

STEPHENS COLLEGE
THA 227 STAGE MANAGEMENT I

Lecture #4: Unions, Rules, and Scheduling - Safety

HANDOUTS: *Causes of Exposure to Hazards, Firearms Safety, Sample Stage Manager's Contract*

SHOW TO CLASS (BUT DO NOT DUPLICATE): *Equity Rule Book, Sample IATSE Contract, Photo of OKLAHOMA*

I. Unions

- A. The 2 main unions with which you, as stage managers, will have to deal are:
1. Actors' Equity - represents actors and stage managers, and
 2. The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) - represents stagehands (live theatre and film), projectionists, and wardrobe
 3. You may also have to deal with Teamsters for truck unloading
 4. Each union is represented on the job site by a steward (IA or teamsters) or deputy (Equity)

B. Rules

1. Actors' Equity: There are several different Equity contracts, including those which govern Broadway, Off-Broadway, and LORT (League of Resident Theatres). The rule book for each is about the size and thickness of a script from Samuel French. The following rules come mostly from the Broadway rule book, but are typical:
 - a. The rehearsal period begins with the date the Actor is first called, whether for a read-through (full or partial) or any other type of rehearsal. Rehearsal salary may be paid for:
 - i. Up to 8 weeks for Principal Actors and Chorus in a dramatic production,
 - ii. Up to 9 weeks for Principal Actors in a musical production, and

- iii. Up to 10 weeks for Chorus in a musical production.
- b. Except for the 7 days immediately preceding the first paid performance, actors may work up to 7 out of 8 ½ consecutive hours (including breaks). During the week prior to opening, actors may work up to 10 out of 12 consecutive hours, including breaks.
- c. after no more than 5 consecutive hours of rehearsal and/or performance, actors must have a 1½-hour recess.
- d. actors must have a 5-minute break after each 55 minutes of rehearsal or a 10-minute break after each 80 minutes.
- e. except on the day before opening, actors must have a rest period of 12 hours between the end of rehearsal/performance on one day and the rehearsal, performance, or transportation call on the following day. If the following day is a matinee day, Principal Actors may be called after a 10-hour rest period. The rest period prior to opening night may not be less than 9 hours. For each instance in which these rest periods are not granted, the actors receive 1 hour of overtime.
- f. during the week prior to the first paid public performance, actors may rehearse up to 10 out of 12 consecutive hours, including breaks. On the day of the first paid performance, rehearsals and performances may exceed 10 hours and encompass more than 12 consecutive hours so long as applicable rest periods and breaks are granted.
- g. actors must have 1 day off in each week of the rehearsal period (usually Monday) except during the week prior to opening, during which no day off is required.
- h. notes:
 - i. actors may not be called for notes after performances, except that on 1 performance day during the first week in the theater the director, choreographer, or both may give notes for 1 hour within 90 minutes of the final curtain.
 - ii. if the production runs for more than 2 weeks, the director and/or choreographer may call one note session not to exceed 90 minutes after the performance, provided the actors receive at least

24-hours notice and the director and/or choreographer has seen at least one performance within the last 48 hours and that they give the notes personally. The required rest period begins with the end of the note period.

- iii. no note session may be held on a 2-performance day
- iv. no notes may be given during a performance.
- j. in the absence of special circumstances, actors must have 24-hour notice of all rehearsals.

2. IATSE :

- a. Each major company such as American Ballet Theatre or the Metropolitan Opera typically has its own contract with the IATSE.
- b. In some states, individual venues may have IA contracts.
- c. It is important that you understand the terms of whatever contract your stagehands are working under.
- d. typical rules include:
 - i. the minimum call is all the department heads (carpentry, electrics, props, and sound). Exception can be made for "work-light" rehearsals.
 - ii. any stagehand called to work must be paid for at least 4 hours.
 - iii. stagehands must be given a meal break within 5 consecutive hours of work. the definition of "meal break" is:
 - one hour, off-the-clock, or
 - a 1/2 hour, on the clock, with food provided by the producer from a menu approved in advance by the Union.
 - iv. stagehands receive overtime rate for:

- hours worked in excess of 8 per day
 - hours worked in excess of 40 per week
 - hours worked between midnight and 8 am.
- v. stagehands must have at least an 8-hour rest period between workdays.
- II. **Safety:** The amateur looks at a situation and thinks, “we’ve never had a problem with that.” The professional thinks, “we haven’t had a problem with that yet.”
- A. Handout: *Causes of exposure to hazards*
1. Haste
 2. Unsafe conditions
 3. Bad attitudes
 - i. Macho
 - ii. Horseplay
 - iii. Lawlessness
 4. Impaired judgment
 - i. drugs and alcohol
 - ii. chemicals in products
 - iii. medications
 - iv. lack of sleep or food
 - v. stress
 - vi. lack of (or improper) training

B. General safety

1. never allow any aisles or exits to be blocked or occluded.
2. make sure that all stairs and ramps are adequately railed, marked and lit
3. make sure that all exit lights and emergency lighting circuits are functioning correctly
4. if you can't afford to do it safely, you can't afford to do it. Saying, "we couldn't afford it," won't cause an emergency room doctor to say, "OK, then she's not dead."
5. OSHA requires employers to post written notification of hazardous materials and conditions.

C. Fire Safety

1. Historic Fire catastrophes in public venues:
 - i. In 1970, 142 people were killed in a dance-hall fire in France.
 - ii. In 1972, 172 people died in a night club in Japan and 37 people died in a similar fire in Canada.
 - iii. in 1975, a fire in a Belgian disco killed 15 people
 - iv. A 1977 fire in the Kentucky Supper Club killed 164 people.
 - v. In 1981, a fire in a Dublin disco killed 48 people
 - vi. A 1985 fire in a British soccer stadium killed 56 people.
2. all flammable materials should be stored in flameproof cabinets.
3. fire extinguishers should be kept in all 4 corners of the stage, in such a manner as to be easily accessible.
4. live flame effects on stage:

- i. should be avoided if at all possible
 - ii. requires at least one stagehand or ASM serving as "fire watch". This person should have no other duties until the flame is extinguished.
 - iii. may require a fire marshall to be on the premises.
 - iv. may require special permits or licenses
5. most municipalities require that scenery be flameproofed.
 6. ALWAYS COMPLY WITH LOCAL LAWS AND CODES.

D. Ladder Safety

1. never use or allow to be used a ladder which is in obvious disrepair.
2. never allow anyone to stand on the top step of a ladder.
3. all tools carried to the top of a ladder should be tethered to the stagehand's body.
4. nothing should be left on top of a ladder or placed (even temporarily) on an electric's plugging strip.
5. never climb a ladder – or allow others to do so – without someone standing on the bottom rung of the opposite side for ballast.
6. always use the outriggers on a personnel lift.

E. Pyrotechnics

1. always use equipment and effects manufactured specifically for theater by a reputable manufacturer.
2. always use a double switch system with a keyed lockout
3. never allow pyrotechnics to be used in proximity to humans
4. must be operated by a licensed pyrotechnician

5. state and municipal licenses and permits may be required
6. always treat every effect as if it were loaded and armed.
7. demonstrate all effects to the cast and crew before the first rehearsal in which they will be used.
8. store all pyrotechnics materials properly:
 - i. store the 2 parts of an "A/B" system separately
 - ii. do not allow smoking near the storage area (or in the theatre at all while pyrotechnics are being used)
 - iii. check state and municipal laws for additional storage requirements.
9. always post a lobby notice when pyrotechnics are to be used.

F. Lasers

1. state and municipal permits are required
2. always use equipment and effects manufactured specifically for theater by a reputable manufacturer.
3. improperly used lasers can cause blindness.
4. must be operated by a licensed technician.

G. Fog

1. there are 3 types of fog machines used in theatre:
 - i. dry ice:
 - solid carbon dioxide is heated to produce carbon dioxide gas at a temperature lower than the ambient; the fog thus created lies close to the floor.
 - this effect is reasonably safe; the only real danger is suffocation due to displacement of oxygen and it is highly unlikely that this

could happen before the mist evaporated. A second risk associated with this effect is that a performer may slip on a wet spot left on the floor.

- this effect is not useful when the goal is to get particulate matter into the air so that beams of light might be more easily seen by the audience.
- ii. cracked oil or "oil mist" machines:
- use catalytically "cracked" mineral oil
 - this effect has the potential to be quite harmful to the respiratory system. some oils are carcinogenic
 - eventually, the oil must fall to the ground; as the rate of evaporation is very slow, a slip hazard eventually results.
- iii. fog fluid machines:
- use glycol alcohol
 - are less dangerous than oil mist machines but less safe than dry ice.
 - may create staining and stickiness on stage surfaces.
2. always follow manufacturers recommendations concerning the cleaning and operation of these machines.
3. demonstrate all effects to the cast and crew before the first rehearsal in which they will be used.

H. Flying Actors

1. the physical stresses in flying an actor both vertically and horizontally are greater than those incurred in flying in one direction only; the engineering is quite complicated. So is the liability.
2. this effect should only be designed and installed by an experienced, reputable, professional rigger.

3. there is no certifying agency for riggers; if a rigging contractor claims to be "certified", inquire as to the source of that certification.
 4. allow the effect to be operated only by stagehands who have been thoroughly trained by the rigging contractor.
 5. demonstrate all effects to the cast and crew before the first rehearsal in which they will be used.
- J. Firearms:
1. SEE HANDOUTS. SHOW PHOTO OF OKLAHOMA
 2. always post a lobby notice when firearms are to be used.
- K. Loud Music
1. over time, loud music can be extremely harmful to the hearing.
 2. Ellis Stewart used to brag about mixing 120 dB onstage monitor mixes for Tina Turner. He'll still tell you about it if you ask, but you'd better ask loudly – or he won't hear you.
- L. Strobe Lights
1. can cause epileptic seizures
 2. always post a lobby notice when strobe lights are to be used.
- M. Health
1. be aware of any actors who have allergies to materials which may be used on stage (including food props).
 2. store food props properly.
 3. make sure stage, rehearsal halls and dressing rooms are kept at proper temperature.
 4. if an actor has a communicable disease, send him or her home.