the Upper Level Drama HANDBOOK
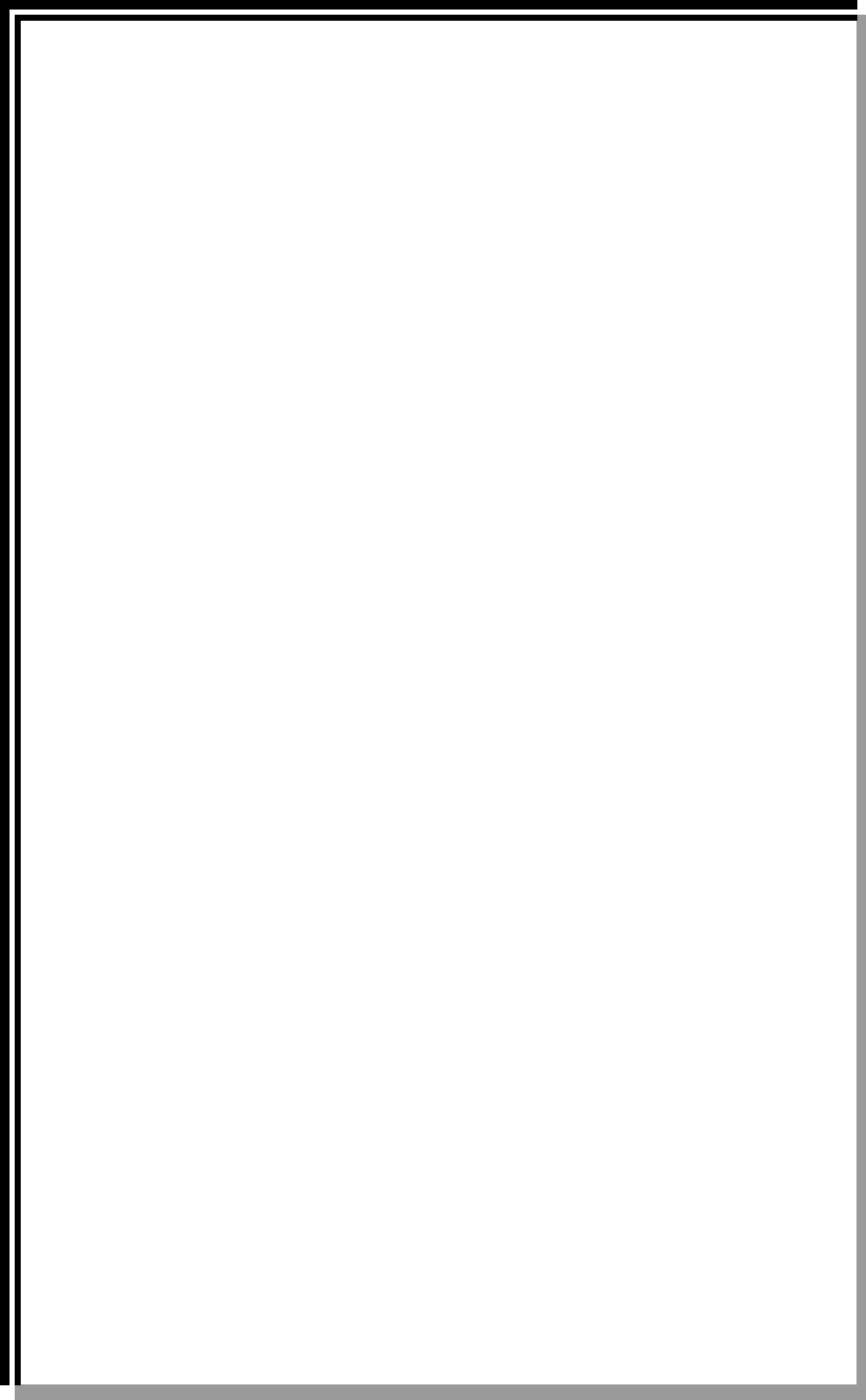
This handbook is for your individual use and is intended to give you all possible information on each of the backstage roles involved in the Upper Level Drama class's annual stage production. Bon appetit.

Each of the following pages describes one of the offstage roles in Upper Level Drama. They each have five criteria: the Definition, the Duties – that is, what jobs the role actually involves – the Requirements: Qualities & Skills, which defines the kind of person best suited to the role (e.g. a "numbers person" or a "leadership person"; the Function/Placement, which explains where you are in the structure of the class and who you would report to/be reported to by, and also what kind/size of role the position allows for onstage, and finally the Quote, a section written by a person who actually filled the role previously.

The table of contents for the roles is as follows:

This is a note, before starting, on the structure of each backstage production.

1: A production meeting happens in the first week, usually between the official Director and all Design departments, to establish a theme and idea. Each of these will attend and it will be their baseline.

2: Design departments begin their plans and sketches. During the first 1-3 weeks, the Producer assesses what each department will require and decides on a BUDGET. Whenever buying is mentioned in this guide, don't worry, it's done through the school's budget, not the student's money (although this doesn't encourage carelessness. You still have to make up what you spent in ticket sales).

3: Design plans are finalized, budgets are finalized, and at the end of the first month or so the Production Presentation Meeting happens. At this, a class is devoted to each backstage role presenting everything they've worked on and finalized. Most of the work should be done before this. This lets the whole class know in what direction the play is going.

4: Backstage roles usually slack off in the next 2-4 weeks as blocking and rehearsals pick up and the actors focus on their acting and their characters. For some it's finished but for many others, such as all Technicians, the backstage role gets picked up again at dress/tech rehearsals and performances themselves to actually put it to use. Blocking overlaps backstages.

5: Everybody helps take down what they put up after the performances. Everything should be the way it was. Take stuff home. Give it to the school. It's called the set-strike. And then that's it. The play is done and you can all relax. Oh, except for summatives. Enjoy!

ξDramaturge

Definition

The Dramaturge (DRAW-mah-turj) is the person, or persons, responsible for the acting company's accurate and truthful production of the play. Their purpose varies by play. In a play written in a different time period than the one in which it is being performed, the Dramaturge researches the original location and setting of the play, as well as its writer, in order to get a clear sense of the intentions and language. In a play that is contemporary, the Dramaturge's research is more on the location and setting in which it is being done, in order to properly understand its relevancy.

Duties

The Dramaturge's duties consist of researching, by any means, into the aforementioned setting in terms of PEOPLE (audience), CULTURE (the play's tone), and PHYSICAL AND TEMPORAL SETTING (the set).

Actors or other members of the crew are encouraged to come to the Dramaturge if they have questions on any of these subjects. A helpful divisor is whether or not the question needs a solid answer or is conjecture. The Dramaturge's role is not to be confused with the Director in terms of answering questions, though it is intended to be a similar resource for general facts.

Requirements : Qualities And Skills

A possible Dramaturge is indicated by a patience and thoroughness in research, an organized

method of dealing with information, the grace to be potentially unneeded for long periods of time, and most importantly a love of trivia which is not likely to come into use too often elsewhere in life.

Function / Placement

The Dramaturge is an encyclopaedia. Other people should have need of the information that the Dramaturge has acquired through their duties. However, the Dramaturge is only a resource towards the on-stage performance, and has little bearing on production value. They do not hold much authority.

The Dramaturge's on-stage role should be determined by the level of complexity in the play. It's rare that Dramaturgy will require a very small role; there will be times when a Dramaturge will probably forget that they have an off-stage role whatsoever.

Quote

"Dramaturgy was not about my

value as a person or my specific skills, but rather of being a medium for other people to use information and resources that they were too occupied to obtain for themselves. While my affinity for fairly one-purposed information was helpful, it did not define my job. I remember searching Google for a company that would do large-scale printing for the show's tickets: it was a matter of how my time was best used. But I did feel like an important organ in the crew."

-Luke Sawczak

ξCostume Designer

Definition

The Costume Designer devotes their time toward the design & creation of the costumes that the actors will be wearing on-stage. This means that they don't only design the costumes but also provide them. They are also responsible for taking care of the costumes, which includes anything that is worn on stage whether or not it was supplied by the Designer.

Duties

The Costume Designer has three basic duties: first, to examine the play and its setting and come up with costumes appropriate for the setting (consult the Dramaturge) and the mood of the play (consult the Director). This duty usually includes a meeting with the Director and Producer first to decide the general theme and look of the costumes, and later again to present the ideas the Designer came up with. At this stage, the Director will either OK the costumes and they can begun to be made, or else not and further alterations will need to be made to the plans. Remember to consider all the factors included in a costume's look before designing them, such as the character's personality and role, and whether or not the script calls for alterations to the costume (e.g. "Oh look, my sleeve has ripped") throughout the play. The Designer cannot be too thorough.

The design of the costumes should be done before the second week of production.

The second duty is the actual creation of the costumes. Because the Designer is usually a team rather than a single person, usually fabrication of the costumes is a responsibility divided between several people. Frequent check-ups need to be made between members of the team. The first step to making the costume is taking the measurements of each actor. The size measurements should be taken in the form of shoulder-to-shoulder width, arm length, crotch-to-floor length, hip width, and waistline. Note that if the measurements for two counterparts are very different, there may need to be two separate costumes for them.

Once the measurements have been taken, each member of the team should see if there are any places where they can either buy the costumes or the material to make them out of. Some plays, such as 2008's *The Seagull*, use a mixture: some of the costumes were bought but some were handmade, or altered in appearance. During the process of creating them, the actors who'll be wearing them need to try on the costumes to make sure it fits properly. This is *not* a one-time thing. Never assume it will fit the actor.

The creation of costumes should be done before full rehearsals start, regardless of needing them or not.

The third duty is actually putting the costumes to use. This is the easier part of the three. The first step to this is having a scheduled Costume Parade. Once the Director has approved of all the finished works, the costumes need to be shown on the stage, and in the proper lighting. Usually, an entire period is dedicated to this, which involves all the actors modelling their costumes in various positions on the stage for the Director's judgment.

This third role is also in the performances and dress rehearsals, when the costumes are actually worn. In this case, the Desginer's role is to make sure that the costumes are all properly handled – e.g. they are not misplaced or damaged – and to make sure that they are all returned to their proper place (the rack, and the costume room) when the actors are done with them. The Designer should personally take charge of asking actors to properly put away their costumes.

When the play is done, and the set-strike happens, the Costume Designer should safely put away the costumes for future use and make sure that any articles of clothing that the actors brought in themselves – such as shoes, socks, tights, and so on – are returned to their owners.

Requirements : Qualities And Skills

The Costume Designer is a team, not one person, with the size of the team varying by play. A usual and manageable size is five skilled people. This also allows for people of different skills to take different jobs. For example, you might have some that are excellent at designing costumes, and others that are excellent at making costumes or who know where to buy them or take measurements. All the members of the team should be experienced with handling and altering clothing, and have a sense of style. A good deal of responsibility is also required, since the costumes can be very expensive and fragile, and generally require extra care compared to the other off-stage roles.

Function / Placement

The team of Costume Designers is responsible for half of what the audience will be looking at for the entire play. They should ask the Dramaturge for things during the design stage, but beyond that will be entirely answerable to the Director, whose vision is the play that they are trying to make real. All the actors should listen to the Costume Designers so long as it comes to handling of their costumes. The Costume Designers should speak to the Director or the Teacher if costume handling is being abused.

The Costume Designer's on-stage role should be medium-to-large-sized. A smaller number of people on the team means more work and smaller roles on-stage, but with a team of five or more, there shouldn't be much conflict with their ability to act and focus on rehearsals – all of the main work should be done before rehearsals begin, anyway.

Note – the Costume Designer team should be working closely with Hair and Make-up Design!

Quote

"Our team worked together well, and we helped each other as much as possible. I myself wasn't able to sew, so I wasn't able to be as useful to the team as I would have liked. I don't think I'd choose the job again, because it did end up interfering with my acting role and causing a bit of stress. But the others really seemed to enjoy it."

-Lauren Linton

ξStage Manager

Definition

The Stage Manager takes on a lot of responsibility, and has a large and impressive range of duties. For a comprehensive encyclopaedia of this position, please refer to the Stage Manager's Bible, which is in the Teacher's possession and is available to all classes.

Duties
Requirements: Qualities And Skills
Function/Placement

For advice on the Requirements and Function of the Stage Manager, take cues from the entry on the Assistant Stage Manager.

Quote

"**Stage managing was a new and** exciting experience, but don't underestimate the amount of work. Still, if you've got the attitude and patience, it's very much worth it. My advice would be to sort it out with the teacher on some way to get the class's attention since they have trouble focussing."

-Rachelle Veldkamp

ξAssistant S.M.

Definition

The Assistant Stage Manager is not nearly as large a role, and is rather a supplementary role. The Assistant Stage Manager spends most of their time learning how to do what the Stage Manager does in order to be able to help at higher-stress times.

Duties

The Assistant Stage Manager spends all of their active production time working closely with the Stage Manager and doing a good deal of running around and doing odd jobs, mostly in the vein of keeping the actors, departments, and schedules managed, often encouraging when things are slow. As evidenced by the funny shorter form, 'Ass-man', this is best done in a lighthearted attitude, while not slacking off.

During blocking, stagger-throughs and (hopefully not, as the actors should have their lines memorized) rehearsals, the Ass-man also prompts the actors' lines. Also, any practice props used before Props Design has supplied everyone with the correct props should be made/bought and managed by the Ass-man.

During the actual shows, the Ass-man gives cues to the lighting and sound technicians, and calls to the actors backstage when needed. In short, them and the Stage Manager have to take care of the behind-the-scenes while performances are on.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

The Assistant Stage Manager should be a person that is familiar with everyone, and isn't too self-conscious to give people the urging they need when they aren't focussed, which is the biggest problem in any class or production. They should be people with similar qualities to the Stage Manager, that is, time management and organization. Their ability to handle tedious tasks should be excellent.

Function/Placement

The Assistant Stage Manager, along with the Stage Manager, are the grease on the wheels, if not the wheels themselves, that keep the whole vehicle running. They make sure that everything is smooth and, mostly, besides making announcements about schedule or channeling announcements from other people (such as the Director, or Design departments that need public help), mostly work in the background, and only a few people really notice them.

Unlike the Stage Manager, who ought to have a very small role – a cameo – if any at all, the Assistant Stage Manager doesn't really have a restriction on role. The job will not detract too much from the acting.

Quote

"You get to wear an awesome

headset and order people around on the show nights. It makes it all worthwhile, and it's not hard."

-Marlee Vanderkooy

ξSound Director

Definition

The Sound Director is in charge of creating the soundtrack for the play's duration. This includes sound effects (a dog barking, a whistle blowing, etc), the musical score, and intermission entertainment. The Sound Director also runs the device which produces the sound and music during the play's run, which means that since all class members are actors, there must be at least two sound directors so that one can run the reel while the other is on stage.

Duties

The Sound Directors' first priority is familiarizing themselves with the play. They should, as with any other Design roles, get a sense of the play's mood, consult the Dramaturge for factual advice on the setting, and most importantly the Director for his/her vision on the music. The most important part is take notes, best done alongside the Director, of everywhere in the script that calls for the use of a sound effect.

The Sound Directors should find out immediately from the Teacher or Stage Manager where the school's cache of sound effects and music can be found, since it is the main resource that will be used, and look through it all to be sure they know what they have at their disposal. If necessary, the Sound Directors might have to add to the resource with their own CDs, or by buying some under budget. In short, the Sound Directors should have a detailed knowledge of every

sound/music available to them during production.

Understanding the device used for playing the sound and music during the performance, and having a good knowledge of resources, should be done within two weeks, if not sooner. A meeting should happen with the Director afterwards for the next part.

The next step and the most important is deciding each use of sound. The sound effects are the easier bit, as not much decision-making is involved. There are some choices – for example, there were several tries at a dog bark before an acceptable one was approved by the Director in 2008's *The Seagull* – but the majority of it is finding a suitable sound to fill a spot, simply. The harder part is the music. While an underuse of music can leave the audience sometimes needing direction of mood, an overuse can replace the essential importance of what's being said by the actors, and a judicious amount of music should be taken into consideration.

Decide with the Director what genre of music you would like. The standard is classical, but by no means should you take this as a requirement. Music with lyrics is not advised, as it detracts from the atmosphere and focus of the play, except perhaps during intermission; instrumental is preferred. Find parts of the play that would be suited by a musical interlude or background. The Director's advice is certainly needed here to be consulted for the mood and theme of the play at a specific moment in order to choose the music that should be played at that time.

Make sure that you have a complete score, with cues written *into* a script, so that you can follow along. This should be done partway into rehearsals, since you will likely need to see it performed to get the score right.

When the score of sounds and musical pieces to play is entirely done, and a light, mood-sustaining piece is chosen for intermission, the Sound Directors should begin practicing. The Stage Manager and especially the Teacher, if not outside resources, such as past Sound Directors, should be able to instruct on the use of the sound device, which is key. Also key is not making any mistakes, which are often used as cues by the Lighting Technician and the Actors, and a mistake will throw off the play and leave a memorable slip-up in the audience's mind. Also at this point the Sound Directors can focus on their acting capacity.

During the actual performance, the Sound Director who is not acting should be in the sound booth with the device and their list of cues in the script, following along and activating the sounds at the appropriate times. This means they should each be able to do it.

Finally, the Sound Directors also have to return everything to an organized and usable state.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

The Sound Directors should certainly be people with a lot of experience in music and sound, and also who are technologically capable. If possible, they should also be experienced with Mac computers and the tool GarageBand, which allows for creating your own music, which, for example, the Director of *The Seagull* preferred to the pre-recorded music for that case. They should also have a good idea of how to match the music in a complement to the stage, props, and costume designs. Music that sharply contrasts the the theme of what the audience is seeing can throw off the entire production.

Function/Placement

The Sound Directors determine a lot of what the audience interprets in the back of their heads, and that's important, as it sets their attention in the right atmosphere to the actual happening on stage. However, the music and sound are still tools to a good play and certanly not what's being exhibited (except perhaps during intermission). That in mind, the Sound Directors should consider themselves a regular working part of a machine. Their closest contact should be with the Director for the production.

The Sound Directors' roles should be medium-sized roles. Even during rehearsals they might still be working on the development of the score, so keep that in mind since they won't be able to start paying serious attention to their character until later on. However, there being two of them means that the hands-on job is taken care of during performances.

Quote

"Sound design was a fun path

of making our own music clips and songs, and we had a successful reception of the music which was pleasing to see work with the other aspects of design. It was a new experience for both members of our team. It was very interesting and we had a lot of fun."

-Michael Atkins

ξProp Design

Definition

The Prop Design team is in charge of assessing what props need to be used in the play, usually by referring to the script, and acquiring these props, and finally managing them for the entire duration of the play and its performances. The job becomes exponentially easier with multiple people, as a large part of it is organization and keeping track of the props.

Duties

The first part of the Prop Design's job is to choose a theme that resonates with the stage and other Design departments. A list should be made of all the props that the script makes mention of, and also any that the Director may choose to implement to enhance a scene. With a theme and a list in mind, ideas should be thrown around. Some of the larger or more complicated props, such as tables and chairs, may require some effort to be put into designing specific props, as opposed to functional props. Note that these props might have to be constructed, or, as in 2008's *The Seagull*, relegated to Set Construction to build.

A list of props and a good idea of what each one will look like and where it will be used by, as well as, not least importantly, a list of who uses which props, is the first starting step and should be finished before the end of the second week.

The part that will take most of your effort in this job is acquiring the props. A lot less buying of props is

required than you might expect, as you will likely be able to find most of the generic props at your and friends' houses. The Prop Design team must be careful that, as props come into their ownership, they deal with the variety of likely other-people-owned objects in an organized way. Containers and labels are excellent ideas. The earlier that the props are made available to the acting company the better, but usually most of them will have come by the fifth to sixth week, or before any full-scale runs start occurring.

When rehearsals begin, props tables should be set up backstage, in an area that is easily accessible for people between the time they're on stage. Areas should be designated on the tables for each actor, so they can not only easily find the props they need but equally importantly also return them. It's Prop Design's job to make sure that all the props are taken care of, and are where they need to be before any rehearsal or performance. If things are out of place, replace them.

Some props may need to be periodically replaced, such as flowers and food. These should be bought as soon to the rehearsal/performance as possible.

At the end of production, Props Design should try to get all the props together in an area where their original owners can pick them up, and where unclaimed items can be added to the school's supply.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

The Props Design team should be chosen for their time management, creativity, and their organization, especially the latter. They should be able to create an organized system and have an artistic sense of things.

Function/Placement

The Props Design team is really responsible for most of the subtle realism in a scene, and also the more forward showing of things (e.g. "I killed this seagull [*produces a seagull*]"). An undecorated stage would look bare without the little things here and there, even if never directly addressed by any actor or the script. The Props Design team is essentially what lures people into believing it's somewhere in the real world. The Director and Stage Manager are their close friends, as well as the Dramaturge.

The Props Design team's roles can be of varying size depending on the amount of props used in the play. However, even in a play with a large amount of props, since most of the work is done before being on-stage, fairly large roles can be appropriate and manageable. The only issue is keeping track of the props while one is required to be performing, so it may be preferable if the members of the team are not in the same cast.

Quote

"I personally enjoyed doing the

props and thought it was a good role for me and my partner. We had the right amount of work and a sense of satisfaction in seeing the actors use their props."

-Sofie Bédard

ξHair Designer

Definition

The Hair Designer is the person who comes up with the hairstyles that will be worn by the actors, gets the needed materials together to create these styles, and implements them for the performances. Sometimes there can be two people in this position, but most plays are manageable with only one, until rehearsals.

Duties

The first duty of the Hair Designer is, as with all the Designers, to get used to the theme of the play that all Designers and the Director are trying to get across. Be familiar with the genre and direction that the play is going to take, especially in terms of whether the end result of the hair will suit make-up and costumes, so brainstorm with those departments. There is usually a meeting held between the Director and the three actor-dressing departments in the first week of production.

Once having a baseline of the play's theme, the Hair Designer should begin drawing sketches of ideas for each character's hair. The hairstyle should reflect the character's portrayment on-stage, such as a quirky hairstyle for a quirky character. However, note that it's not a good idea at this point to get too detailed with the sketches, since the actor who will be playing the part may not have the proper hair to support the hairstyle. Because the ideas for hairstyles should be done by the second to third week, the cast list will only be available later on. Once the cast list is out, the individual hairstyles can be brought to greater detail.

An important note is that hair, especially in grand hairstyles, is above the actors' heads and therefore can *interfere* with lighting. A hat or a jutting hairstyle can potentially overshadow the actors' faces, so be careful to take this into consideration. Consult the Director.

When all of the hairstyles have been fully drawn out and planned, the rest of the Hair Designer production time is spent on practicing the hairstyles, depending on their difficulty, especially on the actors who will be wearing them, although other volunteers are good too. Also, any products that will need to be bought for doing the hair should be bought now, such as bobby pins, freeze-spray and hairspray. Don't underestimate how much you will need but don't use up your budget because more might need to be bought later on.

The last part is the implementation of the hair. On the days of performance, it's best to have arranged beforehand for volunteers or other students to come in and help do the actors' hair (having gotten a feeling for the planned styles beforehand). The average performance is well-suited with two to four hair stylists on the days of performance, since there are often a large amount of actors to do in less time.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

The Hair Designer should be very creative, and able to match hair to make-up and costume, and work with those departments. The most important aspect is, of course, the ability to work with hair and a good sense of what hair shoould look like. Because Hair Design and Make-up are more product-heavy than most roles, it's a good idea to have somebody who can keep track of everything used, especially if brought in by actors.

Function/Placement

The Hair Designer can choose to play a more subtle role or a more open role depending on the type of hairstyle appropriate to the play. For example, in 2007's *School for Scandal*, every member of the audience went home with a clear picture of one actors' horizontally jutting hair, whereas in 2008's *The Diary of Anne Frank*, hair was not given much attention, rather only trying to match the play's setting. The Director should be consulted often, to make sure that the hair designs are approved and work with the play.

The Hair Designer shouldn't have much trouble performing a large role, as their off-stage job will not likely get in the way of focussing on the finer points of acting. The design work should be done before rehearsals begin, and practice can be done at any time, including outside of school, but keep in mind that the Hair Designer will probably need a trusted helper to do hair for actual performances.

Quote

"Hair design called for all of my
creativity and it paid off when the shows were on."

-Amanda Sadler

ξSet Design

Definition

Set Design is responsible for thinking up the set, by coming up with a lot of ideas that go well with the overall idea, and for making a model of it for Set Construction, and finally working with Set Construction to make sure that it turns out right according to the design.

Duties

There will be a production meeting within the first week during which most of the Design teams get together and the Set Designer is not exempt. The Director gives his ideas for the mood and theme and concept of the play – e.g. "stark and bare" or "warm and fuzzy" – and everybody works off of the ideas.

The Set Design dictates what everybody has to work with. So the Set Designer is trying to set the base and background for the mood for the whole production. Lots of ideas are thrown around, and lots of sketches. There shouldn't be any limitations. As the Director and Set Designer come to a more specific idea of what the set will look like, it's important to keep in mind what the scenes require.

Most importantly, collaboration with the other Design departments on arrangement of how each scene will look, including furniture and levels, is key to the design of the set. Final sketches should be done by the end of the second week and with good luck construction can begin shortly after, for the blocking.

During this process, collaboration with Set Construction is required in order to justify realistic dimensions, ones that Set Construction will be using to actually make the set. In 2008's *The Seagull*, a large amount of tiles were also used on the stage. The Set Designer decided where they would be placed, and both Construction and Design worked out the square area of each tile and the stage was made to a certain fit to accomodate the plans for the tiles.

A fairly large issue and one that can also be sorted out with Construction is physical location. This can be a problem if the space you're using is limited in ways.

The next step is the Maquette. This is a physical to-scale model of the finished stage, with some scale reference such as a chair or a person or a piece of furniture to give the proper size. It also shows the audience's sight lines. This should be completed before the class's production presentation.

Finally, once all is finalized, Construction begins. The Set Designer generally helps with some of the labour, where asked. The involvement in building it is mostly, however, to make sure that the Designer and Director's vision of the stage is not compromised.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

The main quality required in the Set Designer is creativity, and a rational sense of making something real and doable that will work both for Construction and the Director's vision, but mainly creativity. Because of the large amount of possibilities to be dug through to get to the idea that will work, as with any art, patience and determination is also advised. It's not entirely an easy job but it is gratifying.

Function/Placement

The Set Designer creates the *shape* of the entire play, in a quite literal way. Everything works or doesn't work because of the way that they arrange the stage. The actors will be using the stage for their own inspiration, as will every Design role. The place where the Director's vision is most accurately put into reality is in Set Design.

At the same time, Set Design does not restrict acting opportunity too much. Besides construction, which might continue a little into blocking and rehearsals if it goes a little slowly or issues come up, the mental stress, if any, is finished before serious acting starts.

Quote

"Doing this job was a terrific experience, because you get to create a crazily abstract concept and basically the world that the characters if the play will live in and interact with. And you get to explore different ways of realizing your concept, and you are challenged to keep with your original idea, and get to see something that seemed impossible to make actually take physical, life-sized, shape."

-Abram Chan

ξSet Construction

Definition

Set Construction's job is simply to build the set and the larger props. Set Construction is definitely required to do work outside outside of class time and while their work is less seen by most of the class, they all work on the stage, so this role is responsible for the class's functionality. This is usually a one-person role.

Duties

The duties of Set Construction depend on their hands-on ability. The standard is to construct a stage, from the Set Designer's vision, made to measure (a facet worked out with Set Design in early production). This is done on the school's grounds, except perhaps if it was made up of blocks to be carried in. The amount of actual from-scrap work put into this varies; in 2008's *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the stage was built (by a team) out of timber, in six pieces, and was stored and put together in the play area, whereas in 2008's *The Seagull*, the play's foundation were the usual stage-risers owned by the school, with adjustable legs for different heights, arranged according to the plan for it.

The stage itself should be ready before the blocking.

The other half is the larger props, such as tables, chairs, cupboards, and the like. While some productions have used home-made furniture, it can be a challenge to make it well enough to suit the vision. *The Seagull* needed benches; wooden benches worked. *Anne Frank* called for an armchair and/or a couch.

In those cases, where furniture can't be home-made – the materials can be acquired either at home through your budget or through the school's shop itself – going out to shops and buying it will be necessary. Used furniture shops and other second-hand outlets such as Waste-Wise are good ideas. Helping out the Props department in getting the furniture/larger props is always welcome.

The last thing is finishing touches: for example, in *The Seagull*, a large number of tiles were used to make the stage into a checkerboard, and these were attached very close to the performances (to avoid damage). Also, if it makes sense for an on-stage cupboard to hold props (such as dishware or food), those arrangements have to be made as part of your job. Finally, painting is a large issue: if objects need to be painted, this is best done while nobody else needs them, that is, in your off-hours or after school.

At the end, during set-strike, all the company helps to take down the stage, so Set Construction isn't alone, but should oversee the taking-down of the set. Remember to keep any parts of the stage that you prefer not to be destroyed or absorbed into the school.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

The Set Construction person should have access to the materials needed, be good with hands-on work (e.g. having taken shop), have an artistic sense of arrangement and cooperation, and of course be able to paint/build, and also have more spare time than most.

The Set Construction person is usually one who knows the most about making things come to life in the shape of constructed final products.

Function/Placement

The Set Construction is basically responsible for making the Set Designer's and Director's vision real. They are really needed to do their work and do it in time for the stage/acting work, such as blocking, to be done. Once the set is up, they can mostly relax, but until then they have to be hard and efficient workers.

The on-stage role of the Set Construction is not taxing if the work is done on time, that is, before blocking starts. The only distractions are the finishing touches which are likely to continue after blocking has begun and which should certainly be done before rehearsals. While noticing lots of things about the stage you're standing on that *you built* are common, they shouldn't detract from either of your jobs.

Quote

"I enjoyed it because it gave me

an inside look on what it takes to build a stage, the most present aspect of a play, and what it takes to maintain it.

I give this advice: if you are going to build a stage, you should makes sure that first of all that there isn't a SCISSORLIFT broken down right in the space that you intend to use. Second, if you are going to store anything in another teacher's room, make sure that everything is WELL-UNDERSTOOD between you and the teacher. Oh, and if anything goes missing, check under some stairs."

-Ben Feddema

ξMake-up Design

Definition

Make-up Design creates the designs that will be put on the actors as part of their costume, buys the supplies for doing the make-up during dress rehearsals and performances, and, usually with helpers, actually does the make-up at those times.

Duties

At the first production meeting you will consult with the Director and the other Design teams for the general idea of the play. Your amount of involvement in the final product depends on how outstanding the make-up you decide on is; in 2008's *The Seagull*, the actors were highly decorated with make-up, whereas in, for example, 2008's *The Diary of Anne Frank*, only the basic white was used. (Also note that on a stage, actors generally have white make-up no matter what, because it becomes unnoticeable with the final lighting.) Periodic meetings should be expected.

The script should be familiar enough by now that the characters are well-known and a good sense of them is already there. Sketches of final faces should be developed into final plans by the end of the second week so that the budget can be decided, and the make-up bought.

Make-up is one of the more budget-involved roles, and deciding a realistic budget with the Producer is necessary early on. If all your plans are approved, it shouldn't be too hard.

The next step is the buying of the make-up. After checking and taking any good make-up from the costume and props rooms, the best target is actual theatre make-up stores, with regular stores being a later target, such as for moisturizer (usually required) or mirrors/sponges and such.

Also a very good idea is to ask the actors to bring in their own eyeliner and mascara, for use on themselves, and possibly moisturizers and personal mirrors. This can save on the budget a good deal.

Dress rehearsals are the day to practice and a station should be set up with mirrors, tables, chairs, and all the make-up, as well as the designs on hand for reference. The main key to this part is organization, even to the point of separating invididuals' make-up. Plenty of time should be available, usually an hour, although this can increase or decrease by the level of make-up being done.

Helpers are the best asset here and on performances. Other people not on-stage, or friends from elsewhere, can come and help, usually people with some kind of skill in the area. Don't let anyone go by whose make-up you haven't checked once it's done to make sure it's right. Don't worry about being over-careful.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

The make-up person should obviously have a good artistic sense, and be creative. Basic knowledge about make-up is also a must-have, and the ability to apply make-up well without unsurety. Cooperation with other Design departments, over the more intricate parts, is absolutely necessary and getting along with them should not be understated for importance.

Function/Placement

The make-up on an actor often defines their face on-stage. While the level of complexity in the make-up is different for every play, for example in 2008's *The Seagull* the make-up shaped the actors' expressions in many situations. Like the hair, it complements and enhances the original idea/theme of the character. Sometimes this is embellishment and sometimes more necessary, to help an actor make the character better.

Make-up Design does not heavily detract from acting time. Anywhere from smallish to large roles can be given. If the make-up person is going to end up doing their own before their own performance, they should be ready to do theirs last and still have time to get ready to perform. With enough time before a performance, there shouldn't be any problems with having even, say, the opening scene of the play.

Quote

"This job is a lot of fun and is

the perfect amount of work for an offstage role, even with a major onstage role. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time. It was good that it included both design and implementation, because I liked making my designs real on the actors in the end."

-Tara-Joy Ubbens
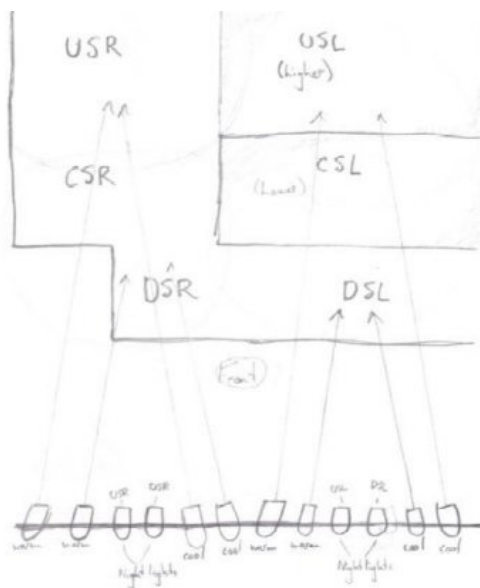
ξLighting Designer

Definition

The Lighting Designer is responsible for deciding where the lights will be placed, in what way the stage will be lit, and doing the actual set-up of the lights, but not operating them.

Duties

The first step is to consult with the Set Designer to get a stage plan (what the stage will look like). Deciding by the shape/type of the stage, the Lighting Designer should draw their own plan of how the lights will be positioned to properly light up the stage.

For example, this image shows the lighting array and path onto the stage. Note that overhead lights are often used in addition to the lights that the Designer adds. In that case, Westerhof is able to help with the setting-up of the overhead lights whereas non-overheads, if used, will have to be positioned elsewhere shining onto the stage. The lights should be set up right after the stage is built.

When choosing the lights, keeping the mood in mind is advised, as well as splitting the stage off into sections (as pictured above). Each section should be lit, preferably by lights of different colours (e.g. a warm colour from one side and a cool colour from the other). Experimentation might be necessary. Gels, the covering you put on a light to change its colour, are advised.

The Director will often have an idea of how they would like the stage to be lit. Don't forget to ask them about it.

When you have the design and the stage is built the lights should be set up. The design should be done within two weeks and the stage built, hopefully, within four, before rehearsals begin. The lights should be up a good while before tech runs.

For performances, two extra small jobs are required. First, the windows should be blocked off, such as with large sheets of bristelboard or something similar, to prevent extra light from getting in and ruining things. Second, when the lights are off the actors will need a way to see backstage, so 'blues' (lights with dark blue gels on them to dim them) have to be set up backstage, by the props tables, so nobody trips and dies.

Operating them is done by the Lighting Technician.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

The position of Lighting Designer should be filled by someone with a good eye for what things look like, and the patience to not be able to work until a stage is designed and built. Obviously, the Lighting Designer will be a person who enjoys working with tech.

Function/Placement

Without a Lighting Designer, the audience would be seeing nothing and hearing what seems like nonsense. Without a *good* Lighting Designer, the audience will wish it was seeing nothing and hearing what seems like nonsense. Much of how a scene is understood by the audience depends on how it's light, because it's essential to setting up the location without an extensive set filled with large, expensive objects (for example, in 2008's *The Diary of Anne Frank,* one scene opened on Anne having a nightmare and the lights used were blue, in order to show people it was night, despite not having the entire sky hovering above the set). You can't be too careful.

The Lighting Designer rarely has to worry about the size of their on-stage role. Most of the work should be done before serious rehearsals, and windows can be blocked up and backstage blues readied in a short time with no acting detracting. In 2008's *The Seagull*, the Lighting Designer had the lead role and managed both his off-stage and on-stage role without problem.

Quote

"The job of Lighting Designer,

I think, is fairly easy to understand. Mr. Westherhof can be a great help in setting up the lights if you talk to him early on, oh, and probably bring him cake and a thank-you card. And make sure you have things done on time or everyone will hate you."

-Sam Smith

ξLighting Tech

Definition

The Lighting Technician goes through Tech Runs to line up lighting cues and operates the lighting machinery in rehearsals and on performance days. Sometimes, the Lighting Technician, if experienced, gives the Director and Stage Manager ideas for which lights to use when.

Duties

The Lighting Technician has three very simple duties. The first one is to find either a previous technician still at the school, or Mr. Westerhof, or, if neither is available, the manual for the lighting device. Through one of these methods, the Lighting Technician must learn how to use the device. Since it's not very hard, even having to learn from a manual is cake.

The second is to perform the Tech Runs, which are usually done either in the week before performances or the week of performances. During these, the actors play the scenes from cue to cue as the script and the Director require lighting changes. A list of cues for lighting changes should be written up. Obvious ones are at scene changes, during which lighting is generally nil. This is also good practice.

The last duty is, dressed in black and wearing a headset, is to operate the machinery backstage during performances, just as you did in Tech Runs, watching for cues. You also must attend every rehearsal.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

There is not much required to being a Lighting Technician. Just a couple notes: it shouldn't be a person who tends to slack off because there are no deadlines, because then it ends up getting done at the last minute, and it should be a person who isn't completely blown away by the simplest technology. Test? If you can bowl with computerized scoring and *not* change people's names to "BUTT" and scores to "A MILLION", you qualify. Usually it's not by talent.

Function/Placement

The Lighting Technician is hopefully not quite a machine, but is pretty much doing a regular task. If some creativity is involved in suggestions for which lights to use when during Tech Run set-up, the Lighting Technician's role gets a small promotion in importance. Lighting Technicians aren't very proud.

Unless magical or very lucky or there are two Lighting Technicians in opposite casts, the Lighting Technician should have a cameo role or else none.

Quote

"Personally, I enjoyed being the lighting technician very much. Sometimes, backstage, it can be a bit boring, but it isn't that bad. I didn't have any knowledge of how to use a lighting board before, but I was taught how to use it, and it is actually very simple to use."

-Elizabeth Lombardi

ξPhotographer

Definition

The Photographer arranges for the class to have their pictures taken, takes the pictures, edits them on the computer for normality and excellence, and mounts them to be visible for people who are seeing the show. This is a one-person job and is quite straightforward.

Duties

The first step of the Photographer's duties is to have an arrangement in which to take the pictures. The Producer, and perhaps also the Teacher, will help choose a day on which the focus for the actors will be having pictures taken (other work will include memorization, backstage roles, etc), and a space in which they will be taken. The Producer will also assign a budget for the Photographer after discussion.

The Photographer must then take the photos, calling up each actor individually, and having somebody take their own. At home, or, if there is time, at school, the pictures are loaded onto the computer and depending on the Photographer's skill with Photoshop (or other image editing tools), touched up. Be sure not to go to a noticeable degree of being touched up – the key is in removing the noticeable degree of *not* being done so.

Third is to find a store that will print them – don't settle for home printing – and one that will supply frames, if the frames were not kept and available from last year's production. Printing the pictures and buying the frames should be done before blocking.

The last step is finding a place to mount the framed pictures for the performances. In the past, triangular pillars have been the standard, but feel free to be original. They should be mounted securely enough to not fall off if people bump into them, which they *will*. The actual mounting can happen near to performance. Actors' bios should be mounted too, and during set-strike the Photographer is the person to take it down.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

The Photographer really only needs two skills: the ability to take decent photos and access to image-editing software, which any TD student actually has. Being organized and dedicated is also helpful.

Function/Placement

The Photographer is one of those people with a not-so-central role that rather makes the whole show atmoshpere more enjoyable for the audience. During intermission, everybody loves nothing more than to familarize themselves with the faces of the actors.

The off-stage role of the Photographer has so small an effect on acting that I won't even mention it at all.

Quote

"I loved being the Photographer

as I love taking photos. My advice would be to practice beforehand so it all goes smoothly, and to a. take them all in one day and b. focus on the eyes!"

-Sarah Idzerda

ξMarketing/A/P

Definition

Marketing/Advertising/Playbill is the department, usually of three or four people, responsible for advertising the play to the body of students and possibly parents and membership adults; for creating the tickets and organizing the selling of the tickets in-school; and for creating the playbill that the audience finds when they come to the play that tells them anything they might want to know, and contains the actors' blurbs.

Duties

This is the most important thing: deciding a date to begin marketing on. Marketing *cannot* be done at the last minute. Because the success of the play and the class depend on the audience that comes to see the play, making sure that advertising begins at the right time is essential.

The campaign should be planned across various mediums, such as posters, announcements, and demonstrations, and certainly with the help of the entire team for a broader perspective. While there usually aren't any restrictions on how to advertise the play, it's still a good idea to get permission from the staff before putting things on the walls or in assemblies.

Marketing to a fairly small audience that is saturated with plays in this environment and which takes four whole years to replace itself is quite a challenge.

Creativity in your approach is especially important in a small high school, like TDCH. The students need to feel like they need to see the show, and, unfortunately, they have seen most of the marketing tactics imaginable used in the school already. You need to know when to talk to people and when to say nothing.

Ticket and playbill design is the other half. If nobody on the team is artistic, and you have to be sure that everyone has been asked what they can contribute, outsourcing is possible, to the class or even outside of the class. However, the ultimate design is still in the marketing team's hands. Don't rely on others and be sure to approve all designs.

The tickets are easier, and should be aimed towards being easy to recognize, with a symbol of the play's theme and the date and time mentioned, as well as a stub to rip off, or a similar such thing. These can be mass-printed usually with the school's resources.

The playbill is usually eight half-size pages, with the following: a cover; the cast credits; the crew credits; any words from the Director and/or Teacher; any mentions of outside help, of which the use of the school is always there; and the actors' bios and photos. Also, if anything is planned to happen during performance that might alarm the audience, that should be mentioned too (e.g. "a gunshot will be heard" or "the cigarettes smoked by the actors are not real, only herbal"). The impression of it being something interesting to read before the play begins is a major factor.

As for the writing of the bios, they should be fifty words or under and the actors should be encouraged to write them before any rehearsals. Actors that do not

write their bios in time simply don't get printed and it's worse off for them. Bios should include an actor's past theatre work, a quick note on their current work, and plans for future theatre experiences, nothing else.

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

The members of the MAP team should be diversely talented. The qualities should be in the fields of knowing what interests people, having a good artistic sense, being well-organized and good with making good-looking and sensible documents, and certainly a good sense of management to keep the team in order.

The most important quality is being able to make the school want to see the play. The rest are perks after the person's already been sold. Focus is good too ...!

Function/Placement

The MAP is a lot of the success of the play, since no matter how good the Director and Design departments make it, people have to know about it to come. MAP is also central to creating the mindset that will best make the audience walk out feeling satisfied.

MAP also don't have restrictions on their on-stage roles, as evidenced by the leads in 2008's *The Seagull*.

Quote

"Marketing designs play closely

with the Director's vision... and you have to have a good sense of mass thought. It was a good challenge."

-Andy Philp

ξDirector

Definition

The Director (or Artistic Director) is at the heart of the vision for the play and the work of the actors in terms of coaching them.

THE POSITION OF DIRECTOR IS NOT INCLUDED IN THIS 1st EDITION HANDBOOK 2008.

Duties

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

Function/Placement

Quote

"I pretty much loved it, but it's

a lot more work than you think. You do everything."

-Nathan Kalk

ξProducer

Definition

The Producer is responsible for the actual business of the play – that is, budget and revenue – and is the proverbial authority behind the whole show.

THE POSITION OF PRODUCER IS NOT INCLUDED IN THIS 1st EDITION HANDBOOK 2008.

Duties

Requirements: Qualities And Skills

Function/Placement

Quote

"What? lol, no, I'm not writing a

blurb to put in the Handbook. I prefer to get a zero."

-Sarah De Donato

ξTeacher

Definition

The teacher is an adult who puts in extra coaching for the actors and works closely with the Director to help them throughout the entire process, as well as with each individual actor – er, in this case, student.

Duties
Requirements: Qualities And Skills
Function/Placement

This position has already been filled. Better luck next time!

Quote

"This is is a lot of fun. I really

don't do anything at all, except talk with students. And hey, I get paid for it. Can you think of a better job? Because I can't."

-Richard Peters

This concludes the Official Upper Level Drama Handbook on the backstage roles involved in the play. All the roles have been well-documented here and compiled from the cooperative effort of the entire class and its teacher at the time of publication, Mr. Richard Peters. This Handbook was created in May 2008, following the class's production of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*, and was largely the work of Luke Sawczak.

This is the first edition of the Handbook. Extra copies can be obtained from Mr. Peters. The class whose quotes and analyses were used are these:

Rachelle Veldkamp	*Jason Normandin*
Lauren Linton	*Malcolm Tolman*
Noelle Zevenbergen	*Andy Philp*
Sarah Idzerda	*Nathan Kalk*
Luke Sawczak	*Sam Smith*
Denise Ligterink	*Abram Chan*
Rebecca Coster	*Sarah De Donato*
Kirstyn Krause	*Sofie Bédard*
Benjamin Feddema	*Ashley Cate*
Michael Atkins	*Emily Groot*
Tara-Joy Ubbens	*Mandie Sadler*
Marlee Vanderkooy	*Elizabeth Lombardi*