1517 W. 6th St., Topeka, Kansas

Opera hose

State Sales Co., 65 W. Harrison St., Chicago 5, Ill.

Tights

Ben and Sally Dance Footwear, 1576 Broadway, N. Y.,
N. Y.

Capezio's, 15 E. Washington St., Chicago, Ill.

Robinson's, 1016 Main St., Kansas City 5, Mo.

State Sales Co., 65 W. Harrison St., Chicago 5, Ill.

forms of entertainment to see a good play, for the legitimate theatre alone offers that exciting experience of seeing real people enact a story. The impact of actual personalities is moving and thrilling as films can never be.

Appealing though plays are, people must be made aware that one is to be held before they can attend. Herein lies a big reason for advertising widely. Sometimes they must be made aware again and again and again before they are convinced

CHAPTER VIII

ADVERTISING THE PLAY

that an amateur group is a big reason for advertising often.

Probably the best kind of advertisement for any drama group, amateur or professional, is to have a past record of high-level performances.

In this busy day and age it is scarcely necessary to point out the necessity for advertising a play. Most American communities offer countless regular social activities which can keep their citizens occupied every night of the week--civic organization meetings, church activities, school activities, athletic events, and so on. Besides these affairs, various commercial entertainment offerings vie for America's evenings. Getting a lion's share of them of late is television with its steadily improving quality of programming.

Fortunately, in spite of all there is to do and in spite of all the easy access to movie and television drama, there are still many, many people who will bypass other forms of entertainment to see a good play, for the legitimate theatre alone offers that exciting experience of seeing real people enact a story. The impact of actual personalities is moving and thrilling as films can never be.

Appealing though plays are, people must be made aware that one is to be held before they can attend. Herein lies a big reason for advertising widely. Sometimes they must be made aware again and again and again before they are convinced

that an amateur group is worth going to see; here is a big reason for advertising often.

Probably the best kind of advertisement for any drama group, amateur or professional, is to have a past record of high-level performances. Lacking this, the next best way to assure a loyal audience at play after play is to begin now to give good performances of worth-while scripts. Soon the people of the community will realize that good actors and exciting theatre are not necessarily famous actors and professional theatre. They will learn that even hard-working, talented youngsters can provide them with stirring interpretations of good drama.

Even so, human nature being what it is, the wise director will see that the name and the date of his performances are put before the community as often and in as many different ways as possible so that no one can escape being reminded of them many times.

To organize and carry out a thorough advertising program the director will need to appoint a publicity manager. He may be put in charge of directing the entire publicity campaign and of managing ticket sales, since the two tasks are closely related. However, some directors prefer to appoint another person as business manager and give him charge of ticket sales.

Flat against a Ideas for a Publicity Campaign

The following paragraphs describe some relatively inexpensive advertising devices that have been used with good results. An ambitious publicity manager can probably think of others. A really vigorous campaign includes many stunts, not just one or two, and if they are promoted energetically, they will prove well worth their cost.

Posters. Big, showy, attractive posters are always excellent attention-getters, provided they are displayed in a prominent spot. It is always good for public relations to get permission from the proper authority before posting or painting signs anywhere, and most downtown businessmen are perfectly willing, if asked in advance, to let drama groups display posters in their shop windows. Any popular public places, such as drug stores, coffee shops, restaurants, banks, the post office, hotel lobbies, school hallways, and so forth are fertile display ground.

There are numerous variations of the ordinary poster. Small stand-up placards can be used on restaurant tables and end tables in doctors' and dentists' waiting rooms. Actual photographs of the cast members, or some of them, on a large piece of posterboard make an outstanding sign. Big heavy cloth banners can be painted with the pertinent information and stretched overhead across a street or hung

flat against a building. Handbills can be distributed on a busy shopping day or placed under auto windshield wipers.

Whatever kind of signs or posters are used, the director should take care that no messy, hastily-done publicity is distributed, for it is only natural for the public to associate the quality of the advertising with the quality of the performance. Posters should be neat, easy to read, and grammatically correct--spelling errors invite an undesirable reaction from the reader.

A source of professionally prepared illustrated posters, as well as ready-to-use newspaper releases, ad slogans, excerpts from New York newspaper reviews, a history of the play, a biography of the author, illustrated post cards, and illustrated advertising mats, is the Package Publicity Service, of 1674 Broadway, New York 19, New York. These publicity packets are available for many well-known plays and musicals. If interested, the publicity manager should write for a catalogue listing such plays.

Announcements. The local newspaper will welcome a well-written story about a coming performance, and, as mentioned above, the Package Publicity folders are very helpful in this respect as their stories include a summary of the plot of the play. Perhaps the newspaper will send a photographer to get some rehearsal shots, or the drama group

may be asked to furnish some pictures. Usually a paper is willing to run an advance story as soon as the play has been selected and the cast announced; then a day or so prior to performance they will print a short reminder of the time, date, and place.

In most communities there are other periodicals which will be valuable in getting word of the play to smaller groups. Some churches, community service clubs, industrial plants, and other organizations print weekly or monthly newsheets; a notice in these small papers may arouse a surprising amount of interest.

Besides written announcements, there are many opportunities to get vocal plugs. The nearest radio and television stations should be all means be exploited. The program directors will almost certainly announce the show on newscasts, perhaps give it fuller discussion on disc jockey or similar programs, and may even have some of the cast on the air for an interview and maybe some short skits from the play. Many times all it takes to get exciting advertising opportunities is a courteous request, but it usually always takes that. Newspapers and radio and television stations seldom seek out publicity managers; it must be the other way around.

Another kind of vocal publicity is making announcements at public events. The publicity manager can request

permission to have the coming play announced at school assemblies, half-time at athletic events, at church services, community club meetings, and so forth. Whenever it is possible and appropriate, he'll be wise to have some tickets and some change on hand and try to make some sales right there.

On the day of the play, or perhaps the preceding day, a sound truck can be rented and loudspeakers can boom last-minute reminders through the downtown section and residential areas.

All announcements and posters should make clear the title of the play; the producing group; the date, time, and place of production; the price of admission; and how tickets can be obtained.

Skits. An excellent way to stimulate active interest in the play is to present to a group a series of short cuttings from the play. A school assembly, an afternoon ladies' club meeting, and a businessmen's luncheon are a few examples of possible opportunities for this kind of publicity. Again, tickets should be ready for sale following the skits if possible. If skits are attempted, the director should take great care that a lively, interesting few minutes--around ten minutes in all is probably long enough--is planned in detail, for here as in poster

displaying, a good impression is important. A disorganized group of actors which takes up precious meeting time just getting themselves arranged and which then stumbles through dialogue which makes no sense out of context would do much better to stay at home, for no publicity is better than bad publicity. The portions chosen for skits should be short but complete scenes which fully display a brief episode of the plot. A narrator may introduce each skit and explain enough of the setting and plot so that the action can be understood. Fast-moving scenes with plenty of action and emotion make the best skits. If possible, the skit should end with a bang at a moment of climax.

Two or three snappy, gripping scenes make a program of about the right length. The actors may add to the skits' effectiveness by wearing costumes and make-up, but these are not really necessary. The audience will also understand the need to use makeshift props and scenery and the absence of special lighting. Perhaps the narrator can vividly describe these factors and call upon the audience to imagine what isn't provided. Of course, scenes should be chosen in which special lighting effects or heavy, nonportable props are not absolutely necessary.

Parades. In some communities, a great deal of fun as well as good advertising can be had by organizing a parade.

Usually someone in the drama group will have access to a truck with a bed big enough to show off several actors in costume and some props which will arouse curiosity. Just about anything or anyone can be included in a parade: the high school or some other community band is almost a must to provide music to attract attention, or a sound truck playing records could substitute for a band; plenty of cars, especially convertibles with cast members in costume perched on the back seats, can lend horn-honking; saddle horses, decorated or undecorated, can be made to seem appropriate somehow; people can walk along carrying banners; any unusual vehicles that the community may boast, such as foreign cars, old cars, horse-drawn carts and wagons, can be decked out in big signs which proclaim the title and date of the play to both sides of the street--these are but a few possibilities.

Thorough preparation and planning is important in this as in preceding ventures. First of all, permission must be obtained from city officials to stage a parade, and a time, date, and route must be fixed. Motorcycle policemen may be provided to block the traffic while the parade is in progress. Next, the time, date, and route must be made known to participants. The leader of the column must be instructed as to when to get underway, how fast a pace to set, and exactly where to go. Everyone should be clear about what to do when the parade is over.

Just as important as any of the above preparations is the need to publicize the fact that a parade will be held, its time and date, and the route it will follow so that spectators can plan to station themselves somewhere along the route at the proper time, else participants may find themselves parading before empty sidewalks.

Ticket sale drives. There are various ways to organize intensive ticket-selling campaigns. With the city's permission, a stand equipped with big, plainly lettered signs can be set up on a downtown sidewalk during a busy shopping day and tickets can be hawked to passersby.

Also, tickets may be distributed among members of the drama group, who are then charged with selling as many as possible. Some publicity managers have divided their communities into zones, and on a certain day each ticket-seller is assigned to a zone. He then canvasses the entire zone, going from house to house selling his wares.

A device for stimulating ticket sales in student drama groups is the contest. If an attractive prize is offered to the person who sells the most tickets, a feverish race is apt to develop which may bring in big sales.

House-to-house selling campaigns may have more effect than the number of immediate sales indicates, for the play has at least been widely publicized, and many people who did

not buy tickets then may later decide to attend and buy at the door.

Ways to Organize Ticket Sales

Part of the publicity manager's responsibility (or the business manager's, as the case may be) is to organize the ticket sales. Usually theatres issue either general admission tickets or reserved seat tickets, but some, because of special circumstances, work out plans which combine the general admission and the reserved seat. Each kind of ticket has its advantages, and the publicity manager should analyze his situation and use whichever plan is most convenient and economical for his staff and for his patrons.

General admission tickets are probably simpler to handle, cheaper to have printed or easier to type and duplicate if the publicity committee is to make them, and more flexible to use in on-the-spot selling campaigns. This kind of ticket merely admits the holder to the auditorium; it does not assure him of a certain seat. Therefore, auditorium seats do not need to be numbered and lettered by rows, and on performance nights ticket-taking and ushering are relatively uncomplicated. Information on these tickets can be very brief; usually the title, date, time, and place of the production and the price of admission is enough. They can be checked out to numerous members of the drama group and

peddled simultaneously, since there is no seating preference to deal with.

When using general admission tickets, publicity managers need to be careful not to oversell the seating capacity of the auditorium. If the auditorium seats 1,000 and the manager releases 2,000 tickets to his committee members for selling, he may find when results are checked that he has sold 1,500 seats. A sure way to avoid this situation is to have only the capacity number of tickets printed and issued to sellers.

Reserved seat tickets are preferred by many theatre-goers and very often by directors. The patron may desire to sit in a certain section of the auditorium; his reserved seat ticket allows him to do so without having to arrive early and beat the crowd. The director likes to know in advance how large an audience he will have at the performance; the reserved seat sales give him a more accurate indication than do general admission sales.

Another advantage for the director is that he can distribute the audience throughout the house as he wishes by directing ticket-sellers to sell those seats which will place people where he wants them. In this way he can scatter a small audience evenly throughout the house and make it seem much larger; he also prevents the audience from bunching in one area. This strategy is psychologically

advantageous for the audience themselves and for the actors. The people in the audience may feel somewhat uncomfortable if they see whole sections of the house unoccupied. As for the actors, they have been trained to include the entire house--the left, center, right, front, and rear sections--in their voice projection and their blocking. It may be disconcerting if they sense audience response from only one section. It is much better, though the applause is light, if it comes from a wider area of the house.

This deliberate arrangement of the audience may be accomplished when general admission tickets are used by instructing ushers to escort patrons to seats in a scattered pattern. Many times, however, the patron's desires of the moment may not correspond with the usher's instructions. It is much easier and pleasanter to arrange seating when the box office attendant can sell the patron certain seats in the general area in which the patron desires to sit.

In order to use reserved seat tickets, the publicity manager must do some careful planning. For one thing, he must see that auditorium seats are numbered correctly and that all rows of seats are lettered or numbered, depending on the designation he chooses to use.

Next, some kind of chart or other duplicate of the auditorium's seating arrangement must be made for the ticket-seller to use so he can mark off seats as he sells

them. If a paper chart is used, he can pencil through the corresponding seats as he sells the tickets. A very handy, more permanent, and quite graphic device is a ticket rack which is built with hooks or slots to hold tickets arranged to represent every seat in the house. Before ticket sales open, each ticket is hung or placed on the rack in its proper niche; the rack is now a solid mass of tickets. Then, as they are sold, the tickets are taken from the rack and given to patrons. Thus, it is possible to tell how many seats are sold and how the audience is distributed at any moment by a quick study of the ticket rack.

Another necessity for reserved seat ticket selling is some conveniently located place where people can come to buy their tickets. This place is generally the box office of the theatre or auditorium if one is available. If not, any spot where regular selling hours can be maintained will do. It is important that the location of the box office or its facsimile be well publicized, along with the telephone number (if it is so equipped) and the hours and days it is to be open. It is also important that the publicity manager see that there is always someone on the job during those hours, that this person thoroughly understands his task, and that he has plenty of small change and extra bills on hand. The box office attendant is a living advertisement for this play and future productions of the drama group. It is important

that patrons receive quick service and utmost courtesy during box office dealings.

Reserved seat ticket printing is more complex than preparing general admission tickets, for each ticket must give the title, date, time, place, and price information plus the seat and row numbers or letters. Also, it is advisable for each ticket to include a stub which is retained by the patron and can be checked in case of a mix-up in seating.

Ticket-takers and ushers need to be carefully trained when these tickets are used so that patrons are directed to the correct aisle and shown to their seats with as little confusion as possible. Chapter IX contains a detailed discussion of this problem.

Some directors feel that a disadvantage of reserved seat tickets is that they cannot be checked out to numerous salesmen and sold in downtown campaigns and door-to-door drives such as were described earlier in this chapter. To overcome this handicap, many publicity managers make use of the season ticket booklet. This booklet offers tickets at a price slightly less than the single performance tickets would be. However, the booklet ticket for each performance must be presented at the box office and exchanged for a reserved seat ticket. This procedure enables the publicity manager to incorporate the wide publicity features of the

general admission ticket with the convenience-in-seating features of the reserved seat ticket.

Certain other precautions regarding ticket sales organization apply regardless of the kind of ticket used. First, if the performance is to be held more than once, some method of easily distinguishing the tickets of the different performances must be devised. The date can be printed on the tickets and ticket-takers can be instructed to check each ticket for the correct date. An aid to quick checking is printing the tickets to one performance on paper of one color, other performances on different colors.

A final detail of organization is determining price differences. The director and the publicity manager must decide what admission price to charge and, if minors or students are to be given a reduced price, what it will be. If there are tickets of varying prices, these tickets, too, must clearly show that difference in order to facilitate ticket taking.

SOURCES OF PREPARED ADVERTISING

Package Publicity Service, 1674 Broadway, New York 19, New York

Miniature Billboard Company, 10 East 44th St., New York 17, New York

SOURCES OF MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS

Art supplies

Capitol City Blue Print Co., 421 Kansas Ave., Topeka, Kansas

Craftint Manufacturing Co., 1615 Collamer Ave.,
Cleveland 10, Ohio

Photo supplies

Color prints - Minifilm Camera Corp., 1190 Ave. of
the Americas, N. Y. 36, N. Y.

Photo paper - Eastman Kodak Stores, Inc., 1515 Broad-
way, Kansas City, Missouri

Tickets

National Ticket Co., Shamokin, Pennsylvania

Careful, thorough organization and management of the house is, however, as vital to a smooth performance and, therefore, customer satisfaction as is backstage procedure and onstage happenings. If customers are made to stand in lines for a long time waiting to get tickets or to be seated, they may well be out of the mood to be receptive to any kind of performance given by this group. Or if, after the play begins, there is so much distracting noise outside the exits that the audience cannot hear the lines, the actors might just as well go home, for their efforts will be in vain. Both these examples would of course be undesirable developments, and they illustrate but two of many reasons why

CHAPTER IX

MANAGING THE HOUSE

It is very easy for the beginning director to overlook this step of direction entirely or to seriously underestimate the importance of detailed planning. In the fever of concentration on rehearsals, costumes, sets, and all the other demanding technical tasks, it may seem to the new director that simply getting the audience into the auditorium and into their seats is the least of his worries; what really concerns him is what they will witness on the stage after they get there.

Careful, thorough organization and management of the house is, however, as vital to a smooth performance and, therefore, customer satisfaction as is backstage procedure and onstage happenings. If customers are made to stand in lines for a long time waiting to get tickets or to be seated, they may well be out of the mood to be receptive to any kind of performance given by this group. Or if, after the play begins, there is so much distracting noise outside the exits that the audience cannot hear the lines, the actors might just as well go home, for their efforts will be in vain.

Both these examples would of course be undesirable developments, and they illustrate but two of many reasons why

opens on performance night. If the programs are to be typed

much attention is given in well-run theatres to managing the house. "The house" can mean two things. It may mean the auditorium, or it may refer to the people who make up the audience. Care of both of these--the auditorium and the audience--is the responsibility of yet another member of the director's production staff, the house manager. His is a job that requires ability in three areas: (1) ability to accept responsibility in handling many details, (2) ability to deal with people easily and pleasantly, and (3) ability to use good judgment in making quick decisions. He should be appointed with care and instructed as to his duties well in advance of the performance date, for many of his tasks require no little time and effort.

Duties and responsibilities of the house manager may be grouped under two headings--his advance preparations, some of which need to be begun weeks ahead of the performance date, and his duties at performances.

House Manager's Advance Preparations

He is usually responsible for seeing that the programs are printed with accurate and complete information and are in the auditorium by the time the house opens on performance night. If the programs are to be typed

and duplicated by the drama group itself instead of done by a commercial printer, he may need to appoint an assistant to take charge of these processes.

Program contents should be planned with the director. The program states the pertinent production information which the posters and tickets carried--title of play, producing group, date, time, place, and price of admission. In addition, it should give the name of the publishing company from whom the playbooks were purchased and performance permission was obtained.

A good program also tells the audience what they need to know about the play to understand it. Perhaps a synopsis of the scenes--the date, time, and place each takes place--will suffice, or the director may wish to add a section of program notes which give further background about the play, its author, and perhaps a short history of its professional run, if any.

An important function of the program is to tell the audience who is playing each of the roles, and some directors may devote another section to actor information--paragraphs giving a brief personal history of each actor (or each of the principal actors if the cast is quite large), including any previous acting experiences. These histories help the audience become acquainted with members of the

drama group, and many regular patrons will enjoy following the careers of individual actors from play to play.

Listed in the program should be the names of the director and all production staff managers, crew chairmen, crew members--anyone who helped in any phase of production. To many a backstage worker, seeing his name on the program makes all his otherwise unheralded labors seem worthwhile.

Many directors use a section of the program to thank publicly those community people other than the production staff who contributed to the production in any way. Often townspeople lend costumes, props, and use of other equipment and facilities to drama groups, without which most amateur play production would be very difficult indeed. This "thank you" may be in the form of a paragraph directed to all who helped in whatever way, or it may be elaborated into a list of names of everyone who made a contribution.

Plans seating procedure. Regardless of the size of the expected audience, a house manager needs to devise the best system he can for quickly and smoothly accommodating an onslaught of people. It matters not whether his crowd numbers in the dozens or in the thousands; a large percent of his patrons will arrive very shortly before curtain time and expect to be shown to their seats immediately. In order to avoid jammed aisles and waiting lines the house manager

needs to work out some kind of plan for quickly collecting tickets and for directing people to proper aisles and then on to their seats.

If reserved seat tickets are being used, traffic moves more swiftly if the patrons are told at the entrance to go to the aisle which enables them to reach their seats with the greatest ease, that is, by disturbing the least number of already-seated persons.

If general admission tickets are being used, last minute seat-hunting and the disturbing of the same people several times can be avoided if ushers are instructed to seat early arrivers in the center seats of the sections so that latecomers can be quickly seated on the aisles. Also, general admission seating can be facilitated by placing early comers near the front of the sections so that last-minute and late arrivals will have room to be seated in the rear.

But, to repeat: whatever the house, ticket, and audience conditions, a house manager should study the entrances and aisles of his house and plan an expedient traffic pattern.

Selects and trains ticket-takers and ushers. His next step is to decide how many people are needed to handle the ticket-taking and the ushering. Many directors also

leave the actual recruitment of ushers to the house manager. When they are all chosen, he should meet with them a day or so before the first performance and thoroughly familiarize them with the details of their tasks and with any special courtesy procedure he wishes to have observed.

First of all, ticket-takers must know what kind of ticket is to be used and whether or not a stub is to be torn off and returned to the patron. Perhaps the ticket-takers will need to check each ticket carefully for the correct date or the proper price if student or minor tickets are used, and they may also need to direct each patron to the correct aisle.

If the auditorium is large and contains several aisles, it may be helpful to have some ushers stand just inside the entrances to hand out programs and again direct people to aisles. Then "seating" ushers can be stationed at the head of the aisles to escort patrons to their seats. Two or more ushers may be needed at each aisle if a large crowd is expected.

The "seating" ushers need to know exactly which aisle they are to tend, and they should clearly understand the house manager's seating and courtesy policy. For instance, here is a common ushering procedure where reserved seats, and therefore ticket stubs, are involved; the usher meets a party of patrons, let us say for example a man and a

woman, at the head of the aisle, wishes them a good evening, asks the man for his ticket stubs, walks ahead of them down the aisle to the correct row, points out their seats, returns the stubs to the man, waits until they are both seated in the correct seats, then returns to the head of the aisle for his next patrons. If the seats are the opera house type that can be folded up until ready to be used, the house manager may want to see that all seats are put up before the house is opened on performance night, and then, when the usher shows his patrons to their seats, he can pull down the exact seats that they are to occupy. This trick is one of convenience as well as courtesy, for it clearly indicates which seats are theirs. Immediately, for he will have more

time to Ushers should be instructed in seating persons who come after the curtain has gone up. It is helpful if ushers have flashlights to guide people down aisles in a darkened house. Even when seats are reserved, some house managers have latecomers seated anywhere in the rear so that others will not be disturbed by the fuss of locating and getting into their seats.

Just before intermission begins and again shortly before the play is over, ushers should prop open the exit doors so that people will be able to pass quickly outside or into the lobby. When everyone is seated again after

intermission, doors should be closed immediately so that quiet can be quickly regained. There will be other details to be cleared with ushers. They will need to know what time to arrive at the auditorium and be in their positions, what time the house will be opened to admit the public, what they should wear, and when they will be free to leave. They should be reminded of the importance to the entire drama group that every patron meet with pleasant, courteous treatment throughout the evening. Finally, should any unforeseen situation arise, such as someone in the audience becoming ill or perhaps someone having the wrong ticket, ushers should be instructed to locate the house manager immediately, for he will have more time to handle the situation, and he will probably be better able to locate whoever is needed or to correct any mistakes involving tickets.

Locates ticket-takers' and ushers' equipment. Ticket-takers will need a container in which to drop the collected tickets. If this container is a small box, they may have to place it on a table and stand or sit behind it. Box, table and chairs--whatever is to be used--should be located and arranged in place by the time the house is opened on performance night.

safe for housing a crowd of people, and, secondly, is as clean and comfortable as possible.

Ushers' flashlights should be checked to make sure they are in working order, and, shortly before the house is opened, placed wherever ushers have been told to expect to find them. At this time the programs should also be put where the ushers can get them as soon as people begin to arrive.

Posts emergency information. Whenever a crowd of people congregates in a building, it is best to take steps to deal with possible emergencies. It is by no means rare for a member of an audience to need a doctor's services. No one knows when fire will break out and the local fire department will be needed. Thus, the house manager should see that a list of emergency telephone numbers is posted by the nearest telephone. The list should include the numbers of a doctor, an ambulance service, the fire department, the police department, and a taxicab.

A small first aid kit which contains among the usual items a bottle of smelling salts should be kept within easy reach of the house manager.

Checks condition of the house. Several days prior to performance the house manager should make a careful inspection of the auditorium to make sure that it is, first of all, safe for housing a crowd of people, and, secondly, is as clean and comfortable as possible.

Seats should be in good condition. Broken backs, springs, and arm rests should be repaired, particularly if reserved seats are sold. There should be no protruding nails, splinters of wood, or springs which might be dangerous.

Exits should meet fire law requirements. There must be nothing blocking free passage from the aisles to the doors, and it should always be possible to open the doors from the inside. Exits should never be locked with a key. If all the doors are not equipped with the type of lock which enables them to be opened from the inside when locked, yet the house manager wishes to prevent entrance through all doors except one previous to curtain time, he can keep these other doors unlocked and station an usher at each one to keep people from entering.

Fire extinguishers in or near the auditorium should be in good condition, and the house manager should know how to operate them. In fact, he should make certain that at least some of the ushers also are familiar with their operation, for in the event of a fire, there is serious need for people who know what to do.

A few hours before performance time, the house manager should make a final check of the auditorium. Seats should be dusted, aisles swept, and any unnecessary or

unsightly equipment stored away out of sight. Finally, all exits should be properly secured.

House Manager's Duties at Performances

Checks personnel. On performance nights the house manager's first task is to arrive at the theatre fifteen to thirty minutes before time for the house to be opened to see that all the ticket-takers and ushers are present and have all their equipment at hand.

Opens the house. When the ticket-takers and ushers are ready, the house manager's next step is to open the house at the appointed time. Until he does so, the entrance doors are locked and the public is not allowed into the auditorium. Technicians may wish to arrive prior to this time and make last-minute tests of sound equipments, lights, curtains, and so forth, without fear of an audience member wandering into the auditorium. When the house manager does open the entrance doors, he notifies the stage manager immediately that "the house is open." Upon receiving this message, the stage manager signals for the curtain to be dropped into place ready for the opening of the play. He then informs the backstage staff and the actors that "the house is open," and they immediately assume the discipline they will maintain throughout the performance, for people

will be coming into the auditorium from this moment on, and there must be no noise from the backstage area.

Assists ushers with seating problems. While the audience is arriving and being seated, the house manager should be somewhere near the entrances where the ticket-takers and ushers can easily locate him should some difficulty with tickets or seating arise. Occasionally, no matter how careful the box office attendants try to be, mix-ups do occur. Two tickets may have been printed with the same seat numbers and sold, the mistake undetected, to different people. Or the patron may have bought tickets for Saturday night and here he is, on Friday night, accompanied by his wife and guests, blithely unaware that he has planned his theatre party a night too soon. In such cases, the usher should call the house manager to settle the situation so that he, the usher, can continue to seat people and keep his aisle traffic moving. Needless to say, in regard to ticket errors, no matter who has made the mistake, the house manager will do much to further good public relations if he will give to the victim of the error the best unsold seats he has left or offer some other solution which leaves the patron feeling that the house manager has done all he could to solve the problem happily for the patron.

Nearly all theatre-goers know that this signal

Informing the director of a large unseated crowd at curtain time. As curtain time draws near, an eye must be kept on the number of people who are still in line at the box office buying tickets and the number of people with tickets who are waiting to be seated. If, five minutes before time for the curtain to go up, there is a large crowd of people waiting for these reasons, the house manager should notify the director, for he may want to send word to the stage manager to hold the curtain until further notice in order to allow time for the crowd to be seated. Although most directors strongly desire to begin the play at the advertised time, they also want the first scene of the play to be seen and heard. If large numbers of people are filing down aisles and getting themselves situated comfortably in their seats after the play has begun, they and the people whom they inevitably will disturb will miss sometimes entire scenes and important exposition as a result of all the distractions.

Maintaining quiet during performance. When the audience is finally in place for Act I and the curtain has risen, there Gives "curtain going up" signal. A few minutes, usually three or four, before curtain time the house manager gives the "curtain going up" signal to people who are lingering in the lobby to smoke or chat. This signal can be several flicks of the lobby lights or a few sounds from a buzzer. Nearly all theatre-goers know that this signal

means that they have just enough time to get to their seats before the play begins. If they don't know, however, or are for some other reason slow to leave the lobby and go to their seats, the house manager may need to urge them along by walking through the lobby calling "Curtain going up!" several times in a loud, clear voice, then proceeding to close the entrance doors in preparation for the play to begin. If this practice is observed for two or three successive plays at the beginning of the performance and near the end of each intermission, audiences will eventually respond to the signal lights or buzzer. It is usually better not to hold the curtain for a loitering crowd, for if they see that there is really no need to move when the signal is given, the director may find that his actual curtain time and length of intermissions is completely out of his control and is dependent upon the whims of his audiences.

Maintains quiet during performances. When the audience is finally in place for Act I and the curtain has risen, there begins what may be the most difficult part of a house manager's job, for during the action of the play he must see that absolute quiet is maintained in the lobby and that no distraction occurs, if he can possibly prevent it, or at least no commotion is allowed to continue, in the house. If a person in the audience is called outside for a conference manager should notify the director and assist him in dealing

with a messenger and unthinkingly speaks in ordinary tones which easily carry back into the auditorium, it is the house manager's responsibility to see that he lowers his voice or converses elsewhere. If a baby cries for a long while and the parents seem to be inclined to stick it out rather than leave with the baby, the house manager may have to have one of the ushers offer to baby-sit with the youngster somewhere outside the auditorium. In dealing with situations of this kind, there is no need to be apologetic, for in maintaining a quiet house one is simply making it possible for everyone to enjoy the show. The house manager must be able to be emphatic and tactful at the same time, so that he accomplishes his purpose without antagonizing the offender.

Checks doors and lobby during intermissions. Each intermission his responsibilities are to see that ushers have opened the doors shortly before the act closes; that lobby and house rules concerning smoking and, if there are concession stands in the lobby, eating are complied with; that the "Curtain going up" signal is given; and that entrance doors are closed and quiet regained in the lobby as the next act begins.

Assists director in handling emergencies. If an emergency should arise during the performance, the house manager should notify the director and assist him in dealing

with it. This policy is especially wise in student drama groups. Reliable though a student may be, if he is a legal minor, he should report such occurrences as accidents, illnesses, and fires to the director.

Stores equipment and dismisses ushers. After the show is over and most of the crowd has left the auditorium, the house manager should see that ticket-takers' and ushers' equipment is stored and that any stray items left behind by forgetful audience members are taken to the box office or some other spot where owners are apt to call for them. Then he can dismiss the ushers and, unless he is responsible for locking the auditorium for the night, his duties for that evening are over.

However, as far as his directing duties are concerned, "the thing" is not over quite yet, and we see the director who reaches this moment of philosophical final-curtain contemplation unprepared for the next maneuver in the directing operation. To borrow from an old cliché, although it is the last step, it is by no means the least.

CHAPTER X

STRIKE

As the curtain falls on the last act of the last performance, there simultaneously rises within the breast of the director a surge of mongrel emotion. In this mixture of feeling somewhere is perhaps a twinge of sadness that the show has come to its absolute close, for after weeks of preparation and at the end at least some degree of accomplishment, this unique machinery of people, equipment, and thought will never again be set into motion. Part of his feeling may be pride in the attainments of the actors and the staff, not always just because they made a hit with the audience, if they did, but more because of the new levels of realization they reached while they were performing their various tasks, creating the show. Almost certainly a great deal of this emotion will consist of simple, fierce, sweet relief that "the thing is over with at last." And who can blame him for this latter sentiment?

However, as far as his directing duties are concerned, "the thing" is not over quite yet, and woe be the director who reaches this moment of philosophical final-curtain contemplation unprepared for the next manuever in the directing operation. To borrow from an old cliché, although it is the last step, it is by no means the least

in importance to the drama group and their future productions; therefore, it must be given just as much thought, be organized just as carefully, and executed every bit as thoroughly as any phase of production which directly affects the quality of the play itself. Even if this group never gives another play, this last task must still be done, and for the sake of the individuals and the equipment involved, it is advisable to do it systematically.

In theatre jargon this final phase of play direction is called "the strike." It means "the clean-up." When the strike has been completed, the stage, the backstage area, the make-up rooms, dressing rooms, orchestra pit, the house, the lobby, the box office--the entire theatre has been cleared of the trappings of the play and restored to its original, or pre-play, condition. This fact means, then, that all the paraphernalia that has been accumulated in connection with the production must be disposed of in some way. Every piece of scenery, every lace doily, each light bulb, microphone, top hat, tube of lipstick, notebook, poster, and flashlight must be assigned to a place and put there.

One look backstage immediately after any performance at the dense clutter of objects large and small will be enough to make the newest director realize that the strike is a big job. He may then sense that after the pressure of the performance routine is suddenly gone, the whole group,

actors and production staff alike, are intensely interested in relaxing, or celebrating, or reliving the exciting moments of the past few hours and even weeks, but that there is little spontaneous enthusiasm for the anticlimactic, unglamorous job of cleaning up the mess. Experienced directors know that this lack of interest in cleaning up grows more pronounced every day that passes.

For these two reasons, the unattractiveness of the job and its magnitude, many directors make three recommendations concerning strike procedure. First of all, they suggest that everyone in the drama group, actors as well as technical crew members, participate in the strike.

Secondly, they strongly advise that the strike be held on the night of the final performance just as soon after the curtain calls as possible. Actors will need a few minutes to change from their costumes into work clothes, and they and the rest of the company will probably want to relax for a little while. During this break a simple snack may be feasible; it most certainly will be welcome. Of course, it is most important that the group be notified of this strike plan several days in advance so that they can make arrangements with their families for remaining at the theatre as late as is necessary to complete the strike.

Thirdly, experienced directors point out that the strike must be organized step by step. The wisdom of this

suggestion becomes evident when one imagines what would happen if a group of people began to tear down scenery, carry off furniture, pick up props, unplug lights, and so forth, all at the same time without knowing what to do next with the objects in their hands. A miserable waste of time and energy would be the inevitable result of such chaos, and in all probability a lot of totally unnecessary damage to expensive stage equipment, borrowed articles, and even people would ensue--all this not because people were unusually careless, but rather because everything cannot be done at once; some tasks must await the completion of others before they can be safely commenced.

There are several other reasons for careful strike planning. For one thing, as the productions go by year after year, prudent theatre directors find themselves with a steadily accumulating stock of scenery pieces, props, costumes, sound and light equipment, and make-up from these past productions that will be quite valuable to them in future plays, but all too soon they find themselves painfully short of storage space. Whatever space the theatre does contain can be made to go much farther if an evaluation, done preferably well before strike time, is made of the remains of each production, so that equipment that is too flimsy to survive another show or that can easily and quickly

and cheaply be made or acquired again is destroyed and does not occupy precious space.

Another reason for planning the strike is to allow for the careful storing of items that are to be kept. Each kind of equipment should be assigned to a certain area which is suited to its peculiar storage needs and where it can be readily located when it is needed again. Scenery can be designated to stand in out-of-the-way places along walls or in lofts, props assigned to a room with lots of shelves, costumes to another room where there are drawers and space for clothes racks, and so forth. It is equally important that the equipment not only be placed in a pre-arranged area, but that it be placed there carefully so that (1) objects will not be damaged by handling or crushed or scarred by improperly resting on each other, and (2) objects are arranged within their area to take up as little room as necessary. Too often space that is available is wasted by hastily dumping things in the middle of a room, then shoving them aimlessly aside when the next item for storage comes along.

Finally, strike needs to be well thought out and orderly because borrowed and sometimes rented equipment is involved in virtually every production. Community residents will be much more willing to lend props, costumes, and other materials if they find time after time that their belongings are returned to them not only unharmed, but clean. Each

technical crew chief needs to make certain that borrowed and rented items are handled with care as they are removed from the stage and transported to their owners. He should check them before their return to see that they are clean and undamaged. If damage does occur, the drama group should offer to pay for the repair or replacement of the item.

To review, strike procedure must be organized so that all equipment used in the production is disposed of in one of three ways. It is either (1) destroyed, or (2) stored, or (3) returned to its owner.

Now that the purposes of a strike and the need for some sort of systematic attack have been discussed, the next question will very likely be, "What is an efficient way to organize a strike?" Following is an outline of one method of strike planning.

Organization of Strike Procedure

Earlier in this chapter it was recommended that the strike be accomplished after the curtain calls of the final performance. Ordinarily, then, strike will begin around 10:30 or 11:00 p. m., a somewhat late hour to begin a rather sizable task. If the entire drama group participates, there will be quite a number of people helping who are unfamiliar with the technical side of the show and who must be told every move to make. With these two factors operating, it

will be necessary to make strike plans with an eye to the safety of the people involved, yet still get the job done as quickly and as thoroughly as possible while at the same time being careful to protect the equipment.

The lateness of the hour may make the return of all borrowed and rented material impossible that night. In such cases, the crew chairman responsible can be instructed to be sure that definite arrangements are made for someone to see to each item at a specific time in the very near future.

In order to carry out a smooth-running strike, many directors follow a two-point program. First, the director meets with each crew chairman one at a time. He and the chairman discuss the tasks that must be accomplished by that crew and work out problems of procedure and storage so that the chairman clearly understands what to do on strike night.

Second, the director calls together all the crew chairmen. In this meeting problems of coordination are discussed and general strike requirements are emphasized.

Following is an example of a point-by-point outline of the duties which a director may explain to each of the crew chairmen and an outline of points he may wish to cover in the meeting with all the crew chairmen.

Strike Duties of Each Crew Chairman

Construction crew chief

- a. Explain disposal of the set to his crew of helpers. He will need to tell them what is to be destroyed, what is to be torn apart for scrap lumber, and what is to be stored and where to store it.
- b. Divide his crew into working subcrews to work on specific tasks, if necessary.
- c. Direct the crew in the pre-arranged order of tackling each task. For example, their first step may be to do nothing until the props crew has removed the curtains and draperies from the walls. Step number 2--rip the fireplace from the left wall and store the fireplace in the left. Step number 3--remove the door flats from the set, and so forth.
- d. Instruct crew to clean all lumber of nails and other hardware and to save re-usable lumber and hardware such as screws, tacks, hinges, bolts, doorstops, and the like.
- e. Instruct crew to shout warnings to other workers when letting scenery fall to the floor or transporting big, heavy equipment.

Props chairman

- a. Explain to crew members what to destroy and what to store and where to store it.
- b. Sort items to be returned to lenders and make definite arrangements for their return.

Check these borrowed items for any damage and soil.

Costume mistress

- a. Gather all costumes from any offstage areas where they have been kept for actors' quick changes and assemble them in one place, such as the costume room.
- b. Sort theatre-owned costumes from borrowed and rented ones.
- c. Explain to crew where to store the theatre's costumes.
- d. Make definite arrangements for the cleaning and returning of borrowed costumes.
- e. Wrap rented items for mailing.
- f. See that actors and other members of the drama group take home all clothes and costumes belonging to them.
- g. See that dressing rooms are left clear.

Electrician

- a. Explain what is to be dismantled and stored and where to store it.
- b. Warn crew to turn off current before pulling cords or removing bulbs.

Sound technician

- a. Explain where and how to store the equipment. Special care must be taken with delicate machines such as sensitive microphones, amplifiers, tape recorders, and record players.
- b. Warn crew to turn off current before handling electrical connections.

Make-up chairman

- a. See that all make-up containers are capped, wiped clean, and stored.
- b. Remind actors to take home all personal make-up.
- c. See that make-up tables and rooms are left clean and orderly.

Stage manager

- a. Store prompt book.

Publicity chairman

- a. Remove signs and posters in theatre lobby and the big ones downtown and elsewhere.

House manager

- a. Store flashlights, ticket box, and several copies of the program.

Strike Coordination Problems

Prior to this meeting of all crew chairmen, each chairman has already discussed his own strike duties with the director. Now the director will discuss procedures which affect everyone and any anticipated conflicts in carrying out the strike. He may want to discuss the following points.

- a. Emphasize strike requirements; if at all possible, crew chairmen are to complete their part of the strike before leaving; they are to take whatever safety precautions necessary while working; they are to handle equipment carefully.
- b. Assign everyone in the drama group to a strike crew. Each chairman should estimate how many people he will need. The stage manager should post this list of assignments,
- c. See if there are conflicts in planned use of storage space.
- d. Review order of overlapping and interdependent jobs.