

# Central Alberta Theatre

## Position Description

# Studio Theatre Stage Manager

## Extended Version

### [The Studio Theatre Stage Manager's Role](#)

The Stage Manager (SM) for a Studio Theatre production by CAT is a key position for ensuring a successful production. The SM's overall purpose is to work directly with the director, cast, backstage crew and the Production Manager to move a production from preparation to wrap up.

The position of a CAT SM for Studio Theatre is divided into two parts:

1. [Pre-production and rehearsal periods](#): The SM works in conjunction with the Production Manager and the Vice President – Productions to be the key assistant to the director.
2. [Production and post-production periods](#): The SM becomes the person in charge of the production during its run. The SM ensures the show runs smoothly and is also responsible for the health and safety of everyone involved in the show, including actors, backstage crew and technicians.

### [Reporting](#)

SMs take direction from the director during the post-production and rehearsal period of a production and from the Production Manager or Vice President – Productions as appropriate and as detailed in this document.

### [Etiquette](#)

Stage managers commit to behavioural etiquette throughout their time with the production in order to show respect to their craft, the director, actors, the play, the production team, their audience, and CAT. A Stage Manager is kind, polite, respectful, firm and calm, and is encouraging to actors, crew, techs, and staff. They have stamina and a sense of humour, and can adapt to the production needs of each production.

## Overall

- I shall respect the play and the playwright, remembering that “A work of art is not a work of art until it is finished”
- I shall inspire the public to respect me and my craft through graciousness in accepting both praise and constructive criticism
- I shall never lose my enthusiasm for the theatre because of disappointment or failure, for they are the lessons by which I learn
- I shall direct my efforts in such a manner that when I leave the theatre it will stand as a greater institution for my having laboured there
- I shall look upon the production as a collective effort demanding my utmost cooperation. Hence, I will forgo the gratification of ego for the demands of the play
- I will **always** treat everyone who is a part of the production with respect and dignity (i.e. the backstage crew, director, actors, production manager, Vice President – Productions, designers, technicians, etc.)
- I will not mistreat or put unnecessary strain on the actors because it can lead to miscommunication, hurt feelings, tension, broken trust and anxiety. I do not want this to happen
- I will not arrive for rehearsals or performances under the influence of any drugs or substances for this will automatically remove me from the production

## *During the Rehearsal Period*

- I will leave personal problems outside the rehearsal room
- I will be patient and avoid temperamental outbursts, for they create tension and serve no useful purpose

## Duties

### Ongoing

- Become familiar with the written board-approved policies and procedures as they relate to CAT productions and follow them
- Share the vision and mission of CAT

## *Preparation Before the Rehearsal Period Starts*

- Become familiar with CAT's board-approved artistic and operational policies as they pertain to live theatre and abide by them
- Obtain a copy of the script from the director after the play has been approved by the Board. See **Note A** for more detail on the number of scripts you may decide to use during the production.
- Find out from the Production Manager all the important dates of the play (performance, move-in, dress rehearsal, cue-to-cue, etc.)
- Attend the first production meeting, scheduled by the Production Manager in conjunction with the director and the stage manager, at which the director will share his or her artistic concept with the production team. This meeting will take place before or immediately after the auditions for each play.
- Get any keys and access cards/security alarm codes you'll need for CAT Studios' rehearsal spaces and areas. Instructions for this are found in the written policies Section 6.
- Get to know the venue well enough to ensure smooth operation of the production and to ensure the safety of the cast, crew and audience: know the location and operation of the fire extinguishers, the fire exits, the venue lights, the heating and cooling system.
- Check the backstage Stage Manager's box, including the first aid kit, and coordinate with the Production Manager to ensure any missing supplies are replaced/replenished like flashlight batteries, spike tape, glow tape, dressing room key, etc.
- Obtain the contact list/roster of the entire production team from the Production Manager including names, assignment and contact information
- Make sure to have a reliable timekeeping device (watch, clock, cellphone)
- Read the script several times, making notes on set, costume and makeup changes, especially those that happen back stage, and on the required props and their movement.
- Alert the Production Manager and Vice President – Productions immediately to any major changes you or the director are considering to the script (i.e. changes to the text, male role turning into a female role, etc.) so that a proper approval request can be submitted. **There is no guarantee that changes will be approved by the publisher and/or playwright.**
- Meet with the set designer to determine the set layout
- Meet with set decorator and props person to secure rehearsal furniture and rehearsal props

- If there are special costume requirements, ask the costume head to have rehearsal versions, if possible, ready for rehearsals

## *The Rehearsal Period*

### *Overall*

- Attend all rehearsals (or arrange for the Assistant Stage Manager or mentor Stage Manager to attend instead)
- Be in regular contact with the Production Manager during the rehearsal period regarding the status/progress of the production heads and their duties
- Attend any production meetings scheduled by the Production Manager. The dates and times of these will be set up in conjunction with you and the other production heads
- Ensure CAT members are recruited and scheduled for the needed backstage positions for the run. **Note:** some CAT Stage Managers prefer to recruit and schedule their own backstage crew, some will ask the Production Manager to do this. Both routes are acceptable. However, there may be occasions where the Production Manager requests that one or two new CAT volunteers be part of your backstage crew as an introduction to theatre volunteering. Stage managers will accommodate that request.
- Work with Costumes Head and director to determine if an early rehearsal call is needed for a costume parade.
- Decide whether crew rehearsals will be needed, separate from the acting rehearsals, to choreograph and rehearse changing scenes or props, and schedule those. Whenever possible, schedule the entire backstage crew to attend two run-through rehearsals with the actors before tech week. This is especially recommended when tech week has to be condensed.

### *Before the first rehearsal:*

- Gather and store in the props box all rehearsal props, and gather all rehearsal furniture
- Prepare the Rehearsal Script to record blocking, etc. See **Note A** for a discussion on preparing the Rehearsal Script.
- Contact the Construction Head or set designer to see if a set maquette can be available for the first rehearsal (this is not always possible)

### *On the day of the first rehearsal*

- Arrive at least ½ hour before call time to arrange rehearsal furniture, set up props, set up beverages, food for cast if applicable, table and chairs for director and yourself (production table)
- At the start of the rehearsal give any announcements and distribute any information/handouts needed

### *During rehearsals*

- Set a positive, confident tone.
- Get to know the director's working style and strive to support it.
- Help maintain quiet and order. Make sure all cellphones are turned off and keep anyone off the set quiet while the on-set personnel are working. Lay out the rules about the presence of food and beverages.
- If an actor is late for rehearsal, ask the director if you should call and if so let the director know the outcome of the call
- Refrain from offering creative ideas or solutions during rehearsals. That's the director's job and authority needs to be maintained. Also, actors don't like to be directed by more than one person. If you want to share a great idea do it privately to the director on a break or at the end of the rehearsal.
- Call cues to begin the action (lights, sound) and read aloud any needed stage directions such as audio cues
- Record blocking in pencil as decided by the director
- If requested by the director, give lines/prompt the actors. Each director works differently but the standard is that the actors call "line" if they need one. Prompt the actors in a flat tone of voice and give the first few words of their line rather than the entire sentence.
- Record running time of each scene/act when asked to by director or when needed for set changes, etc. Towards the end of the rehearsal period, start timing each act to inform director.
- Time and coordinate breaks for cast if rehearsals are planned to be longer than 2.5 hours. (i.e. a 3-hour rehearsal would have a break at the 1.5-hour mark.) Establish with your director if he/she wants notification when it's getting near break time. You are responsible for knowing and tracking the length of breaks and getting actors ready to work when break is over.
- As needed, coordinate the sign-up of costume fittings for cast
- Keep an ongoing props list and costume list unless these are provided with the script. Items may change.

- Record what props and set pieces are on stage at every moment and track their movement. Record who moves them.
- Lay out all the scene changes that backstage crew need to fulfill for the run of the performance.
- Prepare Stage Managers rehearsal reports for use by the Production Manager. These are reports that are filled out at the end of each rehearsal regarding anything production related ie. props, sound, lights, that come up in the rehearsal, and also any other incidents about which the Production Manager should be notified. These reports will keep the Production Manager in the loop so they can better support the production and will also help the SM keep track of production items. The Production Manager will provide the format/forms for these reports.

#### *At end of each rehearsal*

- Assist director with notes for cast as required. For example, you may be asked by the director to “tick” each wrong line during a run and let each actor know what they messed up or missed.
- Ask the director if there is any production element they need before the upcoming rehearsal and follow up on this with the Production Manager where appropriate
- Make sure the rehearsal space is left clean and neat
- Make sure all props are stored securely and out of the way
- Turn off lights in the rehearsal space and in the areas of the building that were used
- Make sure you are the last person to leave the building before you set the alarm and lock the main door

#### *At the End of the Rehearsal Period*

- Pull rehearsal props and furniture in conjunction with the set decorator and props person
- Ensure production props, set decorations are packed and ready for the load-in. Props will go in the props box assigned to the production.
- Make sure the rehearsal space is left neat and clean for the next production cast & crew

#### *During Tech Week*

- I will respect crew members/actors that are focusing on the needs of the production (i.e. avoid interrupting actors if they are rehearsing lines, stay out of the way of working crew members that are setting up furniture and/or props, etc.)
- In the backstage area, section and label the props tables.
- Identify a secure place for cast and crew to place valuables
- The Production Manager, Technical Manager and Construction Head will make sure the other backstage components are provided, such as
  - Stage Manager's box (fully supplied)
  - First aid kit (fully supplied)
  - Props box for storing props when not in use
  - Head set for communicating with the sound and light techs in the audience area
  - Work lights (generally blue lights) for props and quick costume changes backstage.
  - Makeup area in dressing room, including tables, lights and makeup
  - Bar fridge for storing fresh food props
  - Written back stage etiquette procedure for cast and crew
  - Sign-in and sign-out sheets for cast and crew
- Ensure glow and spike tape is applied where needed
- Create pre-show, set change, intermission and post-show props checklists for backstage crew, one sheet for each run of the production. See **Note B** for a description of props checklists.
- Be in charge of and schedule set and scene changes with backstage crew before the first dress rehearsal if possible. Ideally, this will be done during a tech dress or dry tech rehearsal but you may decide the time set aside in this rehearsal isn't sufficient
- Ensure you have accurate and complete contact information for all tech and backstage crew scheduled during the run
- Under the supervision of the Production Manager, Technical Director or the Vice President – Productions, run the cue-to-cue portion of tech week and prepare the Call Script. You may request that the Production Manager conduct the cue-to-cue portion on your behalf if you want. See **Note A** for more details on preparing the Call Script.

### *During the Run*

The Stage Manager is responsible for everything and everyone being ready, and for maintaining the director's intentions. The SM is also responsible for ensuring a safe and healthy environment for all involved.

## Etiquette

- I will leave personal problems outside the theatre
- I will respect the audience regardless of size or station
- I shall strive to never miss carrying out my duties for each performance
- I will observe backstage courtesy and shall conduct myself in strict compliance with rules of the theatre in which I work

## Duties

- Determine and communicate the call time for each run
- Be at the venue at call time or earlier each run
- Be in charge of pre-show, set change, intermission and post-show backstage procedures regarding props, set pieces and costume pieces
- Ensure that sound and light techs, and special effects, have done their checks at least ½ hour before show time
- Make sure actors have checked that their props are in place before start of each show
- Make sure actors and backstage crew are following backstage etiquette procedure. Discuss major violations with those involved
- Make sure the actors keep their props on the props table and hang their costumes when not in use
- Ensure no unauthorized people are in the backstage area or in the sound and light booth
- Give actors and crew a 30-minute call, a 15-minute call and a 5-minute call
- Alert the audience at the 5-minute call by ensuring the house lights are flickered or dimmed
- Ensure that shows start on time.
- Record and address when possible concerns/problems identified by front-of-house staff/coordinators
- Alert crew heads to any repairs needed to props, set pieces or the set itself
- Lock valuable props in the props box or in the dressing room at the end of each show
- Lock the dressing room door at the end of each show after all cast & crew have left and return the key to the SM box
- Ensure the actors are maintaining the director's intentions for the production. Discuss with actors if there are significant variations from the director's intent. (If the production deviates from the original artistic concept, the director, in the presence of the Stage Manager, is entitled to



provide appropriate feedback during the run to maintain the artistic integrity of the performance.)

- If changes need to be made to the production when at the venue because of safety concerns, you are authorized to make these changes. The Production Manager also has this authority.
- Ensure all props are clean and dishes sanitized ahead of each show to prevent “cross contamination” between actors
- Ensure the garbage is being taken out on a regular basis
- If anyone is injured during a rehearsal or performance provide the necessary first aid (stop the bleeding). If an emergency medical situation occurs, call 911 and request ambulance service. After the emergency has been handled follow the incident reporting procedure in policies Section 6
- Make notes on what procedures worked well and which could be improved for submitting to the Production Manager at a post-production meeting or on-line survey the PM will implement after the run

### *After the Run*

- Be there for the strike to coordinate with props, costumes, makeup, set decorator to ensure items are either taken back to CAT Studios or are picked up by their owners
- Assist the strike crew if needed
- Ensure backstage area is left clean and neat
- Be part of the load-out procedure
- Return any keys/access codes for the rehearsal space/building. Instructions for doing that are found in the written policies Section 6.
- Participate in the post-production meeting/procedure administered by the Production Manager

### **Note A:** *Use of Scripts by Stage Managers*

For stage managers, there will be up to three uses for scripts of a production. Each of these uses pertain to the stage manager’s responsibility to ensure each show runs smoothly. The three uses are the Rehearsal Script, the Call Script and the backstage script. Stage managers may choose to use all three types for a

production or only one or two (for example, the Rehearsal Script and Call Script might be the same script). A stage manager will need to find a method that works for them as well as for the requirements of the show.

### [The Rehearsal Script](#)

This is the copy of the script that is used during the rehearsal process to facilitate efficient rehearsals by recording entrances and exits, the blocking of the action of the actors, the movement of props and set pieces, etc. There are a variety of methods used to create the Rehearsal Script.

One method is to number each dialogue page, making sure that the director's script is numbered the same way. Each actor should at least number the pages containing their own lines. This is helpful for giving prompt lines until the actors are off-book and is helpful in identifying blocking, allowing the stage manager to remind actors and directors of the planned blocking from rehearsal to rehearsal. Initial coding of props, light cues, sound cues and anything special that is required can also be done; however, directors don't always follow a script exactly when it comes to light and sound, so the final organizing of this information is contained in the Call Script and is finalized at the cue-to-cue rehearsal.

Another method is to photocopy each page of the script and paste each page onto one side only of an 8.5X11 piece of paper, 3-hole punched for inserting into a 3-ring binder. Arrange the pages so that the script appears on right or left side, and the blank sides of the pages appear on the other. The blank pages will have all the blocking, cues, notes on props use, any additional notes. Some stage managers colour code this information.

There are many methods of creating a Rehearsal Script to choose from. It's important to record everything in pencil as directors tend to change blocking as the rehearsals progress. Have a good supply of pencils, erasers for these changes.

### [The Call Script](#)

The Call Script is created at the cue-to-cue rehearsal and will contain all the information needed to call each performance: backstage prompts for each scene, costume or make-up changes or any other cues you need to follow.

Most significantly, it will contain locations of sound and light cues, including houselights, show pre-set lights and pre-show music, and any special effects.

- Sound cues are labeled SQ and numbered in series, identifying any visual cues
- Light cues are labeled LQ and numbered in series, identifying any visual cues
- Special effects can be labelled SPE and are numbered in series

Each cue is called approximately ½ page before it happens and is called as “Standby SQ#” and/or “Standby LQ#”. At the appropriate line the SM says “Go SQ#” and/or “Go LQ#”.

### [The Backstage Script](#)

Often a stage manager will make a copy of the script available to the backstage crew for them to record any of their cues if they choose. This acts as a visual backup to the verbal calls they are being given by the Stage Manager, and allows them to follow the action.

### **Note B:** [Props Checklists](#)

These checklists contain the details of specific movement of props during a production. They are created along a timeline: pre-show, set change, intermission and post-show. One sheet is created for each point in the timeline and for each performance. Backstage crew use these to organize and coordinate their management of the props.

Sample: Pre-Show Checklist

<b>Prop</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Done</b>
Cake	Place on counter	
Knife	Place to right of cake	
Napkin	Place to left of cake	

