

SMITHFIELD LITTLE THEATRE

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER HANDBOOK

Issued by Board of Directors, Smithfield Little Theatre
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"How're we ever gonna get enough money to pay for that broken window, Spanky?"

"I know hey, let's do a show."

"Yeah, let's do a show!"

OK, having made that decision (one based on questionable sanity, we might add), what do you do now? Hopefully, this handbook will help answer that question.

In the Theatre world, the roles of Director and Producer have been very separate and specific. Here at SLT, these roles seem, over the years, to have become less traditional and more customized to our style of production and to those individuals putting together each show. As an accommodation to that situation, the information in this handbook is offered in a manner to cover all of the needed areas without regard to who (director or producer), is specifically responsible for any given job. In general, with the exception of the actual direction of the performance, these tasks and responsibilities may be delegated as the Director and/or the producer may so choose. So...that said, "On with the show!"

I. THE SHOW

If you have this book in hand, then your show has already been selected for production by the Board of Directors (the Board) at Smithfield Little Theatre (SLT). Here are some things that must be done next:

A. DATES FOR THE SHOW: Dates for the show are set by the Board of Directors and are fairly standard from season to season. Generally, shows run for 12 performances (Thursday, Friday, Saturday, curtain at 8:00 pm and Sunday, curtain at 2:30 pm), over three consecutive weeks. Sometimes, for shows which are anticipated to be more popular, a fourth week (4 performances) is added. This decision is made by the Director and the Board together. If you have any specific requests regarding show dates, they should be made of the Board prior to the setting of the season which is done by May of each year.

B. PERFORMANCE RIGHTS, SCRIPTS, ETC.: It is your responsibility to obtain performance rights for your show. This is done through the brokerage house which holds the licensing for that show and can usually be done on-line or by telephone. Once approval is obtained, you will be offered a bill. You may submit this to the SLT Treasurer for payment or you may pay it yourself and submit for reimbursement. Once licensing is obtained, you must obtain any scripts or musical scores needed for the show. Some of these are purchased, some are rented. Payment may be handled in the same manner as the licensing.

C. SCHEDULING: The “schedule book” for the theatre is generally held by the Building and Grounds Chairman. You should contact this person to schedule your auditions and rehearsals. Auditions are traditionally held on a Sunday and Monday (2 nights) at 7:00 pm. You are not locked into this sequence but it has proven to be fairly successful in accommodating those who wish to try out for shows. Rehearsals may be scheduled in whatever manner you feel is most effective for your show. It is probably better to over-schedule and cut back if not needed than to try to add additional rehearsals. Remember, though our regular season of shows are our priority, there may be other events which are previously scheduled, so you will have to work around them

D. FRIENDS & FAMILY PERFORMANCE: Prior to the opening of each show, there is a performance given for family and friends of all cast and crew members. It is a free performance which serves two purposes. First, it is a bit of a “thank you” for all of those involved; second, it serves as a dress rehearsal for the show. It is conducted as a full fledged performance. If you choose, and have available monies in your show’s budget, you may arrange for a small party after the show. This performance is customarily done on the last Sunday before the show opens, either in the afternoon or evening (your choice). This leaves three additional days for “polishing” the show as needed.

E. BUDGET: When submitting a show to the Reading Committee/Board of Directors, you were also required to submit a production budget for approval. This budget should have included anticipated expenses for all aspects of the show: licensing fees, scripts, scores, music royalties, set costs, costuming, props, cast party and gifts, make-up, lighting, sound or any other miscellaneous or special needs for your show. All funds are deposited in bank or other depositories as designated by the Board. **Note: Expense Tracking forms for the categories of Costumes, Props, Printing, and Cast Gifts & Party can be found at the end of this Handbook.**

E.1. NON-BUDGETED DISBURSEMENTS IN EXCESS OF \$100: No non-budgeted disbursements in excess of \$100 will be made without authorization by majority vote of the Board. The Board approves and authorizes the budget for each production undertaken by the Theatre.

E.1. COSTS EXCEEDING AUTHORIZED BUDGET: A director must have prior approval from the Board before exceeding his or her authorized budget for a production. The Director may be held responsible for expenditures that exceed the approved budget.

F. YOUR CREW: As mentioned earlier, the show's Director is responsible for what we will see when the curtain opens. There are many people involved in making this happen and it is up to the Director and/or Producer to obtain and coordinate these individuals.

G. SET DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: Most commonly at SLT, the Producer of the show is thought to be the one who does this job. This, of course, is not written in stone and you may arrange for someone else to do this. Generally the design of the set is thought to be a coordinated effort between the Designer and the Director. The actual construction is done by a crew of builders and painters which may or may not include the producer or designer. It's pretty much up to you how this happens.

H. MUSIC DIRECTOR: Obviously, this applies to musical shows. Most often, the Music Director will fulfill a major roll in the production of the show working closely with the Director and in many cases with a Choreographer. The degree and nature of this involvement is at the discretion of the Director.

H.1. MUSICIANS: It is generally the responsibility of the Music Director to obtain and coordinate this aspect of the show. SLT has never endorsed a policy of "paid musicians". Any departure from this policy would be at the discretion of the Board of Directors. If recorded music is being used for your show, it is your responsibility to ensure that all appropriate fees and licensing are included in your budget and are paid in advance.

I. CHOREOGRAPHER: If dance numbers, or other scenes requiring notable physical activity, are a part of your show, you will need to arrange for a Choreographer to design and direct them. Our theatre lobby offers a wood floor area which may be used for rehearsal/dance space if the main stage is in use.

J. STAGE MANAGER: Your Stage Manager is the most important member of your crew. Customarily, once the show opens he/she is solely responsible for making your play happen on a nightly basis. Be sure to choose someone who is experienced and has capabilities equal to the magnitude of your production. Everything that we will see on stage is coordinated by this person and he or she must be up to the job.

J.I.STAGE CREW: You will need adequate numbers of stage crew to handle the backstage logistics. This crew is usually handpicked and trained by the Stage Manager. The jobs done backstage are sometimes menial and boring and it is easy for individuals to be distracted. Make an effort to see that you select people who are serious and have a mature attitude towards the functions they are performing. What happens backstage has a major effect on what we see on stage.

K. LIGHTING AND SOUND: You will need to obtain competent Lighting and Sound Designers / Technicians for your show. For some shows, this can be one person; for other shows there will be several individuals involved. We expect you to choose people who are experienced, familiar with our equipment and who are safety minded. If you are not sure of an individual's capability, ask around. Most likely someone knows them and will provide a recommendation.

L. COSTUMING: Costumes are important for every show. Sometimes these are obtained by the cast themselves and sometimes you will need a Costumer to design and coordinate the gathering and production of dress. SLT has a large inventory of costumes which you may use for your show. If we do not have what you need, items may be bought or made. Please make sure there is adequate money in your budget to cover these costs. Any costumes which are bought or made at the expense of the theatre are considered theatre property and are to be put into inventory at the end of the show. Any costumes purchased by cast members themselves remain their property and do not have to be given to the theatre. If you choose to rent costumes for your show, this should be anticipated in your original show budget. All rented costumes are the responsibility of the Costumer for their care and return. At the end of the show's run, all costumes are to be cleaned and properly stored.

M. MAKE-UP: For many shows, make-up can be done by the cast themselves. Many performers prefer to do their own. If this does not work for your show, you should arrange for a make-up crew to handle the needs. SLT maintains a certain amount of make-up supplies which are at your disposal. Additional items may be bought within the show's budget. These items will remain in SLT's inventory after the show. Any items personally bought by cast members will remain their property.

O. PROPS: It is a rare production which does not require props for the cast and on stage. Depending on the magnitude of your needs you may or may not wish to arrange for a Prop Person to obtain and coordinate the use of these items for your show. The cost of same should be in your budget and all props or furniture purchased or built at the theatre's expense will remain the property of the theatre. In the event that a cast or crew member or any other individual, would like to obtain any costume, prop, furniture

or set items from the show, a request should be directed to the Board to determine the price at which such item(s) would be sold or in some cases given away without cost.

P. DIRECTOR DEBRIEFING: The Director is required to attend the next regularly-scheduled SLT Board Meeting following the closing of the show for the purposes of discussing the show (what went well, what could have gone better, and lessons learned for future shows). *See “Director Debriefing” form at the end of this handbook.*

II. THINGS YOU NEED TO COORDINATE

There are many other aspects of your production which are your responsibility to coordinate. Many of these areas have theatre members assigned to them; some don't. The following items are for your informational purposes.

A. USHERS: SLT has an Usher Chairperson who will arrange for ushers for your shows. Check with the Board to obtain the contact information for this person. He or she will handle the scheduling of ushers as needed. You may have friends or family who would like to volunteer to usher. Give the necessary contact information to the Ushers coordinator. Ushers may attend the performance for free if there are any empty seats available.

B. CONCESSIONS: There is a Chairperson who will make all necessary arrangement for the concessions for your show. **We assume that all shows will have an intermission.** If this is not the case with your show, please notify the Concessions Chairperson.

C. PROGRAMS: The Program Chairperson should be contacting you to discuss the program for your show. It will be your responsibility to obtain from your cast and crew any needed information which is desired for the program. Also, any pictures will be your responsibility to obtain. All information is turned over to the Chairman who will layout the program and provide you with a proof to be approved before it goes to press. The Chairman will make you aware of any necessary deadlines for this information. Normally, each cast/crew member is given a form to complete which will provide the information for the program. This is up to the Directors'/Producers' discretion. Also, both the Director and the Producer are invited to write a “blurb” to be included in the program. This is usually some schmaltzy stuff about how proud you are to have worked on this show and how much you appreciate the support of our patrons.....or something to that effect.

D. PUBLICITY: The SLT Publicity Chairperson will handle and coordinate the publicity for your show. You should discuss with him/her any particular ideas you may have for promoting the show.

E. PHOTOGRAPHY: You will need photographs for the program, for publicity and, if you choose, for display in the lobby during the run of the show. Traditionally, there is also a photo done of the entire cast and crew as a group which is duplicated and a copy given to each participant. The Photography Chairperson should be contacting you to discuss when to take these photos for your show. Consult a Board member about this if you would rather make other arrangements for your show. In some cases, photography is done by a member of your crew or cast who may be particularly adept and has a digital camera. The cost of the photos should be included in your budget.

F. BUILDING ACCESS: You will be issued a key and access code to the building for the run of your rehearsals and the show. You should coordinate this with the Building and Grounds Chairman prior to beginning rehearsals. The key is to be returned after the last performance and after the set has been struck and all properties put away/returned, etc. You will be made aware of necessary information about the building at the time your key is issued. This is regarding security alarms, HVAC, fire alarms, cleaning, and other details.

G. CLEANING: The cleaning and maintenance of the building is a major concern during the run of your production; it seems to be an issue that no one wants to deal with. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the Director / Producer. When you begin the use of the theatre for your production, starting with the auditions and throughout the run, the cleanliness and care of the building is on the Director! You should tour the building with the Buildings and Grounds Chairman and take note of the condition of everything. It should be returned to this condition when you are done. This includes the backstage area, the loft, the costume room, the light booth, all hallways, the auditorium, the lobby, the restrooms and the area outside the back door. SLT will provide a cleaning person to thoroughly clean the public areas of the building prior to “family night”. After that, the public areas are to be “tidied up” prior to each performance. You may do this yourself or with members of your team, or you may bring in a professional cleaner to do it at the expense of the shows budget. The Buildings and Grounds Chairman will review this with you at the time you begin production.

H. SPECIAL PURCHASES: Sometimes it is necessary or desired to make special purchases of tools or equipment for a given show. Such requests for purchases, such as tools or smaller lighting or sound equipment, may be made of the Buildings and Grounds Chairman. Any requests for larger expenditures for permanent items must be submitted to the Board.

I. AFTER THE SHOW: As mentioned above, the “clean-up” after the show is the Director’s responsibility. It is highly suggested that you utilize your cast and show staff to accomplish the following:

I.1. All sets, set pieces and scenery are to be struck. Debris is to be cleaned up and carried away. All lumber is to be “de-nailed” and stacked neatly. All tools are to be put away and the backstage area clean and organized.

I.2. All props are to be stored or returned as appropriate. All costumes are to be cleaned and stored.

- I.3. Any rented items (costumes, scripts, scores, etc.) are to be returned appropriately and in a timely manner to avoid extra expense.
- I.4. The paint room, light/sound booth are to be cleaned and organized.
- I.5. The stage and backstage areas are to be free of any “leftovers” and swept clean.
- I.6. The dressing rooms are to be cleared of all show items and cleaned.
- I.7. The lobby and rest rooms should be cleaned.
- I.8. The seating area should be free of trash.

If there are any known problems, or items needing repair or replacement, the Buildings and Grounds Chairman is to be made aware of them.

J. CAST PARTY: We traditionally have a cast party after the final performance of each show’s run. The scheduling of this is up to the Director / Producer. The cost of this party should have been included in your original budget. There may be a Hospitality Chairperson who will coordinate it for you; if so, contact the Chairperson and make arrangements as you may see fit. If no Hospitality Chairperson is available, then the Director/Producer may make the arrangements within the constraints of the approved show budget. Usually the party includes food and beverages, some sort of gifts or remembrances for the cast and crew, special gifts, roasts and toasts of individuals, and a lot of fun. It’s pretty wide open to ideas as long as it is not out of the bounds of propriety. Planning this well can result in a very special and memorable event for all attending. Spouses, partners and boy/girlfriends are usually welcome within budget constraints depending on the size of the shows cast and crew. Contact a Board member should you need cost guidelines or other information.

III. OTHER STUFF

Additional general information items about which you should be informed.

A. MARQUEE: There is a “season” marquee kept in the display box in front of the theatre which lists all of the shows for our season. You will need a separate marquee for your show. As you have probably noticed, these marquees are framed and hung in the theatre as memorabilia after the shows. It is your responsibility to arrange for this marquee to be made. You can have it done at a printing company or you can have it done by hand. In either case, the theatre will pay to have this done as an expense of your show.

All necessary “legality” info should be included. Other than that, the design is left up to you. We do ask that the dimensions of the marquee are in keeping with the others so that they may be framed and hung appropriately. The marquee should be posted prior to family/friends performance.

B.KIDS: If you are working with kids in your show, there are a few general ground rules to follow.

- B.1.* Children are not allowed on the upper level of the theatre (the backstage mezzanine) unless accompanied by an adult.
- B.2* Children should not be left in the theatre building without an adult present at any time.
- B.3.* Shows with a large number of children in the cast should have an appointed “child wrangler” who is present at rehearsals and performances and is responsible for keeping the kids safe, quiet and out of trouble.
- B.4.* If you are working with any children under the age of 18, there should always be another adult present unless it is your own kid.

C. ALCOHOL: The use of alcoholic beverages is strictly prohibited at times when there are minors present who are working on or in your show. Alcohol should not be consumed prior to or during a performance.

D. CANDLES / OPEN FLAME: The use of candles or any other type of open flame during rehearsals or performances must be approved in advance by the Board of Directors.

E. BUILDING SECURITY AND SUCH: Our building has a security system for protection from break-ins as well as a fire alarm system. The Building and Grounds Chairman will familiarize you with these when you are given your key to the building and a walk through. It is important that the building is shut down properly after each rehearsal, set-building session or performance. This is YOUR responsibility.

All lights are to be turned off with the exception of one lobby light which stays on automatically, the light over the door to the backstage restroom and the “ghost light” which is to be left lit and on stage anytime that the theatre is dark.

There are three “area” HVAC units (one in each dressing room and one in the light booth). These should be set in the “off” position (both the heat/ac switch and the fan switch), when the building is not being used.

There are 4 large “zone” systems which are the major heating and a/c for the building. The zones are: one in the lobby, two in the auditorium and one backstage. There is a manually set thermostat in each of these areas. The fan indicator and the heat/ac indicator should be left on “auto” all of the time. The heat setting should be left on 60 degrees when the building is not in use and set to 72 degrees when the building is occupied. The a/c indicator should be set to 78 degrees when the building is not in use and as follows during times of use: lobby 72 degrees; auditorium 70 degrees if there will be an audience, 72 for rehearsals; and the backstage from 72 down to 65 depending on how cool you want it during your rehearsal or performance.

Remember that it takes at least an hour to stabilize the temperature so you need to anticipate your requirements. **PLEASE CHECK ALL OF THESE ZONES PRIOR TO SECURING THE BUILDING AFTER USE.**

E. PARKING: The theatre owns a certain part of the parking lot around the building; however, we generally share space with the Smithfield Center which works for

both them and us. Our lot is also used during the day by some of Smithfield Foods' employees. The small area outside of the stage door is for the exclusive use of SLT workers as the sign indicates. It is a good idea to check with the Smithfield Center regarding events at their facility which may coincide with your performances. In the case of a conflict, it is a good idea to "rope off" our part of the lot so that we have space for our patrons to park for the show. The Building and Grounds Chairman will make you aware of how to do this but it is YOUR responsibility to make it happen.

IV. FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH DEPARTMENT

The following are some general thoughts about doing a show at SLT. Some we expect, some we suggest, all must be understood and considered.

4.1. VOLUNTEERS: SLT has always been an organization peopled by volunteers and we are very proud to offer the level of theatre that we do with no paid professionals. We, of course, expect you to maintain this policy ...and to remember that working with volunteers can be very different and often more difficult than with paid staff. The time and effort given by all concerned can be mammoth and a drain on individuals as well as families. It is important to make clear to all who are involved with the show what will be expected of them in the way of commitment of time and effort. You should always have a complete schedule of rehearsals and performances included in your orientation at the time of auditions so that there are no surprises for anyone. Remember, it is a lot easier to delete a rehearsal than it is to add one.

4.2 MEETINGS, NOTES AND CAST CALLS: These things are not required by SLT but they are suggested as extremely useful tools and ones that have proven to be very effective. Every show is different as is every director's style, so customize things as you deem appropriate.

4.3 MUNCHIES: Often your cast and crew will be at the theatre for a number of consecutive hours, sometimes having missed a meal in getting there on time. It's never a bad idea to keep beverages and munchies in plentiful supply backstage throughout your production as you may feel are appropriate; these may be charged to your show's budget. You will find that as the rehearsals progress and your cast begins to form that "family" thing, homemade goodies will begin to materialize. Keep 'em fat and happy. Our Concessions Chairperson will be glad to assist in obtaining needed items. Contact that person and let him or her know what you need.

4.4 TRADITION: We at SLT are very proud to offer what we feel is the best community theatre in the area and would hold our productions up to any others which are performed on our level. We anticipate that as a Director and/or Producer, you will continue and contribute to this reputation. We are all aware of the time and effort involved in achieving the end product your audience will experience when that grand drape opens each night. It so often comes down to the fine tuning and the details which are instilled by the Director and the Producer in the cast and crew. Make it happen.

Smithfield Little Theatre

Director Debriefing

Plan to attend the next regularly-scheduled Board Meeting following the closing of your show. During the course of the show, take notes on the following topics (attach additional sheets as needed). Bring this sheet with you to the Board Meeting, and be prepared to speak for 5 – 10 minutes on these and any other show-related topics.

Show: _____

Director: _____

Performance Dates: _____

Scheduled Date of Debriefing: _____

Show Proposal Process

Auditions

Rehearsals

Tickets

Expense Tracking

Set Design / Construction

Programs

Publicity

Photography

Lights / Sound

Costumes

What is one thing you learned from directing this show?

One suggestion I would make for future directors is:

What do you wish you had known or been told before directing this show?