

## Stage Manager

If the Producer is the Director's right hand, the Stage Manager (SM) is his left. The SM should be shadowing the Director every step of the way from the earliest design meetings through every phase of the rehearsal process, because ultimately, it's the SM's job to see that the production, as conceived and directed, is what goes on stage.

Ideally, the SM is the first to arrive and the last to leave rehearsals.

During the blocking phase, the SM takes detailed blocking notes in the prompt book. Once blocking is complete, the SM watches blocking notes to assure that actors follow their blocking. When the actors begin putting their scripts down, the SM prompts in a manner agreed upon with the Director. (Some directors like the prompter to "throw in" lines as needed for a smooth glow; other directors prefer to have actors "call" for the line.)

In actors' absences, the SM will read-in their lines, and sometimes walk their blocking – again at the Director's discretion.

The SM "sets up" each scene – arranging the furnishings, and often the "working" props.

As crew members are folded into the rehearsal process, the SM oversees the work of the grips, the props committee and sometimes dressers, and/or sound/special effects technicians.

The SM assures that a complete first aid kit is available at rehearsals, (and at the performance venue.)

The SM keeps the rehearsal space clean (swept, trash emptied, studio kitchen and bathrooms clean.) This doesn't mean the SM is ipso-facto the janitor, but it is up to the SM to oversee the state of the facility, rotate maintenance jobs as needed.

Once the production moves to the Audi, Music Theatre, or other performance venue, the SM works with the set/designer/builder to organize the backstage area – ensuring clear aisle for safe movement. (S)he also works with sound/light/special effects chairs, ensuring that cables, wires and cords are properly tied up or taped down – again, for safety purposes. The SM is the safety officer of the production.

The SM takes cast and crew on a tour of the venue – points out fire extinguishers, fire exits, and other safety features. (S)he explains the evacuation procedures, and RUNS A FIRE DRILL (absolute requirement.)

The SM keeps a sign-in sheet in the stage left (or hallway) area. (S)he assigns some individual – generally the assistant SM if there is one – to take that list and call the roll in the event of evacuation. That person must be able to assure the fire department that the backstage is clear. In a fire emergency, the SM lowers the safety curtain and cuts the ropes at the rear of the stage/backstage areas to be sure the cast and crew have all exited.

The stage manager works with the grips and props crew to effect fast and smooth scene changes; (s)he works with dressers for quick costume changes, and with sound, light and special effects technicians to set light and sound and effects levels and cues.

The SM runs the technical rehearsals ("dry" tech – crew only, and "wet" tech – cast and crew.) (S)he "calls" the show: gives the cast a minimum of 30-minute, 5-minute, and "places" calls; oversees cast readiness for entrances, and gives "ready" and "go" calls for sound, light and effects cues. (S)he coordinates with music director when cues are musical.

On musicals, the SM numbers and controls rented materials – checks at production's end to be sure they are erased – returns materials to Producer to be shipped back to the Publishing House. On non-musicals, SM marks and distributes scripts (they should be identifiable by name, number or role, because they will be left behind.)

As in the rehearsal space, the SM oversees the cleanliness of stage and backstage and coordinates with the Producer for over-all maintenance of the facility.

The SM, Producer and Director coordinate cast/crew jobs for the strike, taking into account the helper-needs of set and light, costume and props chairs, as well as House Manager. And, again works with Director and Producer to coordinate the Studio cleanup.

Above all, the Stage Manager is organized and calm. Theatre is full of high strung, emotional, sometimes volatile personalities. At a minimum, one person who is always unruffled and in control (of him/herself, and of the situation) is a necessity.