



# **THEATRE HANDBOOK FOR YOUNG PERFORMERS**

**By Evan Knoble**

## **DISCLAIMER**

No single publication could attempt to interpret every policy, procedure, rule and protocol of every theatre group. This document serves only as basic information to those who are new to the theatre and wanting some background information. It remains a work in progress. Please feel free to contact [evan@knoble-arts.com](mailto:evan@knoble-arts.com) with any suggested amendments or inclusions.

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## Welcome

Welcome to the world of amateur theatre. We are so pleased that you and your child have agreed to do a show with us. Amateur theatre has long and colourful history in Australia and we are very proud of our traditions.

This booklet is intended to help acquaint you with our work place and some of the commonly used jargon. This information is by no means complete and will vary depending on the type of show your child is doing and the theatre venue that you are in.

Please feel free to ask questions about anything you don't understand or isn't covered in this booklet with theatre personnel.

### Who we are.

The Theatre Group is a community group, established over time. We have a tradition of providing quality entertainment to the community. We are pleased to welcome new and returning members aboard for our productions. Our members come from all walks of life. What we have in common is our love of musical theatre.

Running a theatre company involves more than just mounting shows. An elected management Committee is responsible for play selection, director selection, publicity and communications, policy development, fundraising, as well as the day-to-day operations of the group.

In addition to the on-going expenses (such as insurance and hall hire), the cost of producing a musical can be in excess of \$10,000. Royalties and Hall Hire make up a large percentage of this figure which must be covered by ticket sales. Unfortunately, sometimes expenses inevitably exceed sales. In order to make up our short falls, we rely on monies made from Chocolate Drives, Bunnings Barbeques and other forms of fundraising. Consequently, your involvement in this year-round fund-raising is essential. We ask you to help out at least twice a year. The financial contribution from our fundraising towards any given show is in the neighbourhood of \$2,500. This allows us to continue to provide the quality of musical production at which The Theatre Group excels.

Members receive scores and/or scripts to use during the rehearsal process. These may be collected at the end of the production. If these are hired, please erase any pencilled-in notations you might have made.

A reminder that, because we are all amateurs and therefore volunteers, cast members are expected to help out "off-stage" too, in areas such as set building and painting, costume preparation, distribution of publicity flyers, and the moves in and out of our production space. The Box office relies on the cast to sell tickets to friends and family - thereby helping us fill the theatre. Please assist where you can.

If this is your first taste of community theatre or your first time out with us, we guarantee you both hard work **AND** fun! Experience has taught us that commitment and dedication translate into a successful production and a wonderful sense of accomplishment for everyone.

## CODE OF ETHICS

***"Successful performances are possible only if everyone – actor, director, stage crew, and audience – shows proper respect for everyone involved. Achieving the best results is possible only in an environment of personal responsibility and mutual respect."* – Unknown**

Part of the great tradition of the theatre is a code of ethics, which belongs to every worker on or behind the stage. It is an attitude toward craftsmanship, a respect for associates, and

a dedication toward the audience. This code outlines a self-discipline, which, far from robbing one of individuality, increases personal esteem and dignity through cooperation and common purpose. The result is perfection, which encompasses all that is meant by “Good Theatre.”

- The SHOW MUST GO ON! I WILL NEVER MISS A PERFORMANCE.
- I will be patient and understanding during the rehearsal process.
- I will always be on time, which means fifteen minutes early, for EVERYTHING!
- I shall never miss an entrance by my failure to be ready.
- I will not alter lines, stage business, properties, costumes or any phase of the production unless told to do so by the director.
- I will use the stage properties and costumes with care, knowing they are tools of my craft and a vital part of the production.
- Golden rule of theatre: If it isn't yours, don't touch!
- I will never upstage my fellow performers.
- I will never engage in giving advice or criticism to another actor or crewmember.
- I will respect and encourage the contributions of each member of the cast and crew.
- I will be polite and do as the director/stage manager instructs.
- I shall accept the director's advice in the spirit in which it is given and make an honest effort to make requested adjustments remembering that he/she sees the production as a whole.
- I will always show my appreciation to the director, the crews, and any other staff members associated with the production.
- I will observe backstage courtesy and shall conduct myself in strict compliance with the rules of the theatre in which I work.
- I shall play every performance to the best of my ability.
- I will respect my audience regardless of size.
- I will commit to the performance by accepting my role, costume, hairstyle, and makeup that go with it.
- 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.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

1. **BE ON TIME:** There are no excuses for lateness to a rehearsal or performance. There are moments when a real crisis may disrupt you from your appointed arrival time, so PLAN for those moments by arriving well before the designated time. Those extra minutes will allow more time to warm up and get into character. If lateness is truly unavoidable, you must notify the program staff at least a half an hour before the scheduled rehearsal start time and let him/her know when you plan to arrive. If you are going to be late consistently on certain days due to school or work issues, such issues need to be arranged with the director prior to the rehearsal run.
2. **ATTENDANCE:** You are expected to attend all scheduled rehearsals. This is a time to explore your character and his/her motivation. In the event that you must miss a rehearsal because of work, school, or a family emergency, you should follow the procedure for lateness.
3. **MOBILE PHONES:** Turn them off when entering a rehearsal or performance space.
4. **NOTES-Getting them:** Always be gracious, even if you disagree. Say, “thank you” after the director gives you the note, or “May we speak about this later?” if you don't understand or you disagree. The note session is not therapy for your character, but

rather a session of quick fixes for MANY elements of the show. Find time for you and the director to solve issues that affect you or your character only.

5. **NOTES– Giving them:** It's quite simple – don't do it. This includes feeding another actor his/her line. Furthermore, don't take notes from another actor. A response could be, "Thanks for your help, but I think it's best we do this kind of thing through the stage manager or director."
6. **COSTUMES & APPEARANCE.** Make no unauthorized changes in costume, make-up, or hairstyle. Let the designer know your concerns, but avoid doing his or her job. Take proper care of all costumes – this means no eating, drinking or chewing gum or anything besides water while in costume unless requested to do so onstage by your director. It is your responsibility to provide your own shoes, makeup, and hosiery unless otherwise specified by your director.
7. **GOSSIP:** You know it's wrong. Don't play into it!
8. **BACKSTAGE NOISE:** It should be nonexistent. That Avoid all talking, whispering, and laughter while in the wings, green room, and dressing room areas. In addition to this, full cooperation with the stage manager is mandatory.
9. **TECH REHEARSALS:** ALL cast members are expected to attend tech rehearsals EVERY NIGHT of the last week before opening night. During these rehearsals, you are expected to pay attention, not disrupt the rehearsal, and stay close to the stage, because you never know when they will go back a few scenes to fine tune timing. Be advised that these rehearsals often run long; the more the cast cooperates, the more enjoyable it is for all involved.
10. **BACKSTAGE DRAMA:** Just because we play dramatic characters onstage does NOT mean we must portray them offstage. When you are in a show, the theatre becomes a tiny universe. You were cast for your performance abilities; perform. We are here to support you in any struggles but remember that does not mean causing drama during the program time.
11. **PROPS:** Never play with a prop – your own or someone else's. In fact, never touch someone else's prop at all. Furthermore, it is not the stage manager's job to keep track of your props. Always check your own props before each rehearsal and show.
12. **AD-LIBS & SCRIPT CHANGES:** Unauthorized ad-libbing or line alteration is a violation of the author's copyright. The only acceptable changes to dialogue are those made by the director to update time references or to eradicate objectionable language or content. Perform what the playwright has written; that's why you auditioned in the first place.
13. **PERFORMANCES:** Call time before a performance is a minimum of one and ½ hour before start time. You are required to be at all performances. You should always give your best possible performance.
14. **PROFESSIONALISM:** Take up all disputes with the director before or after rehearsal, or during a rehearsal break. Never argue with the director from on stage or during a scheduled rehearsal. If you have a dispute with a cast or crew member, take up your concerns with the director before involving anyone else. Furthermore, no matter how disappointed you may be in a production, NEVER speak ill of a show in which you are involved in public. We are a team; if someone asks you how a show is going and you don't have anything positive to say, just say "fine" or "I don't want to talk about it right now."
15. **HYGEINE:** Shower daily while in rehearsal or performance. Brush your teeth before rehearsals and performances. Always wear deodorant, preferably unscented. Do not spray aerosols, especially hairspray, inside the building. If you must use hairspray, it is to be unscented, non-aerosol only, and may only be sprayed outside or in the restroom. Do not use perfumes, scented lotions, body sprays, etc. during a rehearsal or performance, or in the 6 hours preceding – other cast and crew members may have severe allergies. Appropriate underwear and hosiery MUST be worn with

costumes. This includes black socks for men if wearing black shoes, and panty hose or tights for women unless otherwise specified.

16. **GUM CHEWING IS NEVER PERMITTED ON STAGE!**

17. **MAKEUP:** All cast members are expected to wear makeup during performances and designated rehearsals to get the maximum effect out of your facial expressions.

18. **ADDITIONAL DUTIES:** We are a non-profit, volunteer organization. As such, everyone needs to chip in. All cast members will be assigned various jobs with volunteer hours being given to the set-building program throughout the run of the show. All cast members have cleaning duty on closing night – no one leaves until the entire set has been struck and the theatre is in peak condition.

19. **BE INVOLVED:** Whenever possible, cast members and family members should assist in costuming, set construction and painting, props, and, most of all, publicity. None of these can be done by one person alone.

20. **BE PREPARED:** Always bring a pencil to rehearsal and write down your blocking, choreography, etc. Memorize your lines on time. Practice and study outside of rehearsal.

21. **SPECIAL EFFECTS.** There may be occasions when fog, gun shots, strobe lights and other special effects may be incorporated into a show. If, out of medical necessity, you prefer not to be around these special effects, you must communicate your issues to the director in writing within the first week of rehearsals. Do not touch or tamper with special effects equipment unless you have been authorized to do so by appropriate staff (e.g. director, special effects technician).

22. **OBEY THE PRODUCTION STAFF:** If your director or staff member asks you to do something, do it. Never tell a director you “won’t” do something he/she feels will enhance the production. Never say you “can’t” do something without honestly attempting it first.

23. **ABOVE ALL ELSE, HAVE FUN!!!**

## DRESS CODE & APPEARANCE

Participants are expected to exercise good judgment regarding their attire and grooming so as not to disrupt the educational environment and to establish healthy surroundings. Clothing must be clean, in good repair, and worn in such a manner as to exercise good taste and not to detract from the wholesome environment the THEATRE GROUP promotes. All participants’ attire should be neat, clean, and appropriate for the THEATRE GROUP setting.

The following are NOT permitted, unless part of costuming:

1. **Bare feet while at any The Theatre Group event.** Skate shoes, slippers or steel-toed shoes. For safety reasons The Theatre Group Staff will require appropriate footwear. Appropriate footwear would be: tennis shoes, dress shoes, and sandals.
2. **Exposed midriffs:** Tops must be long enough to be tucked in. Halters, backless, strapless, tube top, or spaghetti strap shirts; low cut blouses; any cleavage or see-through clothing. Appropriate tops would only allow the neck, head, and arms below the shoulder to be shown.
3. Clothing cut in such a way as to display bare skin or underwear. All straps or suspenders will be fastened.
4. Spiked belts, collars, cuffs, chains, or wallet chains of any length.
5. Hats/caps worn in the rehearsal facility, hallways, or other buildings except as required for health or safety purposes. Headgear, including hat, caps, nets, bandanas, etc., cannot be worn in any building except as required for health or safety purposes.
6. Slogans or logos, which contain profanity, obscenity, or that advertise or depict cigarettes or tobacco products, alcohol, drugs, or sexual acts. No pride slogans or

logos, or language demeaning to any person or group, or anything that is considered by the THEATRE GROUP Staff to be in poor taste or demeaning to any person or group, will be displayed on shirts, blouses or articles of clothing.

7. Pajamas, sleepwear or slippers. (Except when part of approved “theme day”).
8. Sagging pants or underwear showing. Pants will be worn at waist.
9. Men’s sleeveless undershirts.
10. Any clothing considered gang attire, as determined by the THEATRE GROUP Staff Members.

The THEATRE GROUP Staff may disallow other types of clothing that may jeopardize a safe and orderly environment for the participants and staff.

### **AUDITION POLICY**

1. All cast members who desire a speaking/singing role must audition.
2. Anyone who does not audition and desires to be part of the production will be utilized at the discretion of the staff.
3. Auditions will be held in front of a panel of judges comprised of staff members. This ensures fairness and equality among all auditioning.
4. All final casting decisions will be made by the Audition Panel.
5. The Theatre Group will attempt to give all auditioning cast members a part in the production. This may not always be possible but there are also many other roles in the theatre production team – no one will be turned away.
6. All auditions will consist of reading a script excerpt and singing approx. 30 bars of a song of your choice. Be prepared for the Choreographer to guide you through some dance steps.
7. It is recommended that anyone interested in a leading role should sing a song that is close to the same style as the majority of the songs that role calls for, but is not encouraged to sing a song from the show.
8. Call-backs may be used to identify more closely particular actors for certain roles.
9. Upon completion of auditions and call-backs, All audition applicants will be notified by mail. The cast list will be posted on the THEATRE GROUP website and e-mailed to our THEATRE GROUP list. An initial read-through will be held.
10. The Director’s decision is final. Audition feedback is often a necessary part of improving one’s audition techniques, this feedback will be provided, if requested, by the DIRECTOR. All questions regarding the audition results should be directed to the Director ONLY. Please do not discuss your concerns with any other member of the staff.
11. THERE ARE NO SMALL ROLES – ONLY SMALL ACTORS! EVERY CAST MEMBER’S TALENT IS IMPORTANT AND WILL BE USED TO ENHANCE THE SHOW!

## ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

Theatre is a team effort. When a part of the team is absent, the theatrical process cannot run smoothly for the cast members who are present. Regular attendance to the THEATRE GROUP events is expected. Here are a few guidelines regarding attendance and rehearsals:

- A. Cast members are to be present at rehearsals of scenes/music that include your character. If you are not in that scene or music, you need not be at rehearsal, unless otherwise noted.
- B. All THEATRE GROUP cast members and staff MUST sign in at the front desk at the Rehearsal Venue.
- C. All young cast members (Under 18y.o.) must have a parent sign them in and out of all rehearsals and events. A THEATRE GROUP Parent Representative will be present to assist in this.)
- D. Excused absences MUST be approved in advance via completion of a REHEARSAL ABSENCE FORM, which will be signed by the director, then returned to the cast member. If no advance notice is given, roles will be distributed to other cast members following 3 unexcused absences.
- E. Early dismissal from rehearsal is at director's discretion and must be approved in advance.
- F. Everyone's attendance is incredibly important to the success of the show. Please be present and prompt. Please do not be late for any call times.
- G. Focus is extremely important for a successful rehearsal. All cast members are asked to pay close attention to ALL staff members.
- H. All cast members must be willing to try everything and give 100% participation at all times.
- I. All cast members will be required to sing and dance in addition to acting. Please be aware that if a cast member refuses to try something suggested by a staff member, he/she may be asked to leave the rehearsal or may be replaced.
- J. Breaks will be given at the discretion of the staff.
- K. All rehearsals are not open to the public although parents are welcome to attend any/all rehearsals. However, be aware that the staff is in charge during rehearsals. Should anyone unnecessarily interrupt a rehearsal, she/he may be asked to leave.
- L. Cast members with leading roles must be present at all required rehearsals.
- M. Due to the nature of the intense training, the THEATRE GROUP Participants will NOT be permitted to hold roles in other community productions.

## REHEARSAL POLICY

- Pay close attention to what you learn at rehearsals. You are expected to practice your lines, song lyrics and musical parts, dance steps and movement at home, too. Bring a notebook and pencil to rehearsals so that you can make notes about your blocking, direction, choreography and music. Consider, also, bringing a small cassette recorder (battery powered) to tape your musical parts. This makes it easier to work on them between rehearsals.
- Always be prompt and prepared! If you are ill or have an important work or school-related conflict, always contact the Producer or Stage Manager as soon as possible. The phone numbers of the entire Production Team are included on the THEATRE GROUP's website.
- If you miss three rehearsals without good reason, you may be asked to leave the cast. Your absence puts others at a disadvantage, especially if you are learning movement, dance steps or harmonies.
- Rehearsals will be held on Monday and Wednesday evenings, with Saturday and/or Sunday rehearsals added when necessary. Please refer to the rehearsal schedule to see when you are required.
- Rehearsals are usually at Rosebud Memorial Hall, 994 Pt Nepean Rd, Rosebud, (Melways 158 D-12) from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. Saturday and/or Sunday locations and times will be announced as required.
- Leave your valuables (e.g. jewelry, cash) at home.
- We suggest you bring bottled water and perhaps a light snack for full day rehearsals.
- Sobriety is expected at rehearsals (and during the run of the show). Alcohol is NOT allowed to be consumed in any of the stage or greenroom areas.

## Backstage Protocol

- Be prepared for your entrances, but don't spend excessive time backstage "watching the show". Cast may wait for their cues in the Green Rooms (their dressing rooms, and the general cast Green Room backstage).
- No talking! Remember, there is audio equipment backstage which can pick up your voice.
- Never question the authority of the Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Managers and Stage Crew.
- Backstage staff are your greatest allies... treat them with respect!
- Do not touch the curtain, props, scenery or anything else backstage unless you are directed to do so.
- Be aware of sightlines! It is essential that the audience not see cast members backstage. (That's why stage crew and backstage personnel wear black!) The general rule of thumb is that if you can see the audience, they can probably see you.
- Backstage areas are restricted to production personnel only.

## Personal Requirements

- Cast members are usually asked to supply their own footwear and hose (tights). Other minimal purchases may be requested of you.
- Specialty stage make-up will be supplied. You should, however, bring your own make-up (lipstick - clear bright red-, eyeliner, mascara, brushes, sponges, etc.). Don't forget soap, a towel and Kleenex!
- With regard to hygiene, remember that you are working in close quarters with many people. Hot lights, heavy costumes, nervous jitters and movement on stage lead to extra perspiration. Showers and deodorant are essential!

- When possible, do your own hair prior to arriving at the theatre. If a wig is required, one may be provided. It is your responsibility to ensure its safe keeping. Do not alter the style provided.
- Please remove your personal jewelry during the run of the show. Most often, it is inappropriate for your role, and you will not be permitted to wear it. Do not carry excessive amounts of cash either, as there is no secure place to leave it in the theatre.
- The Theatre Parking Lot may not be a safe place to store valuables.

### **Production Week / “Tech Week”**

The week before Opening Night is the “Production Week” -more affectionately called “Tech Week”. These rehearsals will fill your evenings from “first call” (about 6 p.m.) to the end of rehearsals (about 11 p.m.). A run down of what to expect follows:

- Set Up: The full cast is expected to rehearse with the set, costumes and props, meanwhile, the Director, Technical Director and Stage Manager work to determine appropriate light focus and set up of stage. Finally, it’s time for the cast.
- The Final Runthrough may not take place on the Production Stage. The Runthrough runs the show without stops. The cast gets a better feel for the whole production. The show’s “running time” is approximated. Our final technical rehearsals take place on the Production Stage.
- Q to Q is the rehearsal which allows the Stage Manager to work with the crew, “cue” to “cue” (Q to Q). Thus cues for lights, special effects, sound and set change are the centre of attention. The Cast learns their “marks”. This rehearsal is predominantly for the crew to practice their jobs. This rehearsal may be slow and painful. Be patient.
- The First Dress runs the show with everything but the Orchestra in place (cues, costumes, props, and music - provided by the rehearsal accompanist).
- The Final Full Dress Rehearsal is with the Orchestra. The Sound Technician gets to do a final balancing of levels.

### **Showtime**

- The Director will advise you of the Cast Call time. Be punctual.
- The Musical Director will usually have a vocal warm up and stretch.
- Separate dressing areas are provided for males and females. These are the only places to change clothing. People changing clothes in public areas will be asked to leave.
- Once you are in make-up and costume, please stay in the dressing area. A cast member in make-up / costume must never venture into front-of-house of the auditorium.
- Do not bring family or friends backstage or to the dressing area before or after the show. You may meet them in the theatre foyer after you change into your street clothes.
- Refreshments will be available during the run of the show in the “green room”.

### **Clean-Up**

After the last performance, all cast members are expected to assist with the clean-up. These tasks include:

- Dressing Rooms need to be left spotless. You might bring Windex, Spray Cleaners, Rubber gloves. Generally, mirrors and counters are wiped down, floors are swept, drawers are emptied.
- Costumes need to be transferred to designated vehicles so costumes can be cleaned, then stored.
- Similarly, props need to be cleared and stored.

- The Set needs to be disassembled and transferred to the waiting moving van. The set may need to be stored back in the Prop-Shed this same night.

### **Cast Parties and other Social Opportunities**

- Traditionally the THEATRE GROUP holds a cast party after the final performance, although smaller “wind-downs” generally take place at local restaurants after each performance. You will be informed of details (and any costs involved) at show time. By the way, we are always looking for willing hosts / hostesses for our parties.
- The THEATRE GROUP also coordinates other Social Activities. They have included: the Annual Cabaret, the Christmas in July, Barbeques, Theatre day trips, etc. If you are interested in helping us organize these events, please speak to one of the Committee Members
- You may consider joining the Committee yourself. Membership is open to anyone over 18y.o.

### **ABSENCE/VACATION POLICY**

- Any and all absences from rehearsals must be pre-approved by the director via a REHEARSAL ABSENCE form.
- Advanced written notice is requested. However, in emergencies, a phone call or email is permitted.
- Please complete the Conflict Sheet to list all reasons for missing rehearsals.
- All cast members are required to sign in at the desk. Should anyone not sign in, he/she will be marked absent from that rehearsal.
- Family vacations are always excused absences, provided that the staff is notified in advance. If no advance notice is given, membership in the production may be restricted.

### **PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

Listed below are important guidelines regarding all the THEATRE GROUP performances:

- A. All cast members must perform in ALL performances unless specifically told otherwise by the Director.
- B. Depending upon the production, costumes can be very elaborate or simple. All cast members should be prepared for a wide variety of costuming ideas.
- C. Stage make-up must be worn during all performances. Experienced make-up technicians will be on-hand to apply make-up to all performers.
- D. Cast calls (reporting times) will vary depending upon the performance. Cast members should be prepared to report at designated time.
- E. Back stage behaviour is extremely important to the success of the show. It is imperative that all cast members, while back stage, maintain stillness and silence. Should a cast member consistently make too much back-stage noise, he/she may be asked to leave the stage area.
- F. On-stage behaviour is equally important. In the event of a mishap or mistake, all cast members must continue with the show, unless the mishap or mistake could potentially end in an emergency. Then and only then is stopping an option. However, covering for mistakes is part of theatre.

- G. All cast members on stage **MUST** be “in-character” (portraying role given) at all times and paying close attention to the action on stage. Anyone causing unnecessary disruptions on stage will be removed.
- H. All cast members must check all props, costumes, etc. at the end of a performance to be sure that they are in place for the next performance. Cast members must also check presets prior to the show as well. Do not rely on others to place your equipment. It is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!!**
- I. At the conclusion of a show, all cast members must see the designated staff member to be excused to leave. All young cast members **MUST** be signed out by approved person. **DO NOT JUST LEAVE WITHOUT SIGNING OUT!!**
- J. At the conclusion of all scheduled performances, cast members and/or parents **MUST** assist in set tear-down and packing up materials for storage.
- K. The most important part of a performance is to... **HAVE FUN**

## **THE THEATRE GROUP DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Each cast member participating in THE THEATRE GROUP is valued by our staff. Staff members are genuinely concerned that the most positive environment possible be maintained at all times. A positive atmosphere of education, support, and encouragement prevails. The goals of the disciplinary techniques will be as follows:

- To ensure that the atmosphere at all THE THEATRE GROUP events and rehearsals is fair, positive, safe, and secure for all cast members at all times
- To enhance confidence, self-respect and respect for others and their contributions to THE THEATRE GROUP
- To strengthen the cast members’ self-esteem through positive reinforcement
- Encourage discipline, observation, and listening

In order to provide a positive learning environment, general rules will be established at the beginning of the production and reinforced throughout.

## **MANAGEMENT OF PROBLEM BEHAVIOURS:**

When a negative behaviour is exhibited on a recurring basis, the THEATRE GROUP staff members and/or the Producers will discuss the situation with the parents and agree upon a strategy to help the cast member resolve the problem. The THEATRE GROUP staff will need the cooperation and participation of the parents in following through with the chosen methods at home to provide consistency in the solution strategy. If improvement in the cast member’s behaviour is not achieved in a reasonable amount of time, the THEATRE GROUP Producers will hold a conference with affected the THEATRE GROUP staff members and parents to explore additional options and strategies. Cast members who exhibit recurring unmanageable behaviour that endangers the safety of other the THEATRE GROUP members, or significantly disrupts the THEATRE GROUP program may be withdrawn if the negative behaviour cannot be extinguished in a reasonable period of time.

## TIPS FOR YOUNG ACTORS

Acting in a professional or amateur production can be exhilarating and full of fun but sometimes it is hard to remember that it is a business and despite the excitement needs to be taken seriously. For a young actor coming into the theatre for the first time there is a level of professionalism which will be expected of them. How actors conduct themselves with their fellow performers and carry out their jobs will affect their future prospects and set the tone for a harmonious or difficult run of a play. This is a job, no matter how much fun. Learning a few basic rules of etiquette and behaviour now will stand you in good stead for many years and earn the respect of both cast and crew alike.

1. Acting is fulfilling and exciting work but there are also periods of time when you won't be used and will have to pass the time. Always make sure you bring books or homework to rehearsal. It's not a bad idea to bring snacks as well, as the theatre isn't always situated in an area where food is readily available. You will never do your best work if you're hungry! If you remain in the rehearsal room and your scene is not being worked - then watch and keep quiet. It is extremely hard for other performers to work when people are chatting in the background. Go out of the room to have conversations.

2. Noise is always a constant problem in the theatre. People often don't realize that their voices may carry up stairwells and into the theatre, disturbing both audience and actors alike. Some dressing rooms are quite close to the stage and it is important to keep the noise level down.

3. When waiting in the wings make sure you wait quietly and keep your movement to a minimum. It is very distracting for performers onstage to see movement or hear whispering or giggling from the wings. Again, noise can carry right into the house and unless you are very careful you may be seen by the audience. You should not be in the wings at any time except when waiting for your cue unless you have permission from the Stage Manager or ASM to watch from a safe place.

For safety's sake be aware and watch for set pieces being moved on and off as well as performers making entrances or exits. People are often rushing to make fast changes and may not see you. Move out of the way until it is time to make your entrance. Remember that people exiting the stage are coming from a brightly lit scene into the darkness of the wings and their eyes have not yet adjusted to the dim light so they can't always see very well.

4. Get accustomed to the darkness backstage and always ask the stage manager for glow tape or more light if you have trouble seeing where you are going. Safety is extremely important and there are often cables and pieces of furniture backstage. The stage manager will do everything possible to insure a safe backstage area but some theatres are very short on backstage space and it can be a real obstacle course. In the excitement and nervousness of the early part of a production it is hard to remember to take your time but it is very important to do so. Keep in mind that what at first seems foreign and difficult will become second nature very soon, but you need to take the time to make that adjustment.

5. While you have your costume, it is your responsibility. Make sure you hang it up during or at the end of a show. Laundry is usually done after every show and there will be a basket for anything you need washed. DO NOT rip it off and leave it lying on the floor or strewn all over the dressing room. Dressing room space is often limited and your fellow actors do not want to be stepping over your clothing. If you are lucky enough to be wearing a period costume, then you may be dealing with long dresses, capes and hats. Make sure you pick up skirts when you're walking - don't run backstage. It can be very dangerous and if you don't pick up trailing costumes, you are inviting falls or snags. Take care when or if

you eat or drink while in costume. Bring a shirt or robe from home to cover it. Trying to dry a spill, or erase a stain in the middle of a show is no fun. The better care you take of your costume, the more the wardrobe department will love you. Again, it's all about being professional.

**6.** While in rehearsal make sure you wear loose, comfortable clothing. It is not the time for high fashion. Wear shoes similar to the ones you will be wearing in the show. Often the wardrobe department will give you your shoes at your first fitting so that you can get used to them. If they don't, then ask for something you can rehearse in. Make sure they fit properly and don't skid on the surface of the stage. If they do, tell the stage manager and they can have special soles put on to keep them from slipping. If the role requires a long skirt, and you haven't been given one, ask if it's possible to have one or try to bring something from home. You will move very differently in a skirt than blue jeans and the sooner you get accustomed to it the better.

**7.** During the period of time before a performance, actors have many different ways to prepare. It is important to be aware of this and give your fellow performers the time and concentration to do this. Some actors warm up vocally and physically on the stage or in a rehearsal studio. This is not the time to go out and start playing with them. If sharing a dressing room with adult actors, quietly do your own preparation and help them to concentrate on the job at hand. Do not play with, or use makeup or anything from someone else's dressing table without permission.

**8.** During a performance, always be aware of what is happening onstage. Don't rely on other actors to remind you that it is almost time for you to make your entrance. It is easy to be distracted by your dressing room pals who may be telling you jokes or funny stories. There are very few things worse in live theatre than missing an entrance. Create a bit of a routine for yourself. When you hear a certain scene begin, or a particular line is spoken, then begin to get yourself ready. "On this line I put on my hat. On this line I pick up my prop." Run your lines in your head and make your way to the stage. If you do the same thing every night at the same time, chances are you will never forget where you need to be.

**9.** Don't give another actor "notes" or suggestions or observations. If you noticed they forgot a word, the chances are they did too. It is not your job to improve anyone's performance except your own. The stage manager will keep an eye on everyone - including you.

**10.** If another actor suggests a change in anything during one of your scenes, do not change anything without speaking to the stage manager first. Keep your performance exactly the way the director has set it unless he or she or the stage manager tells you otherwise. There is nothing wrong with saying "I don't mind doing that. I just want to check it out with the stage manager." Again your professionalism will be respected.

**11.** Actors are sometimes required to change costumes or hair pieces in private quick change areas apart from the dressing rooms. Dressers, hired by the Theatre, will instruct and assist young performers in preparing for their next scene. Quick change rehearsals will be scheduled to maximize efficiency and comfort.

**12.** Always make sure that someone knows where you are at all times. Theatre requires a tight schedule and can never afford time to be wasted. Tell the chaperone or stage manager where you are going if leaving the immediate area. You don't want to be the object of a search while everyone waits.

**13.** It is important to respect the other actors but it is equally important to have consideration for every member of the crew. They are there to make you look and sound great. They do not get the applause at the end of the show and yet their contribution is huge. They work extremely hard and put in long hours for every show. Thanking them and helping to make their job easier by knowing your own responsibilities will be appreciated and respected. You will be considered a true professional.

## **KEY PERSONNEL**

### **The Producers**

- The Show Producers are responsible to the THEATRE GROUP's Committee of Management for the entire production.
- The Show Producers are in charge of the business aspects of the show: establishing Crew Leaders (for props, costumes, set construction, backstage work, publicity, etc.) and seeing that their jobs are done; setting and overseeing the show budget; looking after hall; rental contracts, royalties, scripts and scores.

### **The Directors**

The Directors work as a team, but also have identified roles:

- The Director is responsible for the overall composition of the production, including working very closely with the actors.
- The Musical Director is in charge of all music, both choral and instrumental.
- The Choreographer designs and manages the dance and movement of the cast.

### **The Stage Manager**

- The Stage Manager is responsible to the Producer and the Directors.
- During rehearsals, he/she ensures that schedules are set and followed, cast is called when
- required, facilities are set up as needed, and that rehearsals run with as few disruptions as possible. All questions about the operation or scheduling of rehearsals and performances
- should be referred to him / her.
- During the actual rehearsals, the Stage Manager assists the Directors, takes notes for props, set, lighting and blocking, and ensures that the Producer and appropriate Crew Leaders are kept up to date on any changes, deletions or additions.
- When the Show moves into the Theatre, the Stage Manager coordinates all the technical aspects of the show with the music, dance and acting. He/she assumes responsibility for calling and running the show. Each part of the show (props, lighting, set changes, cast entrances, music cues, etc.) takes it cues from the Stage Manager.
- Once the Show is set, traditionally after the final Dress Rehearsal, the Show is "handed over" to the Stage Manager by the Directors. At that point, the Stage Manager's primary responsibility is to guarantee that the Show which the Directors have set is the Show that the audience sees. In the unlikely event of a problem, the Stage Manager may change entrances and exits, props, or even set changes.
- The Stage Manager is the only person with an overview of the entire show.

### **Crew**

- For the show to run smoothly, we must rely on the efforts of several crews. Each has its own area of expertise:
- The Prop Crew coordinates the props table, which is located back stage. Cast members pick up and return props to their correct location during the Show's run.

- Costume Crew will ensure that appropriate costumes are ready for opening night. They are also available during the run of the Show for last minute repairs, etc.
- Your costume, however, is your responsibility during dress rehearsals and the run of the show. Please be sure it is all accounted for after each performance (before you leave the theatre) and that it is kept pressed and clean. Dressers will be available, when necessary, to assist with quick changes.
- It is the responsibility of the Stage Crew to ensure smooth set changes. This may involve moving set pieces, furniture, etc. Cast members may be called upon to assist if this is deemed appropriate to the scene being staged.
- Make-up Crew is available to assist with the appropriate application of make-up as needed. Cast members usually apply their own make-up. It is important to follow the design approved.
- Cast members may have limited interaction with the Lighting and Sound Crews. These crew members provide some of the special effects which will enhance the performance.
- Make sure you learn your responsibility vis-a-vis the Crew once they join the rehearsals in the Production Hall. Remember, any stage production is a team effort involving both cast and crew.

## OTHER THEATRE PERSONNEL

**Assistant Director (AD):** with some productions and theatres an Assistant Director is required. They assist the Director in carrying out their duties and may during rehearsal also prompt you if you forget a line or move.

**Assistant Stage Manager (ASM):** with some productions and theatres an Assistant Stage Manager is required. They assist the Stage Manager in carrying out their duties and may during rehearsal also prompt you if you forget a line or move. During performance they are the Stage Manager's designee backstage making sure artists are available to make their entrances and they are in constant communication with the Stage Manager.

**Box Office Manager:** co-ordinates ticket sales, informs Stage Manager of nightly sales, liaises with the Front of House Manager.

**Child Chaperone:** this is a very important person. They are responsible for your safety in the theatre environment. When you are not needed in rehearsal they are available to supervise you in another space so that you can work on homework or lines for the show. They will make sure you know the schedule for rehearsals and make sure you are in the rehearsal hall when you are needed. They will make sure that you are safely handed off to your guardian at the end of the day and make sure you are in the right place backstage before your entrance and will look after you when you exit the stage.

**Choreographer/ Movement Coach:** organizes any dances (movement) in the play, works with the Director.

**Designers:** Set, Costumes, Lights, Sound: interpreters of the play in visual, aural, physical manner. Create the setting, costumes, soundscape and lighting design for the play in conjunction with the Director.

**Dresser:** the person backstage who assist performers getting ready and doing quick changes.

**Fight Director:** ensures any stage fight is done properly and safely, choreographs fights or assists actors in fight choreography, works with the Director.

**Front of House Manager:** in charge of everything in the theatre space in front of the curtain, including cleanliness of the house, Box Office, seating the patrons, informing the Stage Manager that the house doors are closed to allow the performance to begin.

**Musical Director:** in charge of the musical aspects of the show. Organizes the orchestra. Teaches the cast how to sing the show's songs. Works with the Director.

**Production Coordinator:** this person is management's representative. They handle contracts, organize auditions, and help maintain the smooth running of the company. They more than likely will have answers to questions like "Do we get complimentary tickets?" They will make arrangements for when the rehearsal period starts and when the shows are.

**Running Crew:** lighting/ sound/ set/ fly/ operators make-up assistants, dressers, props people: for the duration of the run each crewmember is responsible for certain duties to ensure the production runs smoothly. They report to the Stage Manager

**Technical Director:** ensures that Sound, Lighting and Sets are designed and installed to the Director's wants whilst maintaining safe standards. Works with the Director.

## Membership

The Theatre Group. is a not-for-profit amateur theatre group open to people aged 8 years and over. All people wishing to be onstage or crew members in any production are required to be members of the Theatre Group. This gives the Theatre Group Member full insurance coverage in the event of an emergency situation.

Membership is \$25 per year for single members and extra family members (i.e. spouses and children 16 and over still living at home) pay \$5.00 each.

## Additional Costs

There are other expenses that can be incurred during the rehearsal / run period. These may include: thank you gifts for some production personnel, cast photos, show logo tee-shirts/sweatshirts. Costs vary.

# GLOSSARY OF THEATRE TERMS

**Archival Taping:** a video recording of the show done by the theatre as a record for the theatre. This tape remains in the theatre's possession and is not for borrowing.

**Backstage:** the whole area behind the stage, including the dressing rooms and green room, used by actors and other members of the company.

**Bio (Biography):** a brief description of your experience and work in the theatre.

**Blackout:** to turn off all the lights on stage at the same time.

**Blocking:** basic movement patterns and placement of actors on stage. Where you go on stage and when.

**Break a leg:** What one does as they come from the wings and pass by the leg or masking curtain to the stage. Have a Great Show!

**Call Sheet:** a detailed description of the rehearsal schedule for the day/week.

**Call Time:** the time that the performer is expected to arrive at the theatre ready to work.

**Contract:** a written agreement between the artist and the theatre, signed by both, that sets out the terms and conditions in which they will work. (Only used in Professional Theatre)

**Cross:** to move from one place to another on stage.

**Downstage:** the front of the stage.

**Flat:** a flat piece of scenery consisting of a wooden frame covered with canvas, sometimes wood.

**Fly:** to suspend scenery or lighting instruments by lines from the grid iron.

**Fly Gallery:** a raised platform along one side of the stage (backstage) where the lines used to fly scenery are controlled (not ordinarily found in modern theatres)

**Fly Loft:** the area above the stage where scenery is flown.

**Grid/ Grid Iron:** the steel framework at the top of the stage house to which are attached the head blocks and pulleys that support the lines used to fly the scenery or lighting instruments. Also used to support the scenery and lighting instruments without a fly system.

**House:** the entire area in the front of the stage. Also used to describe the audience.

**House lights:** the lights that illuminate the audience.

**Italian:** a line run, done quickly and efficiently, sometimes with blocking, to make sure everyone knows his or her lines.

**Mask:** to conceal a person or piece of business from the view of the audience.

**Off Book:** the point in rehearsal when you have memorized all your lines.

**Offstage:** all areas of the stage that are not included in the set.

**Props and Properties:** every article on stage except the physical space. Furniture, rugs, draperies or pictures are known as set props or scenery.

**Personal Props:** those properties that actors handle or use such as glasses, a walking stick or food.

**Quick Change:** a rapid change of costume, usually assisted by a Dresser, done in a designated private area backstage.

**Rider:** an addition to the contract that states special duties, requirements or agreements made between the theatre and the performer.

**Sight lines:** those lines of sight from the sides of the auditorium and from the rear of the balcony that determine how much of the stage can be used so as to be viable to all parts of the audience.

**Sitzprobe:** the first music rehearsal involving both singers and orchestra, usually held in the theatre, where the orchestra plays from the pit and the principals and chorus are seated on stage (Probe is German for rehearsal - a sitting rehearsal).

**Stagecraft:** Stagecraft refers to the technical and backstage aspects of performance art. This includes lighting, sound, set construction and design, costume, stage management, production, pyrotechnics, props, and related areas.

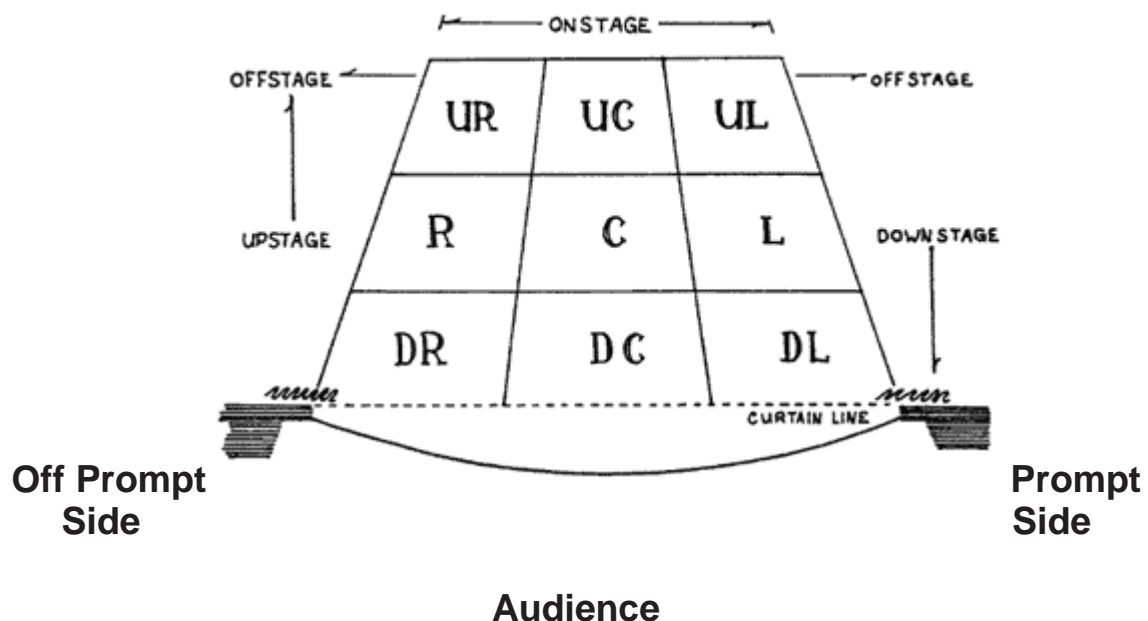
**Strike:** to clear an area or remove an object.

**Tech Week/ Tech:** the point in rehearsal where you move from the rehearsal hall onto the stage. This is where all technical elements (the set, props, lights, sound and costumes) get incorporated. It often involves working longer days.

**Upstage:** towards the rear of the stage. Also, to move upstage of another actor so that she/he must turn away from the audience in order to address you.

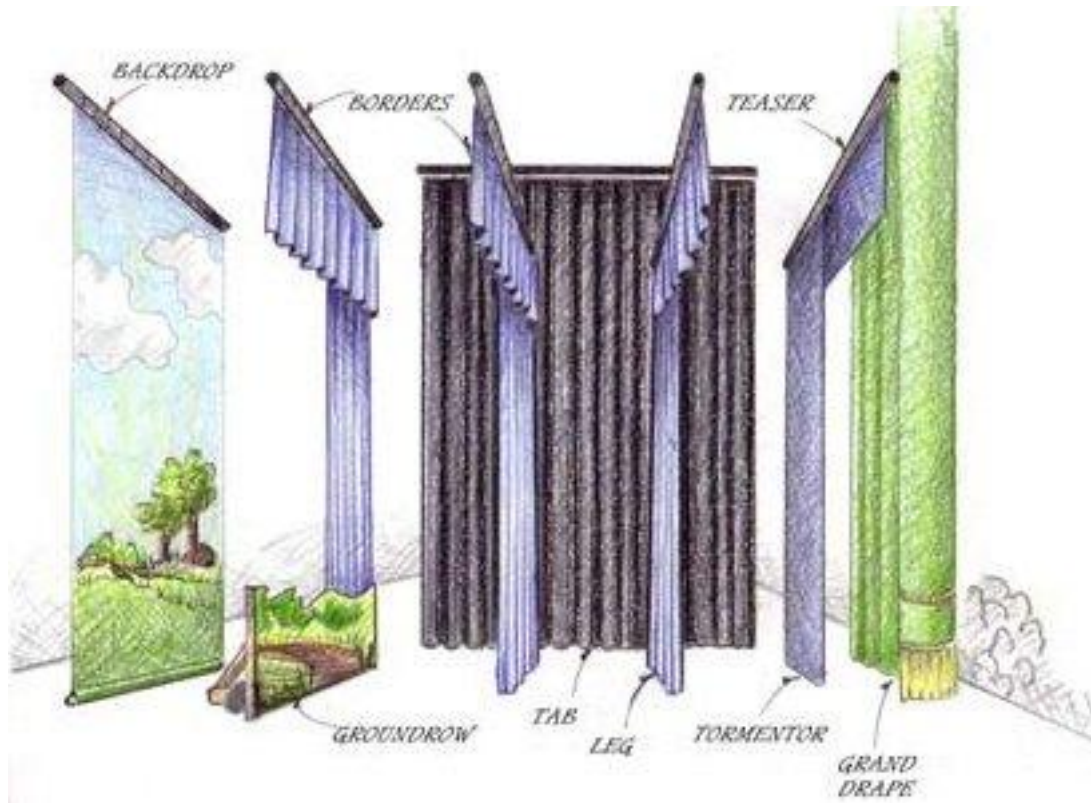
**Wings:** those areas off stage to the side that are masked from audience's view. As a general term used to designate all areas at the side of the stage.

## Points on the Stage



When you stand on the stage looking at the audience, Stage Left is to YOUR left and stage right is to YOUR right. The back of the stage is UPSTAGE and the front is DOWNSTAGE. These points are important to remember as the Director will refer to them when blocking the scene.

## Stage Curtains



**Identification terms for Stage Curtains**

The stage curtains are used for a variety of different purposes. As an actor, your responsibility is to never touch the curtains unless specifically directed to do so. This also means that you need to avoid brushing past the curtains when entering and leaving the stage as the curtains may cling to your costume and follow you. This leaves areas of the stage exposed and ruins the illusion the actors and sets are trying to provide.