

## **Welcome to the Book of Common Knowledge!**

### **What is the Book of Common Knowledge?**

The Book of Common Knowledge, also known as the BOCK, was created to help students and faculty with any performance-based project they may choose to explore. The Book of Common Knowledge is truly a community-based living document. It has been compiled from interviews with students and faculty, post-mortem notes, and writings of former students. It is simply a book of helpful hints and suggestions that has been compiled from people who have come before you. While many people may have done theatre prior to college, Hampshire Theatre has a system that is unlike most others. The BOCK focuses on making theatre in this unique environment.

If you are looking for the rules and regulations of the theatre, you are in the wrong place (See Hampshire College Theatre Handbook). I would also like to note that large portions of The BOCK were taken from Hampshire Alumni, Mark Thomas' Division III titled, *Hampshire College Theatre: Production Styles Past and Present*.

### **How do I contribute?**

The BOCK is constantly being updated. If you have a suggestion or change you think should be made just go to the theatre board secretary. Updates will be made on a regular basis and new versions will be printed annually. Contact information for all Theatre Board members should be posted on the Theatre Board Bulletin board, located across from the Box Office.

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## The History

Theatre at Hampshire has undergone a tremendous evolution from the college's inception to present. Within this evolution, there are six clearly definable stages of development. Whether because of factors, which so radically shifted the ideas and methods, or because of the absence of those factors the way in which theatre was conceived of as an art, and as a part of this college has changed. The ways that theatre is supported, and the ways that theatre is created has changed along with this. The points where the shifts take place are sometimes traceable to a single event, and sometimes are a gradual progression, but it can not be denied that somewhere along the road some turns have been made. Some stages of development have been more rewarding than others, but each has built upon the previous model's strengths and weaknesses; each preparing the program to move forward to the next step in a unique way. A history is a rich and exciting thing, and this section cannot begin to explain the entire progression, but hopefully it will allow even newcomers to the program to get a sense of the past, and more importantly the future. While this account is not complete and full of gaps, it is my hope that alumni, and faculty will step forward to fill them, resulting in a more complete account of the events that guided the evolution of a program.

*“Alumns” is not a real word, but rather a Hampshire invention.*

### 1970-1973

The college was opened, and by choice, there was no theatre program. It was the opinion of the founders that each of the other four-colleges had a theatre program, so it was not needed at Hampshire. There are few records from this time, but indications are that students initiated projects on their own, with no support, or financial backing. There was no central organization supporting production, so each show was on its own. Political pressures, and real confusion as to how this work would fit into the divisional process, some of which had not been formalized yet, were a big problem. Faculty and students lobbied the administration and the School of Humanities and Arts for the creation of a school recognized Theatre Program. The phrase “Whatever you can beg, steal, or borrow” took on a new meaning as theatre students “borrowed” set construction materials from the stock that was being used to finish construction of some of the campus buildings, and slowly began to take over space, beginning with the Division IV snack bar located in the then Academic Building II.

### 1973-1977

Theatre at Hampshire was changed forever when the Executive Committee of the School of Humanities and Arts under pressure from students and faculty, approved the proposal, spearheaded by faculty member Liam O'Brien, creating an officially recognized theatre program, and creating Theatre Board to oversee it. With the clarity of a ringing bell, a message was sent. Theatre had found a home on Hampshire Campus. Continuing in the grass roots tradition established earlier, theatre students continued to push themselves and their new found program into whatever spaces they could find. Effectively taking over and pushing out the Division IV snack bar, located in the newly named Emily Dickinson Hall. The program continued to grow, like a newborn, long anticipated, yet not quite prepared for.

### **1977-1983**

The initial excitement over, the theatre program and Theatre Board, for they were essentially one unit, began to struggle with ideas of identity, goals, and the need to define itself. The first incarnation of the Theatre Handbook is drafted, approved, and revised several times during this period. A productive, but at times frustrating period of development, it is suggested that Theatre Board dissolve itself. Instead, the system of production is redefined and a series of retreats take place in which many aspects of Hampshire Theatre are examined. The program begins to define itself as a production component and a curricular component, overseen by Theatre Board and the Faculty respectively. The physical plant of the theatre spaces begin to be more and more of a problem. Sagging walls, leaking roofs, and other threats to safety hamper production and the program's development.

### **1983-1992**

This period begins with the completion of the EDH renovation. For the first time the Theatre Program really has facilities that were designed for what was being done in them. Flush with excitement the members of the program put aside the discussions of how to do things, and concentrate on doing them. By 1985 student apathy is a major concern, the handbook has been rewritten by the staff TD, and there is no major revision completed for another ten years. The trend of separating the production component from the curricular component continues with the program being officially separated into two entities for the first time. There are occasional discussions of policy changes during this period, but these are seldom followed through on.

### **1992-1995**

In some ways a continuation of the last ten years, Theatre Board is stagnant, accomplishing little. Production and curriculum are completely separate entities by this point, with Theatre Board no longer receiving funding from the school of H&A, rather moving onto the list of Community Council funded groups. The Faculty has begun a new course entitled From Page to Stage, for first year students. This is intended to serve as an introductory class, helping initiate students into the program. The difference between this period and the last is that small groups of students began to see the program with a longer-range vision than their four years in it.

### **1995- 2006**

The Hampshire Theatre Program is waking up and looking around, like a bear finished hibernating for the winter. A major Handbook revision was begun and completed, and students are taking an active role in defining their environment again. Students are again entering into a welcoming, vital place contributing to this awakening. Faculty have recognized the opportunity afforded by the hiring of a third permanent faculty member to "reinvent" theatre at Hampshire. Theatre Board has increased its membership, and is turning its attention inward. There is the sense of a new beginning, and old assumptions are being challenged. One major problem any student centered process must face is the short time which a student spends at the college. The loss of the leaders often killing any sort of momentum. However, at present it appears that as older students graduate, younger students are stepping forward to keep the process moving. Only time will tell

whether the next level of accomplishment and development will be reached, but signs appear to be positive.

**2006-Present**

Hampshire Theatre is again going through a time of re-evaluation and modernization. With a much-needed update of *The Hampshire Theatre Handbook* underway, the theatre program is looking to diversify and experiment. With these updates, some changes have been made including a new emphasis on smaller workshops and independent productions and a change in the Hampshire season, from six to five slotted shows. There has also been an exciting addition to the Theatre Faculty; the new Assistant Professor position focuses on child drama. Out of this position, a new theatre entity has been created: *Seedling Productions*, which concentrates on child drama (Theatre for Young Audiences, Children's Theatre, and Creative Drama). On an unfortunate note, the Theatre Board has been cut financially from Ficom. It remains unsure as to where funding will come from in the future.

## Getting Started

Getting started in Hampshire Theatre can be tricky, because the season is slotted in the spring for the next year. Many of the major production roles are filled early. This is especially difficult for first-year students who were not around for the slotting process. It is not a lost cause however, because there are always some major positions that are not filled, and there are always people looking for an assistant, or a crew position. It helps to know what area you hope to get into, but it is also possible to try a variety of positions early on. If you decide that directing is the way to go for you, you should stage a workshop or two, not only will this get you closer to becoming eligible for studio slotting for the next year, it will provide valuable experience and help you learn the system you will be working with. Talk to a member of the faculty or Theatre Board for more information here. In other areas, the path usually starts with an assistant or crew position. You should be able to find a position that gives you a glimpse at the area(s) you are interested in. Contact the appropriate designer, or technical director for information. You can also contact the Staff Technical Director, usually found in or near the scene shop, or the Staff Costume Supervisor, usually found in the costume shop. Remember to push yourself. Explore an area you have not tried before. This is the best way to get to know people in this area, and how theatre work is done.

Sometimes it can be frustrating to get started and get involved, but it just takes a little bit of effort. Once your name is out there, as someone willing to work, you will soon have more people calling than you can find time to work with. The best way for new students to meet people is by attending the Hampshire Theatre Open House. This event takes place at the beginning of each semester. The open house not only allows you to meet people but students who are working on current projects often use this time to recruit for the upcoming shows.

Do not forget, as the spring roles around, slotting will happen for the next year. Be sure to get your name on some of those applications. That will insure that you are able to work in the areas you want come the next year.

*There is a doorbell mounted in the ceiling of the lobby, one control for it is in the box office, one in the Mainstage Light Booth.*

## **Facilitator**

### *Basic Tips*

- Read the Theatre Handbook
- You are asked many questions, all the time. You should be very familiar with everyone else's job on theatre board, so you can direct questions to the appropriate person.
- It is essential to know faculty and feel comfortable speaking to them.
- The more experience you have with the theatre process the better. There will be a lot of different kinds of questions directed at you and the more you know the more helpful you can be.
- Have every Theatre Board Member's contact information

### *Running the Meeting*

- Post the agenda ahead of time so professors/other members can add or edit earlier. This is also helpful so that people can think about the agenda ahead of time.
- Make sure the door is open during the open meeting, or post a sign marking the open meeting.
- Sit at the head of the table. This helps let you see everyone and make sure everyone's issues are addressed.
- Keep track of who is raising their hands and what order they did so.
- Start each meeting by going around and having time for general check in's.
- If there is *anyone*, new at the meeting makes sure everyone introduces himself or herself.
- Go over the agenda for the day; ask if anything needs to be added.
- Next on the schedule should be show and job reports. More likely than not, the people at the meeting are there to report on jobs or shows they are working on. Doing this first allows job reports and show reports to be done as soon as possible.
- Take care of guests before moving onto the rest of the agenda.

## **Budget Coordinator**

### *Basic Tips*

- Read the Theatre Handbook
- Save everything.
- Have a record of all Budget requests even if they are turned down.
- Use a computer program like excel to do the math and organize the numbers.
- Always have a hard copy of the updated budget.
- Bring a calculator to every Theatre Board Meeting
- It is your job to make sure the numbers are right. Double-check all the receipts and the final budget of each show.
- Take note of where each productions money is going. They should not be spending all their money on Pizza.
- Remind producers that the books for their show should close at strike.
- You should not have to be every producer/ slotting agent's babysitter- but you are.
- Remind them if they want their money, they have to do the work.
- When money is allocated to a show, give them a deadline for their receipts. Be firm. Tell them if you do not get them by a certain time, you will not be able to reimburse them.
- Think ahead. Before you ever allocate money, check the books. Be sure you have that money to spend.
- If there are any budget changes that happen during the week let theatre board know what the most recent balance is.
- At the mid-year community meeting, make a budget report that the community can see. Transparency is important and the theatre community has a right to know where the money is going.
- At the beginning of the semester, evaluate the budget. Have a discussion with theatre board about what the priorities are for that year. Can you afford guest artist? Can you fund Division II's? etc.

- It is a great idea to hold a meeting for Theatre Division III students at the beginning of the year. They will not have a concrete budget but this will give you a sense of how many requests you will be getting as well as when you should be expecting them.

*Some things to remember*

- Do not forget to save at least \$100 for the Theatre Community BBQ.
- It is important that there is also money saved for Staff TD to buy some extra equipment. Have a meeting with theatre staff and faculty concerning what the Theatre needs.
- In the last two months, there will usually be an increase in budget requests. Keep this in mind and pace yourself with the budget.

### **Space Monitor and Workshop Coordinator**

- Read the Theatre Handbook
- The space calendar should already be made up and blocked off by three-day periods for workshops, week long periods for DIV III's and 3 or 4 weeks for slotted shows. If time is not blocked off that way, do it as soon as possible.
- It is usually good to have two DIV III show slots a semester, Plus one in mid January, if people want it.
- Go to EACH faculty member ASAP and ask when his or her classes are being held.
- Faculty should get first priority over the 3- day slots. Go meet with them prior to opening it up to the community.
- Space is given to students on a first come, first serve basis.
- You should always have a physical and digital copy of the schedule. It is always good to post online, as well as on the board outside room 1.
- Find a system to display the calendar within the first week that you are elected.
- Go through every space at LEAST once a week to make sure everything is clean and safe. Talk to staff TD if it is not.
- Make sure everyone knows and respects the 24 hour rule: if they are going to need the space unlocked they must contact you 24 hours prior to use.
- Make sure the spaces are locked the way they should be as often as possible.
- Think about space contracts. Discuss these contracts with Theatre Board and Faculty.
- Feel free to update contracts as needed so that they reflect the current needs.
- Keep a calendar of all upcoming events, including all workshops posted.
- You should have everyone's contact information.

### **Properties Monitor**

- Read the Theatre Handbook.
- Answer Emails as promptly as possible.
- Try to schedule your meeting times with individuals while the shop supervisor/ TD is available to answer questions.
- Clarify everything. Go over what you expect of the borrower.
- Clarify what you mean by *clean* costumes.
- If items are not returned in proper condition bring the issue to Theatre Board to discuss how to address the issue.
- Spend time in the costume loft, props loft, and shop, to better acquaint yourself with the theatre resources.
- Know who the costume designer, TD, and props manager of current shows are.
- Remember that slotted shows have priority over materials so be sure to check with the slotted show before giving anything away.

### **Faculty/ Staff Liaison**

- Read the Theatre Handbook.
- You are charged with holding onto the resource guide for students interested in *Theatre for Young Audiences* and making the resources for those students known to the general Hampshire community.
- You are the link for both the faculty and Theatre Board so write down everything. This way you will not forget anything.
- You do not need to say everything. Just because you wrote it down does not mean it needs to be said.
- Keep your story straight and do not sugar coat things for faculty- this just leads to misunderstandings.
- During Theatre Board meetings and faculty meetings, you will inevitably hear gossip. Keep it to yourself.
- Be on time to faculty meetings, even if the faculty members are not.
- If there is tension or a disagreement between faculty and theatre board be respectful but also remember you are representing Theatre Board and have a responsibility to relay their concerns and or frustrations.

### **Community Contact**

- Read the Theatre Handbook.
- Your job is to know what is going on around the Hampshire campus.
- Good places to look for information include Intranet, Daily Jolt, Theatre Community Archives, Facebook, Five-College Theatre pages.
- Keep all information about upcoming shows in one place.
- Check your email at least daily. Some emails need to be sent out more urgently than others are.
- Read emails carefully to determine if the email is appropriate for the entire theatre community to receive.
- The emails you send out are archived. To find them, go to the administrative interface for the lists and click on “list archives”.
- If someone asks, you to forward an email to the theatre community give them the list serve address and ask them to email it themselves. This way, people who reply to the email can reply directly to the person who requested the email to be sent.
- Advertise events in as many different places as possible- including all the same places, you check to get information.
- Have a concrete idea of what each theatre board member does. You will get many questions in this position and you will need to know who to refer these questions to.

**Secretary**

- Write the notes on a computer.
- Email the notes to the theatre community and faculty weekly
- Save all of the notes during the semester.
- Post the notes on the Theatre bulletin board.
- Keep the notes from the closed meeting separate. These notes are for Theatre Board members only and are to be used if needed for referencing.
- If you are unsure if something is appropriate to the notes you should just ask. If the group decides it is inappropriate it probably should cease being spoken about during the open meeting.

### **Theatre Board Member**

- Read the Theatre Handbook.
- Becoming a member is one of the best ways to join Hampshire theatre.
- Many members are often new to theatre board- listen to what is going on and observe the process.
- A member's job depends on the needs of Theatre Board.
- Volunteer for tasks that need to be done.
- Keep an eye on the other positions in Theatre Board. If it looks like someone is getting overly worked volunteer to take some responsibility.
- As a member, you have the possibility of taking on nothing or taking on excessive amounts. Be sure to find that balance.
- Split the work equally between all members.
- You should know what is going on in the Theatre program so keep your ears open.
- Members are just as important as any other position so don't be afraid to speak your mind.

## **Show Liaison**

### *Basic Tips*

- Go to the first read through and the first production meeting. Make sure everyone is aware of who you are and what you are there for.
- Get the rehearsal schedule and contact list of the entire cast and crew.
- Don't go to too many rehearsals, especially early on. Your purpose is to be an *outsider*.
- You should be going to some kind of meeting about once a week; maybe switch off, one week production meeting, next week rehearsal.
- The key person you should be in touch with is the slotting agent of the show.
- Read the script.
- If there are traumatic, violent, or other unsettling scenes, ask questions about how the director and actors are dealing with them.
- You must fill in the Faculty/ Staff Liaison on the shows well being

### *Individual Meetings*

- Try to hold one –on-one meeting with as many members of the production as possible.
- Remind them that the meeting is confidential.
- Ask about how the process is going- what is going well, what is of concern. Ask them to tell you one thing that is going really well and one thing that could be improved upon.
- Let them know this can be a time for venting.
- After venting, try to brainstorm together about what can be done about any problems.
- Make sure you make decisions together before you act on any of their concerns. It can sometimes be frustrating as liaison to hear a problem and not be able to do anything about it, however, it is ultimately up to that person to tell you what you can and cannot do.
- If the matter concerns an issue of safety or someone's well being and you feel the need to act try to let him or her know what you are planning to do, even if it is against his or her wishes.

*Post- Mortem*

- Begin with affirmations. This starts post-mortem off with a good energy.
- Don't rush. This might take a long time so be prepared.
- Don't let it drag. Make sure the meeting is moving and things are not being repeated.
- Remind everyone that this is not the time to vent.
- Ask them to preface their comments with, "For the next show". This helps keep the meeting productive.
- Keep copious notes and type them up for the Theatre Board secretary.
- Post the post-mortem notes on the theatre bulletin board.

### **Slotting agent**

The slotting agent is the person who has the original conception of the show. They are in charge of finding a team and applying for a slot. (See Handbook for slotting guidelines.) The slotting agent may play any role in the production but is ultimately responsible for everything. The slotting agent is the key link between the production and Theatre Board and they are required to go to weekly theatre board meetings during the run of the show. The slotting agent is ultimately in charge of making sure the show goes up. While everyone has his or her separate job to do in the production, if there is any serious problem, the slotting agent is responsible.

#### *Preparing to Slot*

- Pick a script that appeals to you, but is likely to appeal to others as well.
- It is wrong to slot in the place of someone who does not have the requirements.
- Pick a time to mount the show that does not conflict with your expected leave plans.
- When forming a production team take into account the commitments of the members of the team.
- Word your slotting statement to make your proposal seem as strong as possible. Emphasize the positive.
- Have everything in *on time*.
- Find a team you trust.
- Let members of your possible production team know what they are getting into.

#### *Helpful Hints*

- You are in charge of borrowed items. Make sure you are aware of all of the items you are using.
- If you have concerns, go to the theatre faculty or theatre board to talk about them. Sooner is better than later.
- Ask faculty to come to rehearsals.
- You need to make sure the hierarchy is made and followed.

## **Director**

The Hampshire director is very similar to the professional concept of the Director; with the addition of a sort of artistic director responsibility. The Director at Hampshire is really the provider of the artistic vision. On the practical side, the Director handles the actors, analyzes the script, works with the designers to establish a “vision” for the production, and is in general the head honcho when it comes to the artistic side of things. They are most often at Hampshire because of that coupling with the slotting agent position in charge of the entire show, however in professional models there is usually a producer, artistic director, or board of directors who oversees their work. While this is the typical definition of director each show at Hampshire is run slightly differently. Depending on who the slotting agent is or who’s Div work is being showcased the responsibilities and hierarchy will change.

### *Basic Tips*

- Check in with all members of cast in crew at different points.
- New play fest is a great place to find talent.
- Don’t forget to reach out to the five-college community.
- If you are not ready for a slotted show do a workshop.
- Take directing at the other colleges. This will better your directing and will also help you find actors.
- Sometimes it is a good idea to cross out stage directions and sometimes it is not. Read them first- then decide. This also highly depends on the play you are doing.
- The phrase-“say your line like this...” is generally frowned upon.
- Think process not product. Usually the product will turn out better this way anyways.
- 
- Respect your actors. Remember they are learning too.
- Be flexible!
- If you have taken directing classes, don’t separate theory from practice. Use what you know.
- If you can, say goodbye on opening night (not literally). Let your stage manager and your actors take control from opening night on.

*Rehearsals*

- A director prepares!
- It is great to be spontaneous however; you should have a basic idea of what you plan to achieve in a rehearsal.
- Trust yourself. If you are confident in what you are doing the actors will be more confident in you as well.
- Create a safe environment. This does not mean people need to be in their comfort zone but they have to feel safe enough to be able to experiment.
- First 15 minutes of rehearsal are extremely important. It sets the rhythm for the entire rehearsal.
- Breathing exercises at the beginning of rehearsal help to focus people.
- Asking faculty to come to a rehearsal is OK. It is nice to have an extra set of eyes.
- Collaboration and discussion often leads to a richer performance.
- Give the actors homework.
- Every show you ever work on will be different. Be flexible and know that what worked for one show might not work for the next.
- Ask your actors for feedback on your exercises.
- The best work happens when the actors are off book
- You need to be very aware of what your actors need. You might have planned a focus exercise but if they need energy you should be flexible.

*Callbacks/ First rehearsal:*

- Let the people auditioning know how you work.
- Tell the actors what your goals are for this show and what you expect of them.
- Let your interpretation be known, and let people know if you are flexible with that interpretation.
- Make your expectations known early on: What is the time commitment, what is the rehearsal structure like?

- Make sure you are clear on where you fall in the hierarchy of the production. Make sure everyone else knows this as well.

#### *Traumatic Scenes*

- Address the nature of the scenes during callbacks so people know what they are getting themselves into.
- When dealing with traumatic scenes make sure to discuss the scene before jumping into it.
- Have a full cast discussion about the nature of the scenes. Make sure to also hold one on one meetings with the actors directly involved.
- Continue to check up on your actors to see how they are dealing with the material.
- Make yourself available to your cast at all times- give them your number. Let them know that they are free to call you.

#### *Co- Directing*

- Co- directing is hard and often disastrous.
- Each director should have a specific job- Ex- one director focusing on physicality and the other on text.
- Don't argue in front of your actors. This is a sure way to lose their respect.
- Talk before and after every rehearsal.
- Know who has the veto power.
- No good cop bad cop routine
- Directors often need to make decisions on the spot. Therefore, you need to be co-directing with someone you have full trust in.

## **Producer**

The Producer at Hampshire is an interesting position. In the commercial theatre world, the Producer is the equivalent of the Slotting Agent: The person who gets the ball rolling and hires the staff. At Hampshire the Producer is usually brought on after the script has been selected. It is a difficult position to fill, as the Producer is charged with making certain decisions, but there is always the Slotting Agent above him/her. In the ideal case at Hampshire the person who will be the SA comes to the Producer as soon as they decide to do a show, and together the SA, Director and the Producer pick a staff. Then in this ideal situation, the Director would be in charge of all things artistic, and the Producer in charge of all things administrative, splitting the Stage Manager between them. It is highly recommended that the Producer and the Director/ SA sit down and have a frank discussion about division of power, prior to any real commitments being made.

### *Basic Tips*

- Your job has the most responsibility and least action. Your job primarily is to know things.
- It is your duty to introduce everyone to everyone.
- Try to have everyone, cast and crew, attend the read through.
- Artistic decisions are not your call unless you are asked.
- Always keep your eyes open for problems
- If you see a problem address it immediately. It is better to point out a concern and be proved wrong than to let it pass.
- If you are dealing with drama queens ask your show liaison for assistance. Sometimes you have to weather the storm. If changes need to be made don't wait!
- If the show involves outside sources including spaces or borrowing you need to be very aware. You are responsible for making sure positive connections are made and sustained.
- You can't know the answer to everything but you should know where to go to find the answers.
- Call the president of the college and trustees as soon as tickets go on sale. Reserve them seats ASAP.
- If there is going to be a talk back try and have it occur the night that the president is there.

- As soon as the tickets go on sale pass around the box office sheets to the production team and cast so that they can reserve seats.

*Production meetings* (For more information see Production Meetings)

- Make sure a full hierarchy is created at the first production meeting.
- Always know who has veto power.
- Run your production meetings efficiently.
- Start with a life check in. How is everyone doing?
- Check in with production team individuals outside of production meetings.
- Don't wait until the next production meeting to solve problems.
- Don't let people tell you everything is fine. Ask specific questions. What have you done this week?
- Keep people to their schedule.
- Give people specific homework.

*Budget* (For more information see Budget)

- Make the budget ASAP.
- Create a chart that includes how much someone is asking for- how much they are allotted- and how much they end up spending. This is the best way to keep all the numbers in one place.
- Using a program like Microsoft Excel is very helpful. Remember to also have a hard copy of the budget as well.
- Leave room for unexpected costs.
- You are fiscally responsible for the show, so make sure you are checking up on all members of the team.
- Be realistic on what you can and cannot afford.
- If you have budget questions or concerns talk to the Theatre Board Budget Coordinator.

- Books should be closed at strike.
- Create a final budget report that includes where all the money went.
- Hand everything in to the Budget Coordinator of Theatre Board no later than a week after strike.

*Calendar* (a general format of a show calendar is provided)

- Production meetings generally occur once a week.
- For the first couple of weeks you should schedule separate design meetings. Design meetings and production meetings can eventually merge.
- Once you approach cue-to-cue short production meetings should be scheduled daily.
- Always plan for design to take about two days longer than it is scheduled to.
- Don't set a date for rehearsal props- tell director they can set that date depending on how they work.

*Finding a Crew*

- Make a list of all positions you will need filled.
- It is your job to fill all positions. Fill all of them as early as possible. Even small jobs like run crew.
- Try to find both a graphic designer AND publicist.
- Visit Theatre classes.
- Don't forget about five college students. Email five college theatre professors and ask them if they would announce opportunities.
- Try to avoid using people who do not work well together.
- Let them know what the time commitment is and exactly what their job entails.

## **Stage- Manager**

The Stage Manager is one of the most all encompassing positions in Theatre. Chances are that if anyone will need to pick up the slack as the production goes along, it is the Stage Manager. Responsibilities vary from sweeping the stage to calling the show. Once a show is up the ownership of it shifts from the Director to the Stage Manager. This is one of the most pivotal roles in any production. If the Stage Manager is bad everyone else will find themselves overextended, and things not getting done, but if the Stage Manager is good, things no one thought about until too late will have been done for weeks, and things that were discussed but never carried through will be carried through by the Stage Manager. A great stage manager is a rare thing; it takes a certain type of person. They must be secure in their own skills, and able to maintain a high level of alertness over a long period of time. A Stage Manager is by definition a manager, and every manager must be able to remain cool under pressure. Often the Stage Manager becomes the target of misplaced aggressions from the other members of the Production team, the Stage Manager must not buy into this behavior, or respond to it. In addition the Stage Manager is in the interesting position of being placed between the actors, and the crew. They must help to keep the actors happy, without alienating the crew. The Stage Manager also calls the show, meaning tells the Ops (the people who run light, sound, etc. during the show) when to start the cues. This takes the ability to remain relaxed under the extreme pressure of being the pivotal role of every moment of the show. The Stage Manager never gets a break, never has time off. No one can describe all the details of being a Stage Manager, but Lawrence Stern does a pretty good job, in what is considered the definitive guide to Stage Management, simply titled *Stage Management*. This is a must read for every Stage Manager. The Hampshire Stage Managers guide is also helpful, see the staff TD to get a copy. In addition Directors are encouraged to discuss expectations with the potential Stage Manager, prior to their hiring.

### *Basic Tips*

- Be ready to dedicate about four hours every night for up to a month – SM most importantly needs to be at every rehearsal and production meeting
- Must be easy to get in contact with.
- It is your responsibility to sweep the stage or find someone to do it.
- Find an assistant stage manager. Let them know that they may not be active for a while but they must come to production meetings and rehearsals because by the time they are needed they must know the show very well.
- Make a contact list with EVERYONE on it.
- Be prepared to talk about rehearsals at production meetings.

- Your key contact is the producer.
- Make it clear to the actors whether or not they are allowed or encouraged to come to production meetings (something determined by either the Producer or the Slotting Agent)
- Remember your tone sets the tone for everyone around you.
- You need to be able to answer every question thrown at you about the show.
- You need to be prepared for emergencies.
- Remind your actors they have to be at both strike and post-mortem.
- Once Technical Rehearsals start you are in charge of the show. (For more information see, Technical Rehearsals).
- Be positive and find all the joy and excitement that exists in this job and you'll do great, I swear.

### *Rehearsals*

- You should be the first person in the space and the last one out.
- You must be punctual.
- Don't forget to lock up.
- Meet the director half an hour before each rehearsal to review what is going on and what s/he needs of you.
- It is your responsibility to make sure the space is clean before and after rehearsals. This does not make you the maid. Demand that your actors pick up after themselves.
- Use the first minutes of rehearsals for notes you may have. Let everyone know that this is the time to make announcements.
- . You are in track of time. If anyone is late, call them.
- Take notes as the rehearsal is going on.
- The notes that you take should be put into rehearsal notes and emailed after each rehearsal to the production team.
- Do not disturb the director while he is directing. Instead of whispering things in

his/her ear, give him/her a note if you have to. This way s/he can ignore it if s/he chooses to.

- Meet briefly with the director after each rehearsal (this can just be while you are packing up). This is a time where you can communicate about how the rehearsal went and see if there is anything needed of you.

### *Scheduling*

- The sooner the rehearsal schedule can get out the better. Make the schedule go all the way to tech week. This way people will be able to work around your schedule.
- In figuring out the rehearsal schedule it is important to be realistic. Take into consideration how much time your actors can spend in rehearsal.
- For as long as possible try to give your actors at least one day off a week.
- Make a strict schedule for pre-show warm-ups. Including enough time for group warm up, individual warm up, and costume and makeup.

### *Organization*

- Make a prompt book before rehearsals begin. It is helpful if it is single sided. Have a blank piece of paper opposite each page so you can draw the set ground plan on each page.
- Your notes should be clear enough so that anyone who picks them up can understand them.
- Try to use the same prompt book you create in rehearsals for the performances.
- Color code each cue. Colored sticky tabs are usually the best. Just make sure they don't fall out.

### *Once The Show Starts*

- You are in charge of clip lights and any other backstage item that aids the actor.
- You are in charge of the headsets. The Master Electrician should be able to help you do this if needed.
- You should put tape between all doors used in the space so they do not slam or click. You have to do this every night in order to lock up after the show.
- You are in charge of photo call. Talk to the staff TD early on to schedule this. Speak to designers so you know what they want photographed.

- Don't necessarily run photo call in order. Think about what makes the most sense in terms of scene and costume changes.

## **Scenic Designer**

Surprisingly enough the Scenic Designer is responsible for the design of the set. Like any designer, they need to keep in close consultation with the Director, and the other designers. The process of designing a set is a collaborative one, all the designers and the Director have input into things such as palette colors, and heights of playing spaces. Most scenic elements have an impact on other elements of the production, for example the exits and space divisions affect the Director's blocking. The things that each designer must deliver for the "set design complete" deadline vary from show to show based on the technical needs of a production. In addition, the Scenic Designer is responsible for any scenic painting that is specific to the show, meaning anything beyond painting things black.

### *Basic Tips*

- Read the script as soon as you can.
- Don't assume that the scripts needs are the same as the shows needs. Talk to the director about your plans.
- Schedule a meeting with the faculty TD early in your design plans.
- You should have an idea of the overall direction or interpretation of the show.
- Your entire design should be done on time so the TD can start work ASAP.
- Communicate with your technical director daily.
- Make the build schedule with the TD.
- You usually are in charge of painting the set.
- Talk to the director often.
- Come to rehearsals. This will give you an idea of what the show needs technically.
- When dealing with a characters personal space it is often helpful to hold meetings with particular actors. Ask questions like what color do you feel your room would be.
- Talk to actors about any safety concerns.

### *Production Meetings*

- Protect yourself. Fully present all of your ideas as early as possible.

- Come into production meetings with a swatch or other visual examples.
- Scale ground plan of whole set including seating.
- A scale model or renderings of some type, which allows the Director and other Designers to visualize the set prior to its completion.
- Elevations from as many points of view as are needed to convey the appropriate information.
- Detailed drawings of any unusual pieces.
- You need to make sure that everyone can visualize what is in your head.
- Know your place in the production hierarchy before you sign on.
- Ask what decisions are yours to make.
- Set designing should be collaborative. You need to know what the director and all the other designers have in mind.
- When a director says “no” to something you have done it is appropriate to ask why. Your work should not be disrespected and changes should be justified.
- Remember that you are all working in the best interest of the show (this should not be about egos).

## **Lighting Designer**

The Lighting Designer is responsible for developing the lighting vision for the show. Like any designer the Lighting Designer needs to keep in close consultation with the Director, and the other designers. The process of designing lights is a collaborative one, all the designers and the Director have input into things such as palette colors, and the overall look and feel of the show. Lighting is probably the most difficult design element to explain to others. Unlike scenic, or costume designs, there is no picture you can draw that really conveys the sense of what you are doing. This is precisely the reason that the Lighting Designer must take extra steps to try to convey what they are trying to accomplish, and while words fall flat when compared to the effect of an actual light shining on an actual person there are things the designer can do to make it clearer. Lighting is also different from the other design disciplines in that it is never really seen until very late in the process, usually during tech, so the Lighting Designer must be extra vigilant to avoid a conflict between their design vision and that of the other designers. Drafting a lighting plot, the blueprint for the lighting design and acting as an overseer for the Master Electrician are the primary responsibilities.

In addition the Lighting Designer is one of the central figures in the “Tech Week Festivities.” Setting the timing, and composition of the light cues tends to be one of the most time consuming parts of getting a show ready for opening, partially because the bulk of it is condensed over three days rather than the entire production period.

### *Basic Tips*

- Talk about what you expect from your ME early on
- Depending on the experience of your ME you may have a larger or smaller amount of responsibility.
- Familiarize yourself with Vector Works. This is a CAD program and is the #1 program you will find in the industry. This allows you to render images
- Be on call for cue- to – cue.
- You are an overseer of tech- rehearsals. This does not mean you always have to be there but check in regularly.
- You should be in close contact with the director.
- Sit in on a good amount of rehearsals. Your design will be dictated by a lot of the blocking.

### *Helping Others Understand*

- Arrange early in the production process to have a “Lighting Lab.” For this the Lighting Designer hangs a few instruments puts in some of the color that might be in the show, and shows the rest of the designers.

## Hampshire Theatre Book Of Common Knowledge

- If there is no time for a light lab bring in some gels and a mag light to show at production meetings.
- Bring in lots of reference pictures. Sites such as corbus.com and archive.org are great sources.
- Movies can also be a great reference to help people conceptualize your vision.

## **Sound Designer**

The Sound Designer is responsible for all the sound of a production. This can vary from finding the sound for a ringing phone, to composing an original score. Every show has different demands and the appropriateness of sound varies along with appropriateness of other design elements. Like the Lighting Designer there is an inherent difficulty in sharing design material especially for abstract sounds that might not have been created.

### *Basic Tips*

- Talk to the production team about the overall vision of the show. Make sure there is one cohesive understanding of the production.
- Before you begin working with the system set up a meeting with the faculty TD.
- Depending on the complexity of the design, the setting of sound cues can be another large time consumer during tech. Remind the production team, specifically the stage manager, to take this into consideration when scheduling tech rehearsals.
- When dealing with unfamiliar sounds or music it is important to bring samples for the Director and other designers to hear as early in the process as possible to avoid unfortunate surprises.
- You should have access to an extensive amount of audio. Some places to look are: archive.org, <http://freesound.iva.epu.edu>, or talk to the faculty TD about gaining access to the BBC audio collection.
- Use the library basement to work on sound editing and recording.
- Some helpful applications to get to know include: Q lab, pro-tools, sound track, Quicktime, and garage band.
- Make sure you know how to use the sound board.
- Make sure you know what the other designers are doing.
- Make your cues as easy as possible for the sound operator.
- Learn the patching system (how to set up speakers).

## **Costume Designer**

At Hampshire, the Costume Designer is responsible for the costumes, and usually the hair and make-up as well. Like any designer, they need to keep in close consultation with the Director, and the other designers. The process of designing costumes is a collaborative one, all the designers and the Director have input into things such as palette colors, and fabric choices. At Hampshire like most places, what ends up on stage is a combination of things built for the show, borrowed for the show, and things bought for the show. Due to staffing constraints, the Costume Designer seems to do much of the building as well as the design. This is not to say that it needs to be this way, but rather that it tends to be this way, so be aware of the time commitment involved. The Costume Designer also responsible for keeping up communication with the Shop Supervisor

### *Basic Tips*

- The Costume Designer should schedule fittings with the actors as soon as possible. It is helpful to do this as early as the first read through because the later in the process it gets the harder it is to find the time to take care of this necessity.
- Read the script. Determine the overall look and feel of the show. Take notes as to the physical costume needs of each character in the show including wigs, shoes, and jewelry.
- Find volunteers. There is a lot of legwork in producing a show of any size. The more "hands" you have at your disposal the better. Even having one extra person around to sew on buttons at a crucial time can make all the difference.
- Meet with the Director and Stage Manager. Discuss in detail the costume plot of the show, especially specific costume pieces they want to see.
- find out about rehearsal pieces the actors need to work with. The more time actors have in long skirts, hats, masks, shoes, etc. the better.
- Check in the Costume Shop filing cabinet to see if any of the cast members' measurements are on file. If the measurement sheet is more than a year or so old, re-take the measurements.
- Present the costumes on the cast as an ensemble to the Director, Stage Manager, and the company in a Costume Parade. Generally, this occurs at the end of Cue-to-Cue, giving everyone a chance to get a feel of the whole production. Don't worry about having everything totally finished.
- Secret wardrobe management tip! 1/3 vodka to 2/3 water in a spray bottle sprayed under the sleeves of garments can refresh them between shows if cleaning isn't an option.

- Finish EVERYTHING by second dress. This means any final adjustments to the fit or the look of each costume, making sure that each costume is in character, making sure all costume pieces are labeled and pressed and pretty. Be sure that you have all props and accessories for each costume change.
- Clean, catalogue and store the costumes. Consult with the Shop Supervisor about the best way to clean everything, and where to re-stock it all afterwards!
- Lists and charts are incredibly useful. Keeping an organized sheet documenting exactly what pieces you need for which actor/character/costume and where they come from (buy, build, borrow, pull) can help keep things from getting lost in the shuffle. This goes double for keeping receipts/borrowed costumes in order!
- Make sure the Wardrobe Supervisor is made aware of all complicated costume pieces and changes before first dress. Walk them through the costumes and changes, and give them a good chart/lists of who wears what when.
- Draw up a Wash List to make sure pieces that need cleaning between shows get clean!

#### *Helping Others Understand*

- Preliminary sketches in black and white showing shape and flow of the costumes.
- Color renderings can convey a great deal of information, be sure to render the costumes on an appropriately sized and shaped person.
- Fabric swatches (small pieces of the proposed fabric) are a very tangible thing. They can help people who are not familiar with fabric better appreciate what you are thinking about.

#### *Stage Blood*

- Stage blood can be a pain if not handled right. Find out as soon as possible if your show requires any, and find out exactly where and how much, as well if it needs to be washable, edible, or anything else.
- A good, non-edible, totally washable stage blood recipe is Karo syrup, blue laundry detergent, with red and blue (to darken) Wilton Cake Decor dye. The cake dye can be bought at Michael's. Mix in more or less Karo depending on how thick/sticky you want the blood.
- A decently washable edible blood is Ben Nye 'Zesty Mint' Stage Blood. Both of these wash out in cold water, especially when pre-rinsed first.

### **Technical Director**

This position has some variance in it. Sometimes it is simply the person who builds the set. The limits of this position are most often defined by who is in the role of Producer, or set designer. In professional theatre, the TD simply insures that the technical elements of the show can be completed under budget prior to whatever deadlines are set up. They have a staff of carpenters, electricians, and so on who do the actual labor, and the TD organizes these people. More often at Hampshire, due to labor shortages, the TD functions as a TD, and Master Carpenter. This is not always ideal, so if it is possible there should be a dedicated construction crew, freeing the TD for the ten thousand other things they can be doing at the time. The TD is also in charge of strike (See section on Strike).

#### *Basic Tips*

- Before you start building set up a meeting with the faculty Technical Director.
- The faculty Technical Director is a great resource use him/her.
- Get your build crew as soon as possible. Do it before the production process even begins.
- To find a crew go to classes. Also remind people crew is a Div II requirement.
- Fully price the entire show before committing to anything.
- Order an extra 10% of everything OR leave 10% of your budget out of your spending. This will save your ass if anything goes wrong.
- Talk to your set designer everyday.
- Make your build schedule with the set designer.
- Leave time in your schedule for the painting and drying of the set.
- Set designers are usually the ones to paint the set. Make sure you know who will do the painting.
- Try and stick to your schedule but be flexible also. Some things may take longer than expected.
- Construct basic platforms first!
- Establish your role before committing.
- Try and avoid working with set designers you don't get along with.

*Build*

- During build, designate different people to different projects. This way many projects can be worked on at one time.
- Give the people with more experience more responsibility.
- Your job should not be constantly building. You should be an overseer.
- Have a special project- it is something you can have fun with.
- Have build bonding. Make it fun. This will increase efficiency and also make people more willing to work on the next show.
- Bring music.
- Have a build crew song.
- Leave time for breaks. Usually 5-10 min breaks every 2 hrs are enough.
- Be aware of how your crew is doing both in regards to them as builders and as students.

*Strike*

- Go into strike with a plan.
- Delegate the right jobs to the right people. People who know how to use power tools should be the ones to use them.
- Don't forget to assign people to costumes and props. These are often good jobs to give to actors.

*Safety, Safety, Safety!*

- If something on set is not safe make sure you warn EVERYONE including all actors before rehearsal.
- It is great to bring new people into the theatre program, however if you are working with someone who has never worked on a build before make sure to have someone keeping an eye on them.

### **Master Electrician**

The Master Electrician (ME) is responsible for the execution of the lighting design. With the Lighting Designers consultation, they will;

- Supervise the hang of the show, insuring and verifying that all instruments are in their required place.
- Crew the focus (when the lights are all pointed in the right place), insuring that in addition to themselves there are as many electricians as the Lighting Designer needs.
- Wire any “practical” lighting units, i.e. a real working table lamp on stage.
- Perform the pre-show dimmer and instrument check each night before performance.

The Master Electrician is responsible for all things electric; setting up the board, refocusing lights, etc. In addition, the ME is responsible for making sure the Stage Manager knows how to set up and break down the headset system. That does not mean the Master Electrician does it, but rather they instruct the Stage Manager, if needed, on the proper procedures.

#### *Basic Tips*

- This position should be filled by someone who has worked on several light crews before. This is not a position someone can jump into with no prior experience.
- Having taken a class in lighting would not hurt- but is not enough to qualify you.
- Know the light board.
- Talk daily to the lighting designer.
- Know who is in charge of what.
- Test every light before you hang it. We don't have a tester so you have to plug each light into the wall.
- To lower the grid in the main stage you have to turn the breakers on.
- You are in charge of the lights during strike. Make sure everything is placed in the proper place.
- Safety, Safety, Safety!

## **Publicist**

Publicity is an important element to any production. It is the method by which people are attracted to see the show. Having no publicity is probably going to translate into empty houses. It is important to market your show in an appropriate way, as well as to take advantage of the free, and word of mouth publicity available to you. A poster must be carefully designed to both catch people's eyes, and convey important information. It should also be done in a style that begins to prepare people for the style of the show. Before going to press, a poster must be approved by a faculty member this is mostly to check for spelling and insure that another person has looked at it. If it can be helped, a production should have both a graphic designer and publicist. The designer is responsible for making the items and the publicist is responsible for displaying them. . There is some information, which must be conveyed on a poster that is fairly obvious.

1. All posters for slotted shows must say "Hampshire College Theatre Presents"
2. Name of the show.
3. Name of playwright.
4. Location of show.
5. Date and time of show.
6. How to get tickets.
7. Cost of tickets.
8. If there is nudity or strobe lighting

### **Properties Manager**

Props Manager for short, this position is another that is open for interpretation around here. Sometimes the “Props Person” is a full fledged designer, and sometimes simply carries out the directions of the Director, or Scenic Designer. Be sure to get this figured out before hand.

#### *Basic Tips*

- Spend time getting to know the props loft.
- Read the script thoroughly
- Set up a meeting with the Theatre Board Properties Monitor if you have questions about the Hampshire resources.
- Get rehearsal props ASAP!
- Please don't paint the borrowed props unless agreed upon (For more information see Five-College Borrowing).
- Try to borrow as little as possible.
- In show where props are consumed or are not of a permanent nature, (e.g. cigarettes, food, flowers, paper that is cut) insure that there is always enough on hand. Have a contingency plan in case an emergency of some sort prevents you from getting to the store.
- Communication is key. Talk to the director about their vision.
- Often the need for a prop is based upon an actor's movement, or emotion at a point in the play, so the need for a given prop can change as the Director and Actors continue to rehearse.
- If the props are character specific, talk to the actor about their character.
- Set a date with the director determining when they need props by.
- Props have been stolen from the greenroom.
- Important props can be kept in the red cabinet. It is opened with the same key that opens the stage-managers locker.

#### *Once the show starts*

- Insist that your actors check their props before and after the show. You should be doing this as well.

- Talk to the actors about their entrances and exists to find the best place for the prop to be placed. Always keep the prop in one place.
- After a place has been determined for an individual prop, label that spot. Masking tape is often the easiest way to do this.
- Make sure everyone knows if there is a specifically dangerous or fragile prop.
- Remind everyone that only the specific actors that need the props should be touching them.
- If necessary, perform running crew responsibilities, basically along the line of “Make sure everything is where it should be.”

## House Manager

The House Manager at Hampshire is responsible for a variety of things. From overseeing the box office to dealing with the public the night of the performance. The definitive guide to House Management at Hampshire was written by our very own Wayne Kramer,. I am reprinting a few of the key sections. In general, the house manager is responsible for the efficient implementation of the theatre's "front of house" policies. The house manager must assume certain responsibilities for the comfort and safety of the audience. Further, the house manager should adopt a healthy respect for theatre patrons. A production can be marred by rudeness, inefficiency or confusion in the front of the house operations. A patron treated courteously will be more favorable disposed to the given performance and to the theatre program in general. Hopefully , that patron will return. When we lose patrons we lose credibility and box office revenue. Finally, the house manager and house crew are actors in the broadest sense. Their believability and motivation should be just as evident. **The house manager is solely responsible for any public announcements to the audience and is therefore responsible for emergency directions.** In general, it should be remembered that the theatre has assumed responsibility for the safety of its patrons.

- The house manager should recruit the house crew for the run of the show. The minimal number of ushers should be two (not including the house manager).
- House seat designations. Will there be reserved areas or seats held.
- Special attire for the house crew, if desired (e.g., black and white, costume, period, formal, or informal).
- Special preview or invitational dress rehearsals which require a house crew.
- The approximate running time for the show and its breakdown by intermissions. This information is updated during technical and dress rehearsals.
- The house manager and stage manager determine the time that the house will open. Establish a timetable: arrival times, length of stays, alternates, etc.
- Determine a clear "plan of escape" for both audience and company in case of emergency.
- Determine the need for lobby displays. Decide who will make the display, where it will be stored, who will set it up and strike it, and what security measures are needed. Assign crew members where needed.
- Arrive one hour before announced curtain time. The crew should arrive 45 minutes ahead of curtain.
- The house manager is on duty throughout the performance.

*Safety goggles should be worn at all times when operating power tools.*

- Be available for patron comments and complaints, which are evaluated and, if warranted, forwarded to the proper channels.
- Encourage stragglers to leave the house area, and when the house is cleared, close the theatre doors so that the production staff can begin post-production activity.
- If you are interested in seeing the show see the dress rehearsal. You should not be seeing the actual show. Your job is to make sure no audience members enter during the run.
- You are only required to stay until intermission.
- Prior to every show it is your duty to clean the audience area of all trash etc.

## **Operators**

There are as many different types of operators as there are things to do during a show. They are pretty self explanatory, and this is not a complete list:

- Light Op- Runs light board
- Sound Op- Runs sound equipment
- Patch Op- makes any needed lighting patches during the show
- Follow Spot Op- operates the follow spot
- Rigging Op- operates any rigging or lines
- Dressers- help actors get into and out of costume, quick changes etc.
- Props- make sure that props are where they need to be
- Deck Chief - coordinates the movement of set pieces
- Stage Hand- moves set pieces, or handles general labor during the show

All of these positions and any others you can think of answer to the Stage Manager during the show. In most cases they will need to attend the tech rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and all performances of the show. As the Ops are the ones who are running the show, they more or less give up the chance to see to see a performance, so it is a very nice gesture to arrange for a “Crew Night” where either the actors perform without tech, or the designers act as running crew.

## **Actors**

The first recorded case of an actor performing took place in 534 BC.

### *Basic Tips*

- Be on time. Call if you cannot.
- Do not piss off your stage managers. Once the show goes up they will save your ass.
- Do a show based on your priorities. Before you audition ask yourself what you want to achieve through the experience.
- Consider outside commitments.
- Theatre is collaborative- Everyone is working hard so respect all of the cast and crew.
- Let everyone do their job. Ex. If you have an ugly costume: deal with it.
- Make sure you are clear on your place in the production. Some directors like to have more control than others. Before auditioning it is a good idea to ask the director how s/he works.
- Know your production team and don't be afraid to ask them questions.
- Romantic relationships during shows are dangerous- Don't make everyone else deal with your drama.

### *For the Hampshire Actor*

- Don't forget, everyone is just learning.
- Because this is a learning experience for everyone make sure there is open communication. Your feedback is important.
- Do a show because you want to do it, not because you want to do a friend a favor.
- Use your Theatre Board Liaison! They exist to give you a person to vent to, as well as address private problems or concerns.
- Don't save all your problems for post-mortem.
- Do your own research. Most shows at Hampshire don't have the luxury of having a dramaturge so do your homework.

- Ask all of your questions before the auditions. Don't be afraid to email the director.

*Warm-ups/ Getting into Character.*

- To make warm-ups effective take some time first to figure out what you need (energy? focus? Etc.).
- Respect warm-ups. Even if they are not what you need respect your fellow actors.
- Find something, like a gesture or an image that snap you into character
- Try and discover your characters animal.
- Create a secret for your character.
- As soon as you step into the performance space leave outside life behind.

*Traumatic scenes*

- When working on particularly difficult or disturbing scenes it is important to be able to distance yourself.
- Only work on those scenes in a specific space.
- Tell your director if you are having a hard time
- Find the depth of the scene through physicality first. This may help distance yourself.

*Memorization*

- Work on lines right before you go to sleep.
- Record yourself, and listen to it over and over and over.... You're an actor we know you like the sound of your own voice.
- Go through script line by line and dissect it- find the subtext. Lines are easier to learn if you understand exactly what is going on.
- For each line write down a question as to what the line is answering.

## Budgeting

Budgeting is the act of monitoring how much money you have and how you spend it. Every slotted Theatre Board production receives a budget depending on whether it is in the main stage or studio. All other productions must submit a budget to Theatre Board as early into the process as possible. If you are in a non slotted production you are in the position to ask Theatre Board for the money you need, if you are a slotted show you know how much money you are getting, and you just need to tell Theatre Board how you spent it when the books close are both options.

Let's assume that the budget is being done from scratch, the first step is to solicit the designers and various section heads asking for "budget requests." Make everyone sit down and tell you how much money he or she wants. Yes, at this stage it is how much they want, not need. Once you have that figured out, add it up like this:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Asking Amount</b>	<b>Amount Allocated</b>
Set	\$ 800.00	
Lights	\$ 150.00	
Costume	\$ 500.00	
Sound	\$ 75.00	
Props	\$ 100.00	
Publicity	\$ 150.00	
Miscellaneous	\$ 50.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,825.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

**Figure 1**

At this point leave blank the section that says Amount Allocated, that is coming up. Next, you find out how much money you actually have from Theatre Board. Let us say they give you \$750 to start with, then your budget looks like this:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Asking Amount</b>	<b>Amount Allocated</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Theatre Board	\$750.00	
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Set	-\$800.00	
Lights	-\$150.00	
Costume	-\$500.00	
Sound	-\$75.00	
Props	-\$100.00	
Publicity	-\$150.00	
Miscellaneous	-\$50.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>-\$1,075.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

**Figure 2**

You will notice in Figure 2 that the total lists a negative number. This is because the only credit you have so far is the Theatre Board money. Now you have to find other means of funding. Perhaps your show has to do with Women’s Rights. Your next option might be to go to the Women’s Center. This is what you would present to the Women’s Center. If all went well they would allocate you \$1,075, and that would be that. Everyone would get what they asked for, and as long as the estimates were correct, the show would have no money problems. More likely, however you would end up with something like this:

--

**Figure 3**

As Figure 3 shows, the Women’s Center did not meet your need, leaving you with a potential deficit of \$275. This is where the choice comes in. There are two options in this situation, and the answer usually ends up being a combination of both. You can either cut back on expenses, or increase income. The trick is to make that line at the bottom equal zero, or a positive number. Let’s say that you sell one ad in the program for \$100. That brings you up to \$175 in the hole. This needs to be made up for. That is

where that second column comes into play. Use that column to show how much money you actually will give to each area. Try to think before you cut, and remember not to cut an area so deep that they lose the ability to function. Here is an example of the completed model:



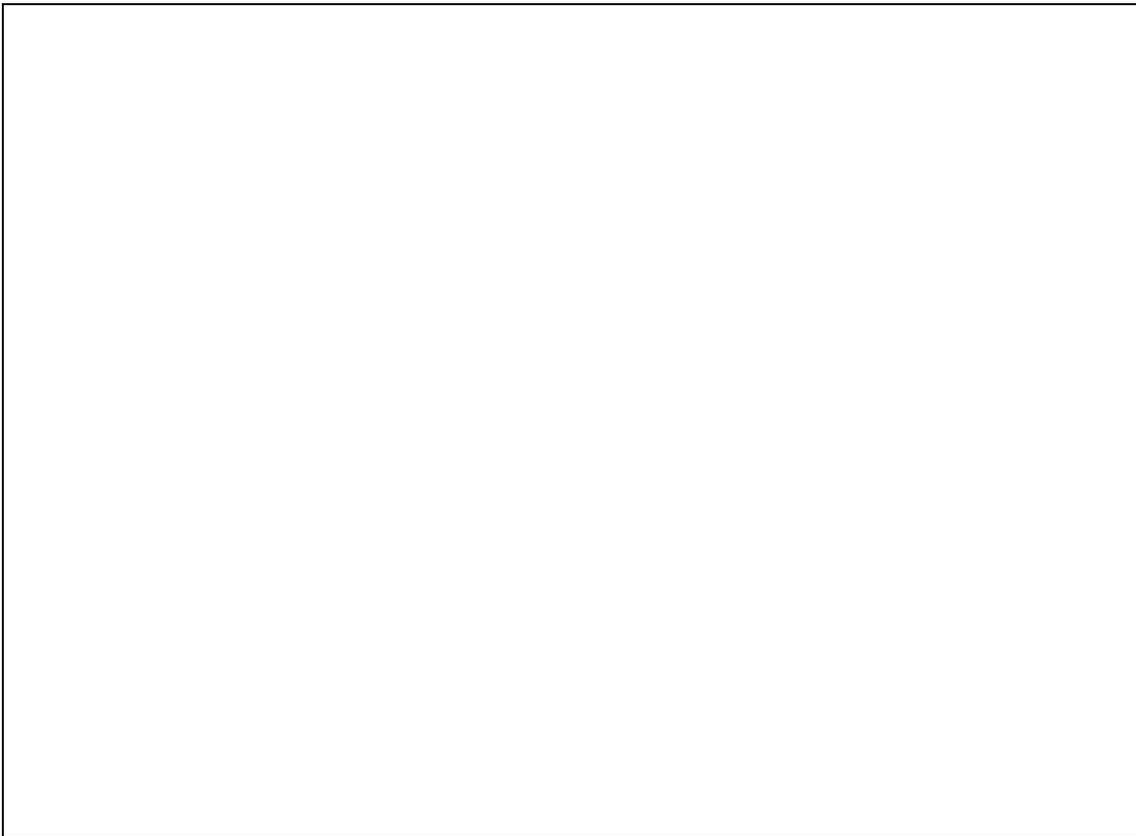
Figure 4

As you can see from Figure 4, by cutting a few dollars here and a few there, plus the addition of the ad revenue we have successfully balanced the budget. It is important to note that you cannot count on that ad revenue to materialize just because you wrote it into the budget. Selling ads is one of the most difficult things to do, especially considering our relatively small house sizes. It is unwise to base a budget on moneys not yet secured, so be sure to have the check in hand, or at least a contract, before counting on the money. Once you have that magic zero at the bottom of the budget, the fun really begins.

*Up is Down,  
Down is Up,  
Left is Right,  
Right is Left,  
Block and falls don't,  
Tripping is Legal,  
Green rooms aren't.  
--R. Malone*

### **Making a Hierarchy**

The Slotting Agent and Producer need to choose which positions to fill and who to put into them. Before making that choice it is important to pick a model by which the show will operate, or at least consider what your personal style will accommodate. There are really few things worse than hiring a person who is excited to do something, and then not letting them do the job they were hired for. Below are a couple of models that have worked successfully in the past. SAs are encouraged to look at these and think about how they work; adopting one of these models if appropriate or modifying one to their liking. It is important however to have a clear idea of how you plan to run your production, because if you are unclear everyone who works with you will be unclear. Set up a chain of command and stick to it, don't cut people out, and avoid making what appear to be arbitrary decisions, it can cause people to lose confidence in your leadership.

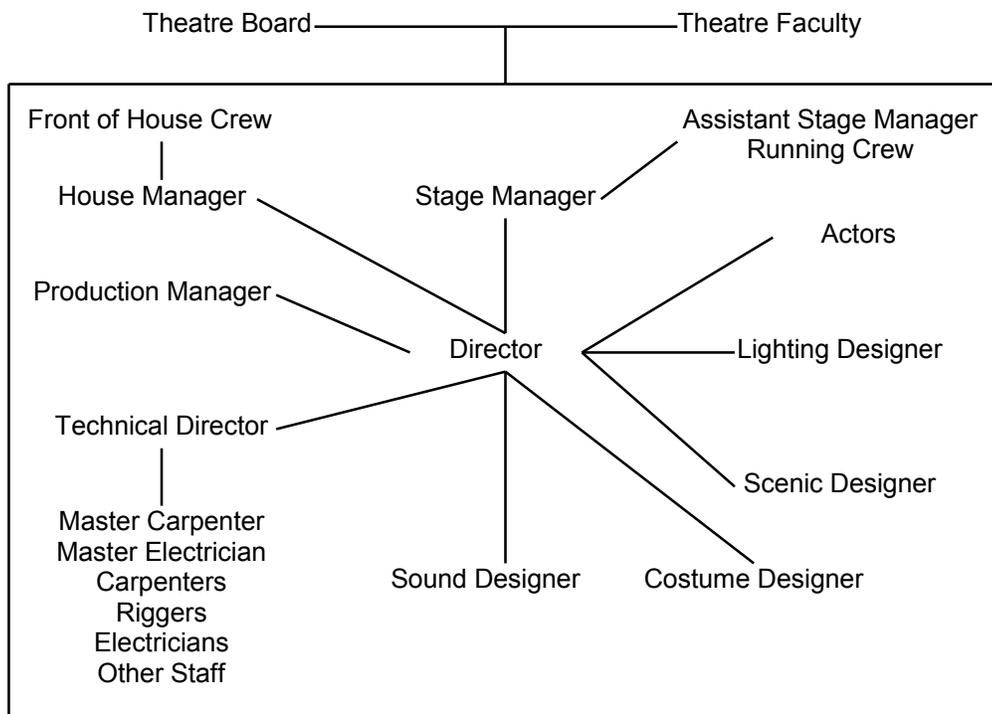


**Figure 1**

Figure 1 shows a standard top down organizational structure. This is tried and true, and very similar to models of professional theatre. It is a distributed structure and it is clear who each person on the list answers to. This more or less covers all the important areas and allows for some significant overlap in the area of production management. Things are never as clear-cut in real life as they are on paper, but this allows a reasonable distribution of labor and power. The most important part of this model is the connection between the Producer and the Director. When you separate the two areas (artistic and organizational) like this it is important that you keep the two sides of the brain working in

the same direction. Regular meetings with just the Director and Producer should take place, and that means daily, or at least every other day. It is difficult to work when you get conflicting instructions from different sources, so the two people who are supposed to be leading the parade better know which way they are headed. In this model and in all the others that tend to work at Hampshire, the Faculty are involved at several levels. They meet with people who are using the production as divisional work, they advise, attend rehearsals and generally act as resources.

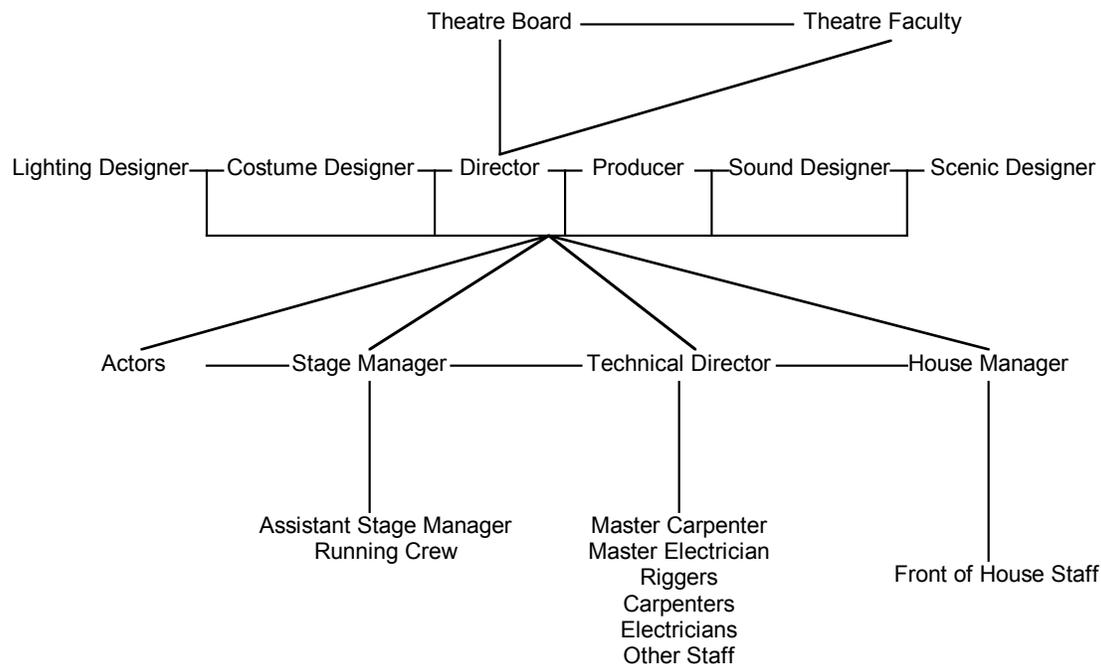
Another model that is often seen at Hampshire is less distributed and is more centered on the director. It is often chosen by Directors who feel a need to have total control. While I have seen it function successfully, it more often than not leads to bad communication, and poor results. It is difficult for anyone to suggest anything to another team member, because the Director is always at the center. Working with this model requires the Director be willing to do everything. While this sounds almost possible at times, it is not. So if you see yourself falling into this model, it is worth reevaluating your style, and thinking again about how things should be done. This is often the model of choice for people who do not choose a model.



**Figure 2**

The final model regularly employed at Hampshire is a more collaborative approach. It requires a bit more willingness to let go than the previous two on the part of the director. This is a challenging model to work under, but can be the most rewarding. It, if it works, promotes an environment of trust, and shared responsibility. There is a risk with this though, if something goes wrong it is often very difficult to fix. So much of this

model is based on the trust of the designers, Director, and Producer for each other and for themselves, that when that trust is broken the whole structure can fall apart. It is very difficult to work within a structure that was once collaborative and is, all of a sudden, not. When choosing this model be sure to look very closely at all the staff members. Even one who does not work as part of the team can cause disintegration. One suggestion is to choose only people you have worked with before and know can work well together. Sometimes however no matter how much you might want to work under this type of system, it doesn't quite work out.



**Figure 3**

At some point, you need to decide how many people it is going to take to do what needs to be done on a given show. Eliminate a task, and you eliminate a person. Unfortunately, it does not work the other way around. This is a rough list, and a particular show may have special needs so be sure to consider those. Someone needs to:

1. Cast the show
2. Staff the show
3. Figure out and keep the budget
4. Develop the blocking for the show
5. Design a set
6. Design the lights
7. Design the sound
8. Design the costumes
9. Design any props
10. Build the set
11. Hang and focus the lights
12. Build the costumes

13. Run the sound
14. Run the lights
15. Make sure the people doing things before, after, and during the show actually do them, at the right time.
16. Organize the actors and rehearsals
17. Take notes on what happens at rehearsals
18. Dress the actors before the show
19. Perform the show
20. Make sure people know what is going on during production
21. Make sure people know what is going on during the show
22. Make sure someone sells tickets
23. Create a poster
24. Create a program
25. Get the audience where they need to go the night of the show
26. Make sure everything is in the right place before curtain

*Measure  
twice, cut  
once.*

Now obviously this is not a complete list, but if you have someone responsible for each of these tasks, you have a good start. Make your own list. See what you have added, and what you got rid of. If you took something off the list, are you sure? Some of these items can be combined, but beware putting too much load on any one person. Remember if you give someone, too many things to take care of he or she are likely to drop at least one of them. Think of ways to take some of the load off the overloaded people. Use assistants, but make sure that the assistant is more of a help than a hassle. By all means be creative, if there is something that one person can do really well, bring them on board to do just that one thing. Consider having a person whose sole job it is to take care of the things that fall through the cracks. Most importantly, listen to your staff, if they are feeling overloaded try and do something about it, if you can't fix it at least make them feel better about it. There is nothing more important than the people working on the show, not even the show itself.

## The Calendar

In Theatre, many of the things that happen are directly under the control of the production team. One of the things that is beyond control is the unceasing forward movement of time. While you can't turn time back, it is certainly possible to account for it, and plan your actions such that time is not a negative factor. When the master calendar for the season is developed Theatre Board makes sure that every show has the needed pre-production time. Some shows may have less time than others, but there should always be enough time if proper preparations are taken. It is very important to figure out early how you plan to make use of the time you have and ensure that everything gets down before opening. There are innumerable ways to handle this, but the most popular, and probably the best is the "Production Calendar."

Setting up a production calendar is easy enough, but holding to it is somewhat more difficult. It is important to decide as you set up your calendar whether this is a calendar that has absolute deadlines, or a calendar that has some slack built into it. There are benefits to each approach, the calendar that has slack will allow you to have a few extra days if something goes wrong, but it also encourages people to miss deadlines knowing that there is that slack. However with the other method, there is no slack in case of legitimate problems. One solution to this dilemma is to develop a calendar with some slack but let everyone know that these are the absolute deadlines. This is difficult to do as many of the people you are working with will probably have done this before, and know how long these things should take. Usually the production calendar is one of the first orders of business at the beginning of a production, however, whoever is planning for the production should have the skeleton of one before production begins.

Below you will find a sample calendar. It should serve as a good starting point for setting up your own. One of the best strategies for setting up a production calendar is to work backwards. Start at opening night, and move back until you reach the present. Think in terms of order, and process, for example in an ideal situation the Lighting Hang takes place before too much of the set is in place, especially if there are large pieces which might interfere with ladders in the studio, or lowering the grid in the main stage. Likewise, major set pieces should be finished and in place before the lighting focus, this insures that the lights will be focused with proper heights, and angles taken into account.

Once this schedule is in place it is important to try to keep to it. There are times when it is necessary to break from the schedule to some degree, but when that decision is made it must be a conscious choice rather than one which forced upon the production team by poor planning of execution. Also, when that decision is made be sure to take into account what those changes will do to the rest of the production schedule. Working with a timetable is difficult and especially so if you haven't set up a good timetable to start with. It is ideal if there is a person on the production team, usually either the Stage Manager, or the Production Manager, who can handle keeping track of the calendar. It is also very important to make sure that if something comes up, and there is a deadline that will not be met, everyone be aware of it. Work toward an environment of trust; so that if someone is worried about their ability to make a given deadline they will discuss it, rather than simply missing it and not feeling like they can communicate their problems to the team.

*Red light  
doesn't dilate  
your pupils,  
so you can  
see better in  
the dark.*

Hampshire Theatre Book Of Common Knowledge

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		Production Meeting		Audition	audition	Callbacks
Read Through		Production Meeting	Rehearsal	Rehearsal	Rehearsal	
	Rehearsal Move into the space. Set construction	Rehearsal Set construction	Rehearsal Set construction	Rehearsal Set construction	Rehearsal Set construction	Set construction
Rehearsal Set construction	Rehearsal Set construction	Rehearsal Production Meeting	Rehearsal Set construction	Rehearsal Set construction	Rehearsal Set construction Poster done	
Rehearsal Set construction	Rehearsal Set construction	Rehearsal Production Meeting	Rehearsal Set construction	Rehearsal Set Construction Box office opens	Rehearsal Set Construction All major set pieces complete	Rehearsal
Rehearsal	Rehearsal Build/ Costume is Done All other designs complete	Rehearsal Production Meeting	Rehearsal Light Hang	Rehearsal Focus	Paper Tech Rehearsal	Dry Tech
Cue-to-cue Costume parade	Dress Rehearsal	Dress Rehearsal	Final Dress	Opening		

## The Production Meeting

The production meeting is the primary forum for discussion and planning of the production. It should be a regular meeting. If possible meet at the same place and time each week. At the beginning of the production it may not really be necessary to meet every week, but doing so will help the team get into the habit. There are innumerable things that it takes to successfully keep a meeting like this going, everyone at the table has a different agenda and what they see as their own territory. It is highly suggested that whoever you have run or facilitate the meeting, have some experience running meetings. Also important is having one person run the meeting; ideally the same person every time, this job is usually filled by the producer, or sometimes stage manager. The production meeting is a difficult enough environment without people being unsure about what will happen, and how it will run. This is the primary place and time for the team to express their ideas, needs, priorities, problems, and goals, so it is important for team members to feel free to express themselves. Any environment that does not facilitate this is bound to cause trouble eventually. Some tricks that can help people keep talking:

- Make sure to hear from everyone, even those who you think might have nothing to say. This can be accomplished by going around the table and asking for reports from each member of the team. Try to avoid the stock response of everything is going fine. Get people to give details about what is going fine.
- At each meeting try to stick to the same format, this helps people know what to expect, and to prepare for their turn.
- Have the Stage Manager, list any deadlines before the next meeting, and remind people of any special events, meetings, rehearsals, etc. where their attendance will be required.
- It is important to remember that this is the Production Meeting, so keep the discussion to production, that means what happens at the meeting should involve all the participants. Any business that is specific to just one or two people can be recognized during the production meeting, but should be conducted in a separate meeting with just the parties concerned. The resolution can be brought back to the production meeting, people's time is valuable and should be treated as such. Likewise, design-specific issues should be handled in a design meeting. Save the valuable production meeting time for things that require the entire company's attention.

This meeting, like any other, should obey some basic rules, they are mostly common sense like respect other people, and don't pressure people into telling you what you want to hear. The best way to learn meeting behavior is to sit through a bunch. Also there are a ton of books about meetings, and facilitating discussions. Check the business sections of bookstores, or look under meeting, and committee in the library catalog.

*A trick to seeing where you are going on stage during a blackout is to close or shield your eyes before the blackout. That way when the stage goes dark your eyes will already be adjusted to the dark.*

## Tech Rehearsals

The last weekend before opening is usually reserved for tech rehearsals. Every production team runs a different style or version of tech weekend, and the demands of the weekend depend on the technical demands of the production. The general sequence runs something like this.

- First there is a **paper tech**, this consists of the Director, Stage Manager, and Designers sitting down with a copy of the script and figuring out where the cues will go in the script. This is the point where the stage manager begins to number and letter the cues. Lights and Sound cues should be labeled differently, for example numbers for lights, and letters for sound. Write in pencil. This usually shouldn't take more than an hour or so.
- The next step is a **dry-tech**. This is a rehearsal with all the technical staff, including Ops, but without actors. In an ideal world all of the Designers would have all of their cues prepared, light and sound levels set etc., but more likely this will be the place where Designers flesh out their visions. This most likely will take a long time, so you should plan on spending the entire day. This is the time for the crew to begin to figure out cues, and transitions. During dry tech the show is run one cue at a time, over and over until it's right.
- The next big day on the tech schedule is usually **cue-to-cue**. This is sort of like Dry Tech, except the actors are present, and the technical aspects are hopefully a little more polished. This is the time to get the show right. It takes a lot of patience especially for the actors, so be sure people expect to spend the whole day in the theatre. Go through the show cue by cue, work each transition until it's done right. Then do it again. Ideally the designers should not be changing levels too much at this point, having done most of that during dry tech. Of course adjustments are expected, but they should not be taking the majority of the time. It is important to get things into pretty good shape before the cue-to-cue is completed, because from this point forward, you should be doing dress rehearsals.
- In the typical opening week, the show will open on a Thursday, and Dry Tech and Cue-to-Cue will take place on the previous Saturday and Sunday. That leaves Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday for **dress rehearsals**. Monday's dress can be fairly low key, designers can still be making minor adjustments, and be on headset, but should try to confine as much of their work to taking notes as possible, and should not interrupt the run. Tuesday is the first true dress rehearsal; it should run as close to the way an actual show will as possible. That means that designers are not on headset, the Stage Manager is wherever he or she will be for the actual run, and the show doesn't stop for any reason short of flood, famine, or pestilence. Designers, and the Director can still make changes in the show at this point, however it must take the form of notes delivered to the appropriate person at the end of the evening. The one thing that is usually different between this night and the actual show is that it generally starts early, so that there is time after the rehearsal to work any trouble spots that might emerge. The final dress rehearsal usually takes place

*All theatre keys start with AL. The next number tells you what door they open.*

on Wednesday night, and is sometimes known as invited dress, some shows choose to invite some guests to see the show that night, feeling confident enough to bring in an audience a little early. This should run exactly like a real show, house staff in place, no stops, regular start time, etc. This is usually the last chance to run the show before a paying audience arrives, so take advantage of it.

### *Basic Tips*

- Set a starting time and an ending time to each rehearsal and hold to it. Estimate more time than is needed, so that you can get everything done, and send people home early. It is easier to send people home early than to keep them late. It feels a whole lot better too.
- Set a start time rather than an arrival time, and make sure people understand the difference.
- Guarantee, that if everyone is present and ready to start on time, that the evening will end at a certain time. Make sure you hold to it.
- Err always on the side of caution.
- Drinking is *never* tolerated.
- Decide who will be on headset.
- The director should be encouraged not to be on headset. If they insist, then ask them to speak as little as possible.

*Mountain Dew is the official soft drink of New England skiing. As well as a fine source of caffeine.*

### *Taking Care of your Team*

- Tech rehearsals are generally a time of high tension. This is to be expected because the hours are long, a lot is at stake, and it comes at the end of a long process.
- People tend to try to take care of the actors throughout this process, and while this is important, remember that taking care of the crew is equally important. Actors usually get the day off for Dry Tech, but the crew spends that day working, so try to take into account all the factors that effect people.
- When starting tech rehearsals that will go all day, be sure to start them after SAGA opens so that people who live in the dorms can eat, alternatively make sure that there is a break when people can eat, or consider providing food.
- If the company has any off-campus students in it, make sure that the busses are running when the person needs to come and go, or provide a ride.

- Before the weekend begins, set a time at which everyone must go home. You may get some resistance from some people who might want to work a little longer, but make them go home. The later it gets, the less work will get done anyway.
- Remember to keep people's physical, and mental health in mind, make sure that everyone is getting enough sleep, and food.
- Watch for signs of burn out, and try to help people to relax. It is very easy to get caught up in it all; to get swept away in the work of putting up a show, and forget it is just a show.
- Look out for the people you are working with, and don't be afraid to take an unscheduled break to unwind and pull things together.

## **Strike**

Strike is the time when everything is taken down and put away. It needs to be completed by 6:00pm the day following the final show unless special arrangements are made with Theatre Board. Strike is a required attendance for all members of the production and Theatre Board. The Staff Technical Director will oversee the strike with the assistance of the production technical director. A meeting before strike will help make this smoother and more efficient. The tasks at a given strike will vary depending upon the needs of a production, but in all cases, steps must be taken to protect the safety of the participants. People should be aware that they are working in a potentially dangerous situation, so be alert. Special care should be taken to restore the space to operating condition. This is usually the last item on the production calendar but should be taken seriously. An incomplete strike can cause significant problems for the next show. As strike is often a long process, it is customary to allocate funds specifically for buying food for strike. Food cannot be eaten until the Staff Technical Director has approved the strike. Following strike there is generally a short break that leads directly into post mortem.

*Strike means putting things away, not moving the junk from one space to another.*

### **Rights and Royalties**

Any work of art whether it is a script, a piece of music, or a graphic is the intellectual property of its creator. If you use it you must have permission, and often must pay a fee. The first example of this that most people will run into is the script. If you open to the copyright page of the script, it will usually tell you who holds the rights. Most likely it will tell you whom to contact to secure performance rights. Many playwrights have authorized a “rights clearance house” to collect their royalties for them.

These companies, like Dramatist’s Play Guild, and Samuel French, will sell you copies of the script, and rights. For slotted shows, these costs are covered by the Theatre Program budget. Be sure to inform the Staff Technical Director what these costs are, so they can be paid. These prices are set based on a typical theatre situation, which usually is somewhat bigger than what we do at Hampshire, so it is possible to negotiate a decrease in rates for our specific situation. You should call and ask for a reduction in royalty and performance fees. When doing this be sure to emphasize the educational nature of the performance, as well as the small size of the house. These companies are large, and have a lot of business, and are notoriously bad about filling orders and sending out letters of authorization so be sure to start the process early.

When it comes to music and graphics usually, a simple program credit will take care of it, but if you have, any doubt be sure to ask around. The Staff Technical Director or the Faculty should be able to help with this. The Slotting Agent is responsible for ensuring that all permissions for all material is properly secured.

### **Five-College Borrowing**

Hampshire College is a member of the Five-College Consortium, which you no doubt already know. This enables a sort of interchange of ideas, and students. In addition under certain circumstances, it sometimes enables an interchange of props, costumes, furniture, and other hard to find items. But first a little bit of history.

“Five-College borrowing is a procedure designed to assist productions with special or unique problems. It is not to be used as a short-cut method and all other methods (i.e., second-hand shops, Hampshire Theatre inventory, local merchants, tag sales, etc.) must be exhausted before this procedure is used.”<sup>1</sup>

That means that Five-College borrowing is the last resort if you absolutely must have that old refrigerator (Mt. Holyoke by the way) and you can't afford to buy, build, or rent the item, or even find one. Then maybe you can arrange to borrow one from one of the other schools. Hampshire has a less than stellar history with this sort of thing, and has in fact lost borrowing privileges with some of the other schools. In the recent past, great strides have been made to better those relationships, and we can currently borrow items from all four of the other schools. It is important to remember that both the borrowing and lending institutions determine the extent of the borrowing. That means that if there is something too valuable to lend, then the lending college doesn't have to lend it, and also if the value is too high and the borrowing college isn't willing to assume the responsibility for the item than permission will not be given. Only slotted shows have Theatre Board permission to borrow items without additional process. The process goes as follows.

- Speak to the Theatre Board Production Monitor, Staff Technical Director or Staff Costume Supervisor about the problem items, they may be able to suggest methods or ideas that you haven't thought of. Be sure to investigate those first.
- Let the Staff TD/Staff Costume Supervisor know that you are investigating Five-College Borrowing possibilities.
- The Faculty and Staff can tell you more accurately what schools have good inventories of different items, but as a rough guide, Smith and UMASS have great inventories of just about everything, Amherst and Mt. Holyoke have good furniture/properties inventory. This varies so ask around.
- Contact a school that you think might have the item(s) in question. You probably want to speak to their Staff TD, or Staff Costume Supervisor if applicable. Be polite. Know what it is you are looking for. You are not going there to browse their stuff. Tell them who you are, and why you are calling, be specific and let them know what you are looking for. Chances are they will know whether or not they have something that might meet your needs. If they say something like “Yes we have that.” Ask if there is a time at their convenience when you might be able to come by and look at the item in question.

*There is a full set of blueprints in the college archives for an Arts Center. A four story building that was to be built in the library quad. It was to house a large traditional proscenium theatre. It was planned and designed in 1974.*

- Be on time to the meeting. These are people who are busier than you are. Bring your Five-College Borrowing form, (available from the Staff Technical Director) look at the items and pick which one you would like. When you do pick one ask them, don't tell them. That means say something like, "Would it be possible for us to use this one from date X to date Y?" If they say no, move on to the second choice. If they say yes, this is when you bring out the form. Have them fill in their section, assign a value, and schedule a pick up time, and a return time. Let them know that you will bring the signed borrowing form at then.
- Back at Hampshire, show the form to the Staff TD. They will process it on their end, and give it back to you.
- Get the head of the program (faculty) to sign the form.
- Arrive at the meeting point on time, bring with you, whatever vehicle you need to get the item back to Hampshire, and the signed form. If the item is heavy or unwieldy, bring equipment, or people enough to move it. Do not count on any assistance to "get it into the truck."
- Take special precautions with the items. Lock them up, or whatever is appropriate. Also make sure not to make any modifications without permission. Sometimes if you ask the borrowing institution may allow you to paint something or slightly alter something. Don't guess about this, ASK.
- When you are done with the stuff, i.e. the day after strike, take it back. This is very important. It is also good form to call a few days in advance to confirm your meeting time.

This may seem like a lot of work, but remember, this is potentially saving you hundreds of dollars in renting costs. This system is there to help all five institutions, and is a very valuable privilege, be sure to treat the items with the respect they deserve.

## Box Office

The Box Office is one of the most important parts of Hampshire Theatre. It is the first thing patrons see when they enter the theatre, and the first contact they have with our staff. It must be well organized, consistent in its policy, and staffed by knowledgeable courteous people. It all begins with the staffing. The Box Office opens in the afternoon, two weeks prior to opening night. The staffing for the afternoon hours (1pm-5pm) Monday through Friday, are filled by the production. That means that it is the Slotting Agent's responsibility to make sure that there are people in the box office for those hours. There is a student staff box office coordinator, every Slotting Agent should set up a time to meet with the box office staff as early as possible in the process. In addition the House Manager, should meet with the box office staff in order to be trained on how to run the box office during the afternoons. The House Manager will then in turn train the production team's staff members.

The general process of answering the phones when working the box office is pretty simple. First off, if the phone rings, pick it up. Answer the phone "Hampshire College Box Office, how may I help you." The person will most likely ask to make a reservation, so you will need the reservation sheets. These should have been made up by the Box Office Supervisor, and there should be one packet for each day of the show. Ask the caller which day they were interested in, and check the sheet for that day to insure there are seats available. If there are seats, simply write down their name, phone number, ticket type (Student, General, Comp,) and how many tickets they would like to reserve. If it is more than one, be sure to draw a line down through the boxes so that no one accidentally reserves those seats for someone else. Write all of this information in pencil, in case there are changes later. Inform the caller that they need to be at the theatre by 7:40pm the night of the performance, or we will sell their seat. If there are no seats on the night they want to come, first suggest another night when seats are available. Try to push them (subtly) towards a night with few reservations. If they can only come on a night that is booked, offer to put them on the waiting list. If they accept, turn to the wait list page of the packet, and put in their information. Tell them that the wait list does not guarantee a ticket, and that they should be at the theatre by 7:35pm because the wait list will be called around 7:45pm.

The night of the show the Box Office Supervisor, and the House Manager should arrive no later than 6:40pm (for an 8:00pm show.) The rest of the front of house staff (i.e. ushers) can arrive around 7:00. The first duties of the House Manager should be to verify that the lobby space and the audience space are clean, and safe. Pick up discarded programs, and so on. Set up any pre-show displays, and make sure things are ready for the audience's arrival. While the House Manager is seeing to this, the Box Office Supervisor should be setting up the box office. Open the safe, count out the tickets, etc. It is important to count out exactly the number of tickets in the house. Double check because if this number is wrong, you could over sell the house. Once you are sure you have the right number of tickets, go through the night's reservation list, put aside any "special tickets" like emergency seats, faculty members, director, producer, ushers; anything that isn't getting sold to the general public. It is even a good tactic to write on each special ticket who it is for. Once the tickets are set, get ready to open the box office officially. The Box Office should open no later than 7:20pm. As people come up ask if they have a reservation. If they say yes, find the reservation, confirm the number of seats

*Emily  
Dickinson  
Hall, like the  
rest of Amherst,  
is a smoke free  
environment.*

and sell the ticket(s). When selling tickets, tell them the price, take their money, give them their ticket, and then their change,. Fewer people will forget their change than will forget their ticket. Before you give the ticket, be sure to stamp it with the appropriate stamp, (COMP, STU, GEN) this will help later when it comes time for accounting.

If the person doesn't have a reservation, ask them if they would like to be added to the wait list. If they say yes, do so, if no ask if they would like to make a reservation for another night. At 7:45, or a few minutes after, announce loudly and clearly that you are about to begin calling the waiting list, and anyone who has a reservation but hasn't picked up their ticket should come to the box office now. Wait a minute or two, and then begin calling the names on the waiting list, in order. Sell all the tickets you can accept the "special tickets." If you get to the end of the available tickets before the end of the people, call the next person, explain that you have x number of emergency tickets, which you cannot sell until 8:00pm. Explain that they can buy them at 8:00pm assuming there is no emergency need for those seats. It also is important to tell groups of people that they might not be able to sit together. If they accept, wait until 7:58pm or so, and sell the tickets. If not, ask the next person on the list, and so on.

Occasionally problems arise, an irate customer, or something like it. The Box Office Supervisor should attempt to resolve the issue. If it seems to be getting out of control, inform the customer that you will get your manager if they would wait a moment. You can tell a situation is getting out of control anytime a customer says "I Demand..." you know something is not quite right. Send someone to find a member of the production staff, ideally the Producer, the Director, or the Slotting Agent. If none of these is available, the House Manager should deal with the situation. Do everything possible to make the customer happy, because in the end that is what it is all about. If a resolution cannot be reached, and the Slotting Agent is not available, ask the customer to leave a name and number, so the SA can contact them and make some sort of arrangements.

Dealing with the public can be difficult, so it is important that we put our best face forward. Dress neatly, be courteous, and polite, and do not be afraid to call for assistance if something is getting out of hand.

## **Post-Mortem and Critique**

Historically there have been two types of post show reviews. First, there is post-mortem, which comes out of Theatre Board. This is a review of the process, the method of production. It is lead by the show's Theatre Board Liaison. It is a chance for people to discuss what worked and what did not. It should be remembered that this is not a forum for discussion of the artistic merit of a show, but should be limited to the process. It is also an excellent opportunity to share hard-earned wisdom with the next production. Theatre Board requires a post-mortem for all shows. Post-mortem's are usually after strike. If this is not possible the Slotting Agent and Theatre Board should arrange a date and time.

In addition to the post-mortem, there is the critique. This is not required, but takes place at the discretion of the Slotting Agent. This is the forum for discussion of the artistic elements of the show. In order to have one of these it must be set up with the faculty. The tone in both of these sessions should be constructive rather than destructive. It is often easy to get caught up in the negative, rather than looking at things and how they might be improved the next time.

Both the post-mortem and the critique are public sessions, the faculty and staff is generally more than willing to talk to you in one-on-one settings and will discuss your work with you at different points in the process.

### *Basic Tips (also found In Show Liaison Section)*

- Begin with affirmations. This starts post-mortem off with a good energy.
- Don't rush. This might take a long time so be prepared.
- Don't let it drag. Make sure the meeting is moving and things are not being repeated.
- Remind everyone that this is not the time to vent.
- Ask them to preface there comments with, "For the next show". This helps keep the meeting productive.
- Keep copious notes and type them up for the Theatre Board secretary.
- Post the post-mortem notes on the theatre bulletin board.
- Follow up any interesting thoughts or ideas, by asking for another person's perspective on that same event or style.
- Insure that every person has the opportunity to speak and be heard.
- People tend to be somewhat invested in the production even though it is over, so be aware of that and take steps to see to it that no one is hurt or upset by the process.