

Theatre Ontario



The Curtain Club's production of Staff Room, winner of the Outstanding Production Award at Theatre Ontario Festival 2004. Cast members: Cam Lund, Jonathan Kline, Victoria Curran, Brandon Moore, Shannon L. Hill, Peter Shipston, Lynda Mur and Carol Moore. Photo by Daws Strong.

Guide To Producing in Community Theatre

General limitations on applicability to The Rural Root Theatre Company:

Dated: 12 June 2011 by Martin W., President of RRTC

This copy downloaded from Theatre Ontario publications website this date.

While broadly applicable to any theatre group, there are statements, descriptions and task described in here that assign responsibilities to various production-team members that overlap those of other members of the same team or, indeed, of the RRTC Board.

In particular: publicity. There are likely others.

The distribution of this document within Rural Root is with the understanding that it is guidance and education, but is not to be used to override RRTC policy or directives or the RRTC Constitution. If anyone finds areas of conflict, confusion or ambiguity of this document with other RRTC documents, please bring them to the attention of the RRTC Board for clarification and, possibly, re-issue of this document as an official RRTC document.

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Introduction

Community theatre is thriving across the province! From small towns to large cities, from long-established companies to new project-based collectives, there is a wealth of opportunities for theatre enthusiasts and emerging professionals.

This guide outlines the various roles within a well-organized theatre company, describes the responsibilities of each role, and gives an approximate production schedule. Planning ahead supports the creative process. Each theatre company will find a system that works best for its needs and particular assembly of individuals and talents. This guide can act as the first step to eliminating the assumptions and expectations that may lead to interpersonal and production crises in the theatre by ensuring that all responsibilities have been identified and assigned.

We have indicated where more comprehensive publications are available and we encourage individuals and groups to consult these resources as they are all indispensable guides to the nuts and bolts of theatre production—whether it’s writing a media release, filling out a box office final report, setting up a prompt book, or building a costume.

While this guide is written for community theatre companies, most of this text is appropriate for emerging theatre groups with professional aspirations, but with the following considerations: the timelines in professional theatre are much more compressed, with full-time rehearsals averaging two to four weeks, depending on the size of the show and budget of the company. The producer’s responsibilities expand to include fundraising, grant applications and contracts. Grant applications, finding and securing an appropriate venue need to be undertaken at least a year in advance. The professional producer may also enter into negotiations with professional associations such as Canadian Actors’ Equity Association (CAEA), Playwrights’ Guild of Canada (PGC) and Associated Designers of Canada (ADC). If doing so, consult *The Canadian Theatre Agreement* available from CAEA or the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT).

Individual and group members of Theatre Ontario may arrange for further counselling and assistance from our staff. As well, Theatre Ontario’s Talent Bank matches community organizations with professional theatre trainers for workshops and short-term consulting contracts in producing, directing, stage managing, marketing and much more.

Theatre is a place where magical things can happen—actors emerge out of the mist to tell their stories, imaginative sets roll out and exciting sword fights take place on stage. For those involved in theatre, the creation of a show can pose many potential safety hazards from the creation of sets, costumes and props with specialized knowledge and equipment; to the movement of furniture and actors under overhead lights or in complete darkness. Performers, technical theatre workers, volunteers, supervisors and management all share responsibility for health and safety in the theatre. With financial support from The Ontario Trillium Foundation, Theatre Ontario created a bold initiative called “To Act in Safety” that delivers health and safety training to people at every stage of their theatre career and offers practical and accessible tools, and best practices that can be freely shared in cultural organizations all over Ontario. Visit www.theatresafety.ca for free health and safety resources.

Producer

The producer reports to the Board of Directors.

Duties:

- Coordinates and is responsible for all aspects of production, both technical and artistic
- Organizes, prioritizes and manages finances, personnel, and scheduling
- Keeps up to date on all developments from inception to final wrap-up of the project
- Ensures everyone has a clear job description and is able to do their job effectively
- Fosters team spirit
- Obtains the rights for the play script and music royalties
- Engages a director and, if required, a musical director and choreographer
- Engages designers and department heads in consultation with the director
- Creates a master production schedule
- Sets up an accounting system for the production in consultation with the treasurer of the company
- Creates a budget for the project with a break-down for each department based on design concepts
- Makes arrangements for the audition call
- Notifies all auditioners about whether they have been cast
- Creates a Production Team and Cast Contact List
- Attends all production meetings, the first rehearsal, all of technical week, and opening night
- Arranges for transportation of technical items, costumes, props, furnishings, etc. to the theatre
- Ensures all departments have completed their clean-ups and returns of borrowed or rented equipment
- Ensures all accounts are paid
- Creates the financial report showing the original budget and the project actual expenditures
- Submits a producer's report with department reports and financial report to the Board of Directors
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Highly organized
- Financially responsible
- Strong communication skills
- Approachable and able to mediate disagreement
- Enthusiastic about the project
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills
- Ability to delegate, motivate and encourage others
- Prepared to mediate a dispute, to solve the problem, and in extreme situations, inform the Board of Directors

Note:

In circumstances where a cast or crew member is consistently late, does not do an assigned job, or abuses membership privileges, the producer should be asked to explain to the volunteer how this behaviour is affecting the others and offer an opportunity to change. It is sometimes assumed in community theatre that one must put up with a disruptive volunteer (not true!) The producer, after consultation with the Board of Directors, may ask a volunteer to leave when their behaviour puts a project at risk.

Recommended Reading:

Community Theatre Directory, Theatre Ontario.

Community Theatre Primer, Theatre Ontario.

The Indie Theatre Producers Guide, Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts.

Finance for the Arts in Canada, Heather C. Young.

Production Schedule

Every person working in theatre has a different schedule, but they are all working towards a common goal—opening night. This timeline offers some basic scheduling of events for all designers, artists and production staff.

6 - 12 months before Opening:

- depending on the theatre, director submits a script for consideration, applies or is offered a particular play to direct
- director assesses and analyzes every aspect of the play: plot, character, mood, rhythm, style—both literary and theatrical
- director researches the playwright, the period, and the style

4 - 5 months before Opening:

- producer or theatre company obtains the rights for the play script and music royalties—if the selection is a musical, the rights might need to be obtained at least a year in advance
- producer ensures any directorial changes to the script—including cross-gender casting, deletions, additions, or addition of music—receive authorization from the writer or agent
- producer confers with the director about the artistic vision of the project
- producer makes preliminary contact with potential designers and department heads in consultation with the director
- allows for at least 80 to 90 hours of rehearsal time for a play, or 120 hours for a musical.

16 weeks before Opening:

- producer, director, set, costume, lighting, sound, make-up/hair designers meet to discuss the director's artistic vision and possible design concepts, and special effects
- all designers begin research, make tentative plans, sketches and visual notes
- lighting designer obtains scale drawings of the stage, lighting grid, circuits/dimmers, detailed inventory of available equipment
- lighting designer researches additional equipment and costs, if required
- sound designer makes note of sound effects, ambient sound, music—if music is being used other than pre-show, intermission, post-show and scene changes, permission must be obtained from the music publisher
- sound designer meets with the technical director on the availability of sound equipment
- sound designer researches additional equipment and costs, if required
- producer makes arrangements for the audition call—book a space, set the time, and post the audition call
- producer creates an audition form for auditioners; this form should ask information on the actors' availability, whether they're interested in working on the production in another capacity if not cast, and whether the actor is a member of Canadian Actors' Equity Association (CAEA) or Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA)
- if possible, producer makes the script available to auditioners to read beforehand, requiring a deposit, if necessary
- producer sends audition calls to Theatre Ontario (including the online form at www.theatreontario.org), the local community arts council and the regional drama association

12 weeks before Opening:

- the director, designers, stage manager, and technical director meet to establish the final design concepts
- producer creates a master production schedule, a description of the space required for rehearsal, shop space, and performances

- producer creates a production team contact list, including names, addresses, email addresses, postal codes with both day and night telephone numbers, and distribute it to all production staff (to protect the personal privacy of the production team, it is recommended that contact lists not be posted in publicly accessible locations)
- producer sets up an accounting system for the production in consultation with the treasurer of the theatre group
- props coordinator and furnishings coordinator discuss with the director and set designer the requirements for props and furnishings
- producer creates a preliminary budget for the project with a break-down for each department based on the design concepts
- set designer makes a set maquette (a model of the set) that has been approved by the director
- the set designer, producer, technical director and/or head carpenter create building plans, a list of required personnel and equipment
- costume designer makes final costume sketches includes swatches of material that have been approved by the director
- costume designer and producer create schedules, a list of required personnel and building-space needs (e.g. storage space, location and size of dressing rooms, designated areas for quick costume changes)
- lighting designer creates a ground and elevation plan, and arranges through the producer any loans or rental of additional equipment
- lighting designer arranges through the producer any loans or rental of additional equipment
- make-up/hair designer researches style of make-up to be worn in consultation with director and other designers
- based on the set designer's concepts, the props coordinator and furnishings coordinator assemble lists of required items
- director and producer conducts the auditions
- producer creates an audition schedule with the stage manager and director
- producer secures an accompanist and has piano tuned if music is required
- when casting is completed, producer notifies all auditioners about whether they have been cast
- producer adds cast list to the production list, and distributes to all production staff (to protect the personal privacy of the actors, it is recommended that contact lists not be posted in publicly accessible locations)

10 weeks before Opening:

- producer holds the first full production meeting
- producer sets up a schedule of weekly production meetings
- all designers coordinate specifics such as budgets, colour schemes, timelines, personnel, props, furnishing, set décor and director's requests
- stage manager obtains complete production lists, including cast and crew, complete schedules, scripts and information packages to distribute to the cast
- publicist and house manager meet with the producer, director and stage manager and have all the information required to begin creating press releases and a publicity timeline, including a photo call and any photo opportunities with the press;
- stage manager, producer, director, designers and technical director should be in regular communication
- stage manager produces a list of rehearsal costumes, props, furnishings
- costume designer, props coordinator and furnishings coordinator supplies the required rehearsal items
- make-up designer assesses state of make-up room (mirrors, sinks, chairs, etc.) and supplies, and purchases any supplies required

8 weeks before Opening:

- producer finalizes all department budgets, if costs appear excessive, work on areas where costs may be reduced
- producer reviews and finalizes all department plans and timelines
- producer should be prepared to solve any inter-departmental conflicts, especially around budget issues
- costume designer prepares a notebook of measurements, costume needs and costume return list
- lighting designer continues to work on the lighting plot
- lighting designer ensures all equipment is in good working order, cables are safely wired, gobos or colour-gels are ordered

First Rehearsal:

- producer, director and stage manager coordinates the rehearsal
- all designers, department heads and company members attend
- introductions, welcome the cast, explain all company policies, and areas of responsibility
- director explains the artistic vision for the production
- set, costume, lighting, sound, make-up/hair designers presents their design concepts, set maquettes and sketches
- costume designer arranges for measurements and all subsequent fittings
- make-up/hair designer collects information from actors about allergies that could impact make-up applications

6 weeks before Opening

- costume designer continues to oversee costume collection and construction
- designers attend as many rehearsals as possible, making notes of any changes and director's requests
- costume designer and make-up/hair designer arrange with the producer for photo-call requirements
- lighting designer, director and stage manager create a preliminary lighting cue list
- sound designer, director and stage manager create a preliminary sound cue list
- make-up/hair designer finalizes design elements and sketches
- make-up/hair designer assigns small personal make-up kit including brushes, brush cleaners, lip liners, eye liners, etc.
- props coordinator and furnishings coordinator complete building of any items required
- actors work with any special effects make-up or prosthetics
- designers create a detailed list of borrowed or rented equipment

2 weeks before Opening

- costume designer arranges for dressers for tech week and performances
- make-up/hair designer arranges for make-up artists for tech week and performances
- lighting designer, sound designer, technical director arrange for lighting and sound operators for tech week and performances
- sound designer completes assembly of all required sound sources
- producer arranges for transportation of technical items, costumes, props, furnishings, etc. to the theatre

Tech Week

Load-in, Set-up:

- hard hats and safety boots must be worn during the load-in and set construction
- technical director supervises
- lighting, sound equipment is loaded into the theatre
- lights are hung and cabled
- sound speakers hung
- the set built on stage
- props and furnishings are moved into the theatre
- props tables are set-up backstage—valuable props should be locked up following rehearsals and performances

Lighting Focus:

- lighting designer directs the focus of the lighting instruments

Level Set:

- lighting designer, lighting operator, director and stage manager sit in the theatre and create all the lighting cues
- lighting levels may be altered over the course of tech week, and additional cues might be added
- sound designer, sound operator, director and stage manager sit in the theatre and set all the sound cues
- sound levels are prone to change, especially in the case of a musical where an orchestra and/or microphones are used
- lighting and sound operators follow all cues as called by the stage manager

Actors' First Time On Stage With Set:

- stage manager establishes a call time for all cast and crew to allow time for warm-up and pre-set
- technical director and stage manager provide a tour of the set, pointing out entrances and exits, props tables, quick change areas, automated scenery and location of stairs, cables, etc.
- technical director and stage manager provide a tour of the theatre, pointing out emergency exits, fire extinguishers, first aid kit location, fire curtain, dressing rooms, green room

Costume Parade:

- actors “parade” on stage in their costumes and make-up under show lighting, for the designers, production staff and director—be prepared to make adjustments
- this is a great opportunity to do a photocall—arrange with the producer, publicist, stage manager

Rehearsal with Costumes:

- opportunity for the actors to rehearse in costumes on the set
- great follow-up to a Costume Parade

Technical-Only Rehearsal:

- rehearsal of only the technical elements of the show—lighting, sound, scene changes, and special effects or automated scenery or props
- director, stage manager, technical director, lighting and sound operators, and stage crew should be present

Cue to Cue:

- under the stage manager’s coordination, action and dialogue between cues is eliminated, so that only actors’ entrances and exits, and technical cues are carried out to the satisfaction of the director

- a cue-to-cue demands extra patience from everyone—make it clear to the actors that while acting is not the focus, actors must be alert

Technical Rehearsal:

- run through of the play with actors (not necessarily in costume) and all technical aspects of the production

Dress Rehearsal:

- conducted as a performance, from the half-hour call to the final exit after the curtain call
- actors must remain backstage at all times and the intermission must be observed
- any errors that occur should be dealt with as if an audience was present
- take notes on “glitches” to be ironed-out and present these notes after the run or before the next run
- stage manager is now responsible for the coordination of the production
- lighting and sound designers should finalize cue sheets

Preview:

- not all theatres will have a preview performance
- this is an actual performance with an audience (could be complimentary or sold at a discounted rate); but the preview still allows the director and designers an opportunity to fine tune aspects of the production

The Run

Opening:

- the first night of the normal run
- if the director or designers have any issues, make notes and pass on to the stage manager

The Run:

- costume designer ensures that all costumes are cleaned and repaired as required
- make-up/hair designer ensures that all make-up and hair supplies are replenished
- props coordinator resets props table following each performance, ensures items are properly placed prior to performance, repairs or replenishes props
- lighting and sound operators ensure all equipment is working properly prior to each show’s start

Post-Production

Strike:

- set is taken down
- set items are returned to borrowed/rented sources, added to the company’s permanent collection or destroyed
- lighting and sound equipment is taken down and returned
- ensure all company-owned lighting equipment is safely stored
- ensure all company-owned sound equipment is safely stored
- costume designer supervises the cleaning, restoration and return of all borrowed or rented costumes and accessories
- costume designer catalogues all costume pieces and accessories being added to the company’s permanent collection
- make-up/hair designer catalogues all materials being added to the company’s permanent collection
- props coordinator and furnishings coordinator supervises the cleaning, restoration and return of all borrowed or rented props/furnishings

Post-Production:

- producer conducts final production meeting for the director, stage manager, designers, technical director, and representative(s) from the cast, to discuss aspects of production—what worked and what did not; artistic outcomes should not be discussed
- producer ensures all departments have completed their clean-ups and returns of borrowed or rented equipment
- producer ensures all accounts are paid
- producer creates the financial report showing the original budget and the project actual expenditures
- producer collects project reports from all department heads
- producer adds the department head reports to the producer's overall report
- producer analyze the results from cost-to-budget as well as artistic achievements
- producer submits this overall report with the financial report to the Board of Directors

Notes on Musical Theatre

Musical theatre, in general, requires more money, people, time and organization. The first thing to remember is to extend the planning and rehearsal time-lines. How much? How long? This all depends on the skill of the cast and crew. If a drama is rehearsed for 80 hours, then a musical would be rehearsed for 120 hours (approximately 50% more)—provided that the musical performers are as accomplished as the actors. If there is any training involved—dancing, singing, music—then it is wise to begin the process a few months ahead, with weekly training/rehearsals in music and dance.

Extra personnel with special skills will be needed—choreographers, music directors, accompanists and musicians. The stage manager will need assistants with clearly stated duties. With large groups of people, maintaining discipline and focus can sometimes be difficult. At least one of these assistant stage managers should be assigned to “crowd control.” During the run, appoint one or two chorus members to liaise with the assistant stage manager. If the chorus contains family groupings, make elder members responsible for the care of younger members.

The primary artistic personnel in musical productions are the director, the choreographer and the music director. Both the choreographer and the music director support the director's artistic interpretation of the play while adding their special vision to their own area of expertise. This is a close working relationship. Care should be taken that communication lines are always open. This threesome is the core of the artistic team, and both the choreographer and the music director should attend any meetings attended by the director. This includes design and production meetings. There is nothing worse than having to cut a wonderful piece of choreography because the designer was unaware of the choreographer's needs. Some set materials absorb or distort sound—these kinds of details must be discussed and settled while ideas are still in the planning stage. Costuming is another area that requires communication. Can the actors dance, move and breathe? When people are physically active, their costume needs must be clearly communicated to the designer by the choreographer. Where will body-microphones be hidden?

Recommended Reading:

Let's Put On A Musical!: How To Chose The Right Show For Your Theatre Peter Filichia (Back Stage Books).
Producing Musicals, A Practical Guide John Gardyne (Crowood Press).
Staging A Musical Matthew White (Routledge).

Director

The director is responsible to the producer.

Duties:

- Assesses and analyzes every aspect of the play: plot, character, mood, rhythm, style—both literary and theatrical
- Researches the playwright, the period, and the style
- Executes and interprets the artistic components of the show
- Rehearses and prepares the actors
- Communicates the artistic vision to the designers and all other departments
- Attends all production meetings
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Knowledgeable in all aspects of theatre, including design, lighting, sound, costume and acting technique
- Excellent communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Prepared to spend the necessary rehearsal and preparation time
- Strong intuition
- Clear artistic vision
- Willingness to work with many people with a range of experience and abilities
- Likes the play
- Enthusiasm for the project

Notes:

It is particularly important that the director consciously communicate in a helpful, creative, supportive and constructive manner. Directors should avoid negative communication methods such as: blaming, yelling, accusing, threatening, nagging, guilt, and not listening.

Recommended Reading:

Acting Skills For Life Ron Cameron-Lewis (The Dundurn Group).

A Director Prepares: Seven Essays On Theatre And Art Art Bogart (Routledge).

The Director's Eye: A Comprehensive Textbook For Directors & Actors John Ahart (Meriwether).

Notes On Directing Frank Hauser and Russell Reich (RCR Creative Press).

On Directing Harold Clurman (Fireside).

Play Directing In The School: A Drama Director's Survival Guide David Grote (Meriwether Publishing).

Sense Of Direction: Some Observations On The Art Of Directing William Ball (Quite Specific Media).

Tips: Ideas For Directors Jon Jory (Smith & Kraus).

Director of the Musical

In general, the director's job description and responsibilities are the same as those described earlier with the addition of collaborating artistically with the choreographer and the music director. Communicating the artistic vision to the large cast, crew and production team required in musical theatre is one of the largest challenges the director will meet. The Director should also define expectations with
Choreographer: which scenes requiring blocking and which scenes require choreography.

Choreographer

The choreographer is responsible to the director for the creation of all dance movement for the production.

Duties:

- Collaborates with director
- Auditions the dancers and may make recommendations to the director for casting
- Schedules dance rehearsals with the director, the music director and the stage manager
- Teaches the cast members how to execute the choreography
- Leads choreography rehearsals
- With the director, blocks and directs those areas of the play that move into and out of the musical numbers
- Functions as a movement coach throughout the show, particularly if it is a period piece and a certain style of movement is required
- Attends production meetings
- Attends rehearsals

Skills:

- Strong visual sense
- Strong choreographic skill
- Ability to teach
- Knowledge of dance styles and history
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills

Note:

Resist the urge to direct the show. This is more difficult than it sounds because, a large portion of the show will be the choreographer's to share. As a result, the choreographer may begin to see possibilities that lie outside the director's interpretation. By all means, the choreographer may express ideas, but should be prepared to accept the director's final word.

Recommended Reading:

Choreography: A Basic Approach Sandra Minton (Human Kinetics).

The Creative Habit: Learn It And Use It For Life Twyla Tharp (Simon and Shuster).

Music Director

The music director is responsible to the director for all musical aspects of the production.

Duties:

- Collaborates with director
- Auditions the singers and may make recommendations to the director for casting
- Schedules music rehearsals with the director, choreographer and stage manager
- Teaches the cast members the show's music
- Leads music rehearsals—principals, chorus and musicians
- Serves as the conductor, or, in consultation with the producer and director, hires the conductor
- In consultation with the producer and director, hires the rehearsal pianist and the orchestra musicians
- Works with the sound designer
- Attends production meetings
- Attends rehearsals

Skills:

- Strong musical sense
- Strong conducting ability
- Ability to teach
- Knowledge of music styles and history
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills

Note:

Resist the urge to direct the show. This is more difficult than it sounds because, a large portion of the show will be the music director's to share. As a result, the music director may begin to see possibilities that lie outside the director's interpretation. By all means, the music director may express ideas, but should be prepared to accept the director's final word.

If the musicians working in the orchestra belong to a union, any special arrangements should be settled well in advance.

Stage Manager

The stage manager is responsible to the producer.

Duties:

- Consults with the producer on the selection of assistant stage managers
- Attends all production meetings
- Auditions:
 - Coordinates auditions with producer and director
- Preparation:
 - Prepares lists and forms for distribution to the actors
 - Prepares a preliminary list of props
 - Tapes out the set on the rehearsal hall floor
 - Prepares the green room area
- Rehearsals:
 - In cooperation with director sets up rehearsal schedule
 - Responsible for the smooth running of rehearsals
 - Ensures rehearsal props are available
 - Ensures rehearsal space is safe and useable
- Maintains a neat, orderly and easily understandable prompt book
 - Notes start time, break time, finish time of rehearsals
 - Takes blocking notes, missed lines, entrances and exits
 - Prepares and distributes daily production notes
- Tech Week:
 - Organizes cue to cue and all technical rehearsals
 - Responsible for calling all cues
 - Oversees all backstage activities
 - Ensures the show is running smoothly;
- After Opening:
 - Responsible for maintaining the director's vision throughout the run
 - All production personnel and actors report to the stage manager
 - Prepares and distributes performance reports
- Health and Safety:
 - Ensures first aid kit is stocked
 - Ensures all actors and crew know where all fire exits, fire extinguishers are located
 - Posts health and safety information
 - Liaises with front of house, calling fire/ambulance/police in case of emergency
 - Responsible for evacuation of actors and crew in case of emergency
- Works closely with the director, producer and actors

Skills:

- Strong organizational skills
- Strong communication skills
- Calm and helpful manner under pressure
- Ability to multi-task
- Sense of humour
- Knowledge of lighting and sound equipment
- First Aid training if possible

Recommended Reading:

Stage Management Without Tears Theatre Ontario.

Stage Managing The Arts In Canada , Winston Morgan (S.M.Arts).

Assistant Stage Managers

An assistant stage manager should be assigned specific stage management tasks under the supervision of the stage manager. For example, in rehearsal the assistant stage manager may be responsible for assisting with paperwork, prompting, and the rehearsal props preset; during production, the assistant stage manager may coordinate backstage traffic while the stage manager is in the booth. In emergency situations, the assistant stage manager's familiarity with the play makes them an ideal pinch-hitter for lighting or sound operators.

The assistant stage manager should not be expected to conduct rehearsals or call a show, except in extreme emergencies. Be clear about delegated tasks and resist the temptation of using the assistant stage manager as a company "gopher."

Set Designer

The set designer collaborates with the director, and is responsible to the producer.

Duties:

- Collaborates with director on establishing a set design
- Collaborates with director, costume and lighting designers on a colour palette
- Creates a maquette (a scale model) to communicate the final “look” of the set
- Creates a set of accurate drawings for the builders
- Creates drawings for props/furnishings coordinator
- Attends production meetings
- Attends first rehearsal and presents design concept
- Attends other rehearsals as available
- Attends load-in and set-up, dress rehearsals, etc.
- Coordinates scenic artists and set painters
- Coordinates props and furnishings with the appropriate coordinator
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Strong visual sense
- Ability to draw and build maquettes
- Knowledge of architectural styles and history
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills
- Financially responsible

Recommended Reading:

Scenography In Canada: Selected Designs Natalie Rewa (University of Toronto Press).

Costume Designer

The costume designer collaborates with the director, and is responsible to the producer.

Duties:

- Collaborates with director on establishing a costume design
- Collaborates with director, set and lighting designers on a colour palette
- Creates colour sketches of people and clothing that communicate the final “look” of costumes
- Takes measurements of all cast members
- Buys, rents or borrows costumes and accessories (shoes, hats, gloves, jewelry, purses, etc.),
- Adapts clothing to suit a character, and the actors’ activities (safety, comfort and moveability)
- Sews costumes if necessary
- Attends production meetings
- Supplies rehearsal costumes
- Attends first rehearsal and presents design concept
- Attends other rehearsals as available
- Attends costume parade, dress rehearsals, etc.
- Coordinates dressers for costume changes
- Arranges to repair and clean costumes during the run
- Supervises returns of any borrowed costumes or accessories
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Strong visual sense
- Ability to draw
- Knowledge of clothing styles and history
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills
- Financially responsible

Recommended Reading:

Plain and Fancy: A Manual On Costume Design Theatre Ontario
A Concise History of Costume James Laver (Thames and Hudson)
The Evolution of Fashion, 1066-1930 Margot Hamilton Hill, Peter Bucknell (Drama Book Specialists)
A Handbook of Costume Janet Arnold (MacMillan & Co.)
A History of Costume Carl Kohler (Dover Books)
Metric Pattern Cutting Winifred Aldrich (Mills & Boon Limited)

Lighting Designer

The lighting designer collaborates with the director, and is responsible to the producer.

Duties:

- Collaborates with director on establishing a lighting design
- Collaborates with director, set and costume designers on a colour palette
- Creates a lighting plot, ground and elevation plan
- Creates cue sheets
- Attends production meetings
- Attends first rehearsal and presents design concept
- Attends other rehearsals as available
- Coordinates rental of additional lighting equipment
- Attends load-in, lighting hang, lighting focus, level set, dress rehearsals, etc.
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Strong visual sense
- Understanding of the interaction of colour, light and shadow in three-dimensional spaces
- Understanding of lighting equipment (lamps, lighting boards, dimmers, wiring, etc.)
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills
- Financially responsible

Recommended Reading:

Light On The Subject: Stage Lighting For Directors, Actors And The Rest Of Us David Hays (Limelight Editions).

A Practical Guide to Stage Lighting Steven Louis Shelley (Focal Press).

Sound Designer

The sound designer collaborates with the director, and is responsible to the producer.

Duties:

- Collaborates with director on establishing a sound design (effects, soundscapes, ambient music)
- Collaborates with other designers
- Creates a sound plot (speaker location, etc.)
- Creates cue sheets
- Attends production meetings
- Attends first rehearsal and presents design concept
- Attends other rehearsals as available
- Coordinates rental of additional sound equipment
- Attends load-in, sound system set-up, level set, dress rehearsals, etc.
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Understanding of different sounds and music create moods, tension, and a sense of place
- Understanding of acoustics
- Understanding of sound equipment (speakers, amplifiers, sound boards, microphones, playback equipment, etc.)
- Ability to record and/or compile sound sources
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills
- Financially responsible

Recommended Reading:

Theatre Sound John A. Leonard (Routledge).

Make-up/Hair Designer

The make-up/hair designer(s) collaborates with the director, and is responsible to the producer.

Duties:

- Collaborates with director on establishing a make-up/hair design
- Collaborates with other designers
- Creates colour sketches of people and make-up/hair that communicates the final “look” of characters
- Buys, rents or borrows make-up accessories
- Attends production meetings
- Attends first rehearsal and presents design concept
- Attends other rehearsals as available
- Attends costume parade, dress rehearsals, etc.
- Coordinates make-up artists for performances
- Arranges to replenish make-up/hair supplies during the run
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Strong visual sense
- Ability to draw
- Knowledge of make-up/hair styles and history
- Understanding of the effect of colour, light and shadow on the human face
- Experience with wigs, beards and various prosthetics and special effects make-up
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills
- Financially responsible

Recommended Reading:

Hair and Wigs for the Stage, Rosemary Swinfield (Betterway Books).
Stage Makeup, 2nd ed, Richard Corson (Prentice-Hall Canada).
Stage Makeup Step by Step, Rosemary Swinfield (F&W Publications).

Technical Director

The technical director is responsible to the producer.

Duties:

- Organizes and costs technical needs of the show—materials for the set, lights, costume materials and rentals, sound equipment and props
- Supervises, coordinates and balances technical needs of the director, designers and department heads
- Manages and directs the crew and technicians up to the final dress rehearsal
- Attends production meetings
- Attends first rehearsal
- Attends other rehearsals as available
- Supervises load-in and set-up,
- Conducts a tour of theatre and on-stage set for cast and crew
- Attends technical-only rehearsals, technical rehearsals, dress rehearsals
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Strong background in technical aspects of production
- Appreciation for the design process
- Ability to interpret construction plans
- Strong knowledge of health and safety legislation, policies and practices
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills
- Financially responsible

Note:

The role of the technical director has developed over the past years to relieve the producer and stage manager of tasks related to the technical production. The greater the technical demands and budget of the show, the greater the need for a technical director.

Recommended Reading:

The Backstage Handbook Paul Carter (Broadway Press).

Stage Directions: Guide To Working Back Stage Edited by Stephen Peithman and Neil Offen (Heinemann).

Technical Theatre for Non-Technical People Drew Campbell (Allworth).

Head Carpenter

The head carpenter is responsible to the technical director and set designer.

Duties:

- Interprets the set designer's drawing into the reality of a set
- Builds scenic elements
- Manages and direct the building crew
- Attends production meetings
- Attends first rehearsal
- Attends other rehearsals as available
- Attends load-in and set-up
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Strong background in technical aspects of production
- Appreciation for the design process
- Ability to interpret construction plans
- Strong knowledge of health and safety legislation, policies and practices
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills
- Financially responsible

Note:

Do not accept vague suggestions or ideas that are not completely defined. An appropriate motto is: "If it's on the page, it's on the stage, if it's in the air, it's not there," meaning that design elements should be drafted or drawn and not just mentioned in passing.

Recommended Reading:

Stock Scenery Construction Handbook by Raoul (Broadway Press).

Props and/or Furnishings Coordinator

NOTE: Different people often handle props and furnishings. In this description, they are placed together but the observations cover both departments. In a professional theatre, the set designer designs props and furnishings, and the costume designer designs hand props like hats, jewellery, accessories, etc. The head of props and/or furnishings is responsible to the designers for achieving their designs.

Duties:

- Collaborates with set designer
- Builds, borrows, rents props or furnishings based on blueprints and drawings supplied by set designer
- Attends production meetings
- Supplies rehearsal props and/or furnishings
- Attends first rehearsal
- Attends other rehearsals as available
- Attends load-in and set-up, dress rehearsals, etc.
- Arranges to replenish or repair props and/or furnishings during the run
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Ability to build, repair props and/or furnishings
- Talent for scrounging and getting great bargains
- Driver's license
- Strong inter-personal skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Strong supervisory skills
- Financially responsible

Note:

Never underestimate the effectiveness of suitable props and furnishings for a production. The aim of every department of theatre production should be “attention to detail”—in decor, props and furnishings it is an absolute. The detail left unattended is what can pull the audience completely “out of the moment.” The exactly right props and furnishings are sometimes hard to find, but absolutely worth the extra time and trouble.

Remember that set furnishings are subject to much more abuse than home furnishings and consequently need much more care. Be prepared to repair and re-upholster borrowed furniture if any damage is done.

Lighting Operator

The lighting operator is responsible to the stage manager and lighting designer.

Duties:

- Attends load-in, lighting hang, lighting focus, level set, dress rehearsals, etc.
- Hangs lights, focus lights
- Follows all lighting cues as called by the stage manager
- Ensures lighting equipment is operational prior to each performance

Skills:

- Understanding of lighting equipment (lamps, lighting boards, dimmers, wiring, etc.)
- Attentive and follows instructions
- Strong communication skills

Sound Operator

The sound operator is responsible to the stage manager and sound designer.

Duties:

- Attends load-in, sound set-up, level set, dress rehearsals, etc.
- Follows all sound cues as called by the stage manager
- Ensures sound equipment is operational prior to each performance

Skills:

- Understanding of sound equipment (speakers, amplifiers, sound boards, microphones, playback equipment, etc.)
- Attentive and follows instructions
- Strong communication skills

Publicist

The publicist is responsible to the producer and/or Board of Directors.

Duties:

- Plans and implements a media strategy that incites interest and excitement in the public through posters, promotional flyers and advertisements
- Liaises with the media through press releases
- Arranges interviews
- Sets up photo shoots
- Prepares press kits
- Prepares the program
- Distributes any complimentary tickets
- Works with the producer regarding the presentation of publicity materials
- Ensures the box office manager is fully informed about any marketing initiatives, particularly ticket discounts
- Attends first rehearsal
- Works within a budget

Skills:

- Strong writing skills
- Excellent communication skills
- Strong computer skills
- Access to a fax machine
- Eye for detail
- Strong sense of design
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Strong organizational skills

Recommended Reading:

For Immediate Release: A Step by Step Guide for Theatre Publicists Theatre Ontario (available free-of-charge from www.theatreontario.org)

Box Office Manager

The box office manager is responsible to the producer and/or Board of Directors.

Duties:

- Sets up a ticket sale and internal audit system
- Keeps clear and accurate records of sales—by performance, ticket type and origin of sale
- Makes regular bank deposits
- Ensures the security of all cash, cheques and unsold tickets
- Trains, schedules and supervises box office staff
- Liaises with the producer and publicist to arrange any complimentary tickets
- Coordinates with the house manager to accommodate any guests with special needs
- Ensures the box office is totally informed about the current show, upcoming events and new marketing initiatives.
- Has answers to any questions a ticket buyer might ask: the length of the show, its suitability for children, what restaurants are nearby
- Attends first rehearsal

Skills:

- Basic accounting and mathematical ability
- Talent for dealing with the public and volunteers
- Ability to maintain a calm and cheerful manner when under pressure
- Strong communication skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Understanding of federal privacy legislation (PIPEDA)

Recommended Reading:

Basics of an Effective Box Office, Richard Carter (Theatre Ontario)

House Manager

The house manager is responsible to the producer and/or the Board of Directors.

Duties:

- Responsible for all activities in the audience (house), the foyer and grounds of the theatre
- Ensures that the house, its foyer and washrooms are maintained cleanly and securely in accordance with any fire and safety codes
- Controls audience traffic before, during and after each performance
- Trains and supervises ushers
- Ensures tickets are collected, programs distributed and audience members are seated comfortably
- Liaises with the stage manager for the timing of curtain at the beginning of the performance and at intermissions
- Responsible for refreshments served during intermission, sales tables in the foyer, displays and the running of a coat check
- Posts warnings indicating that a performance uses fog effects, flashing/strobe lights or cigarette smoke
- Prepares for first aid emergencies and has phone numbers for taxis, ambulances, hospitals and police posted in an accessible location for ushers
- Attends first rehearsal

Skills:

- Enjoys dealing with people and is known as “a good host”
- Excellent communication skills
- Easy-going and personable manner
- Strong team-building skills
- Background in catering or the hospitality industry is a strong asset

Actors/Performers

An actor is responsible to the director and stage manager for punctual attendance at rehearsals and learning the role. It is the actor's responsibility to come to rehearsals well-prepared and ready to work, including bringing their scripts, music, rehearsal schedule, pencils, and highlighters. Because theatres are legally not allowed to issue Tylenol or other headache medication, if prone to headaches/migraines, an actor should bring their own medication. Be prepared to follow company policies and cooperate with department heads' requests, particularly in the areas of costume, publicity, design and make-up, providing they have the director's approval. During the run, all actors are responsible to the stage manager in all areas including: backstage conduct, maintenance of dressing rooms, and handling of make-up, properties and costumes.

Note:

A good actor understands that theatre is a group effort and that all cast and crew provide valuable and meaningful contributions. Truly professional actors do not, at any time, assume that someone else is responsible for picking up or cleaning up after them. It is the actor's responsibility to wash his or her own coffee cups, put away his or her own costumes, and return props used to their assigned places. Remember that the myth of the actor as temperamental genius is just that—a myth. It doesn't matter how "big" the role is.

Recommended Reading:

Acting Skills For Life Ron Cameron-Lewis (The Dundurn Group).

Respect for Acting Uta Hagen (John Wiley & Sons).

The Right to Speak Patsy Rodenburg (Routledge).

Sanford Meisner On Acting Sanford Meisner (Vintage).

True And False David Mamet (Vintage).

Theatre Resources

Theatre Ontario

To Act In Safety (Theatre Ontario's health and safety project)

www.theatreontario.org
www.theatresafety.ca

Community

Association of Community Theatres – Central Ontario (ACT-CO)

Eastern Ontario Drama League (EODL)

Quebec Ontario Theatre Association (QUONTA)

Western Ontario Drama League (WODL)

Théâtre Action (Ontario francophone theatre association)

www.actco.ca
<http://hometown.aol.com/yodler1/>
www.quonta.org
www.wodl.on.ca
www.theatreaction.on.ca

Educational

Council of Drama & Dance in Education (CODE)

Performing Arts Organizations Network for Education (PAONE)

Sears Ontario Drama Festival

www.code.on.ca
www.paone.ca
www.searsdramafestival.com

Professional

Associated Designers of Canada (ADC)

Canadian Actors' Equity Association (CAEA)

Fight Directors Canada (FDC)

Playwrights Guild of Canada (PGC)

Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT)

www.designers.ca
www.caea.com
www.fdc.ca
www.playwrightsguild.ca
www.pact.ca

Other

Association of Summer Theatres 'Round Ontario (ASTRO)

Canadian Institute for Theatre Technology (CITT)

Community Cultural Impresarios (CCI)

Ontario Professional Ticketing Association (OPTA)

Playwrights Canada Press

Small Theatre Administrative Facility (STAF)

Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts

TheatreBooks

www.summertheatre.org
www.citt.org
www.ccio.on.ca
www.opta-on.ca
www.playwrightscanada.com
www.theatreadmin.com
www.tapa.ca
www.theatrebooks.com

Funders

Community Foundations of Canada

Ontario Arts Council

Canada Council for the Arts

The Ontario Trillium Foundation

www.community-fdn.ca
www.arts.on.ca
www.canadacouncil.ca
www.trilliumfoundation.org