THE EDUCATION AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THEATRICAL PRODUCTION MANAGERS

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THE EDUCATION AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THEATRICAL PRODUCTION MANAGERS

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Thesis

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES...................................................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION: DIVISION OF LABOR IN THE THEATRE................................. 1
   The History of Production Management................................................................. 3
   Defining the Production Manager................................................................. 7
   Production Process Overview................................................................. 9
   Pre-Production.......................................................................................... 10
   Rehearsal................................................................................................. 12
   Technical Week......................................................................................... 12
   Show Run.............................................................................................. 13
   Core Competencies.............................................................................. 13

II. LITERATURE AND ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW............................ 16
   Technical Knowledge........................................................................... 17
   Administration....................................................................................... 24
   Problem-Solving................................................................................... 24
   Leadership............................................................................................. 25
   Communication..................................................................................... 27
   Financial Management......................................................................... 30
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>The organizational hierarchy of a producing theatre</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
DIVISION OF LABOR IN THE THEATRE

Theatrical Production Manager is a title that is relatively new to the theatre. Consequently, many who are familiar with the field of theatre may be unaware of the job responsibilities associated with the position. While today many theatres have production managers on staff, there is no universal job description applicable to every production manager in the field. As positions with the title of production management grow and evolve, several universities across the country have developed majors in the field of production management. Because the profession of production management is relatively young, core requirements are not standardized. The textbooks that serve the field vary greatly in format, content, and opinion; reflecting the experiences of the authors. Questions arise such as: What knowledge and skills should production managers possess? What is the relationship of the production manager in the overall theatre management structure? What is the best way to train people for the profession?

This thesis grew out of a summer internship in theatrical administration at Apple Tree Theatre in Highland Park, Illinois. The greater Chicago theatre scene is well developed and provides opportunities for arts administration students to observe and learn about the field. However, even after interning in professional theatre, speaking with theatre administrators, and researching other theatres in the area, the question of how best
to prepare to become a theatrical production manager remains unanswered in the academic world. Many professional production managers learn by experience, working their way into the field rather than attending a professional degree program. The future production manager must now wonder which comes first, the experience or the professional degree program.

Another motivating factor behind this project is the curriculum of the Arts Administration program such as at the University of Akron, (UA). The UA program, for example, offers students significant exposure to various aspects of arts administration. However, as students specifically interested in developing skills in theatrical production management will find, no classes discuss this particular field. While there may be an option for a self-designed course or tutorial, the core information is not readily available in a prepared course. This study will examine the field, the few academic programs that offer specialized preparation for a career, the available texts, and will develop a comprehensive semester-long class in theatrical production management. This project aims to gather the proper information to develop a semester-long theatrical production management class.

The best method of developing a strong knowledge of production management is to conduct an in-depth study of the field. In this chapter, a brief history of the field will set the stage for creating a general definition of contemporary theatrical production management. It will also establish a rationale for identifying core competencies for the field that will serve as a basis for the rest of the research. Chapter II will explore literature that serves the field, with particular emphasis on Peter Dean’s book *Production*
Management. Chapter II will also present a brief description of some educational programs specifically designed to prepare theatrical production managers.

Chapter III will analyze four interviews with theatrical production managers and those who hire production managers. An analysis of these interviews will identify common themes and experiences as well as mentioning information unique to a specific setting. These interviews will further explain the definitions and core competencies discussed in Chapters I and II. In Chapter IV, information gathered from the field will show the relationship to what is being taught in higher education institutions around the country. The ultimate goal of Chapter IV, a framework for a one-semester production management course, will emphasize skills that current theatrical production managers say are critical to the needs of the field. Before a discussion of the field of production management today can occur, a brief history of the profession will lay the foundation for the information that follows.

The History of Production Management

In the last 150 years, the field of theatre has gone through significant changes. Mark Heiser discusses these changes in a Winter 1996 article in *Theatre Design and Technology*. Specifically, Heiser discusses the progression of theatre management in Great Britain. “Professional theatre managers--producers, company managers, stage managers--didn’t exist prior to 1850. Most theatre companies were managed by members of the acting company, traditionally the star actor around which the company built its identity and reputation” (Heiser 48). These companies flourished in the smaller towns outside of London because the overhead was less and the company could tour.
This was a less expensive mode of operation than theatres mounting new productions (Heiser 49). These companies, known as stock companies, “generally employed a star actor from London, and would tour with a select group of actors that formed the acting company” (Heiser 49). These touring companies were less risky for smaller, local theatres to bring in and present to their patrons because the famous name guaranteed the audience’s attendance. The term stock company is drawn from the source of the material that the companies produced. All of the characters, sets, and storylines were taken from repertory that the company had already produced. “Like the scenery in stock productions, character portrayals were also, in a sense, drawn from stock. Most actors specialized in character types, or ‘lines,’ which varied only slightly during their entire career” (Langley 119). These stock companies would guarantee the performers a set wage with the possibility of a percentage of earnings from certain performances as well (Langley 118).

When stock companies began touring Europe, the star performer and organizer began assuming the title of actor-manager. During this touring period, theatre management and production management was condensed into the actor-manager system. These actor-managers often ran extremely unorganized companies. Often, records were improperly maintained, performers were mistreated, and financial management was so poor that the theatres themselves would often be cheated out of the money due to them (Byrnes 22).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as the popularity of touring companies increased all over the world, touring became much more complicated. In the United
States, an organization in New York City called the Theatrical Syndicate gained control of these touring companies. “In 1896 Sam Nixon and Fred Zimmerman of Philadelphia, and Charles Frohman, Al Hayman, Marc Klaw, and Abraham Erlanger” gathered together and formed a stronghold of theatre administration (Brockett 455). These six men merged three theatrical booking agencies to form a partnership that sought to gain total control of the nation’s theatres by permitting only shows managed by The Syndicate to perform.

According to Stephen Langley in Theatre Management and Production in America, the Theatrical Syndicate could be described as follows: “[l]ess interested in standards of production than in making large profits, these gentlemen set out to gain absolute booking control over the nation’s theatres” (123). The original actor-manager system disappeared in the United States. Heiser writes that the downfall of the system can be attributed to the affects of The Syndicate in the United States:

> It became increasingly difficult for the stock company to mount an affordable tour. It was not long before the reputable actor-manager was replaced by syndicates and speculators. These syndicates were prone to offering contracts to the actors that were inequitable at best, illegal at worst, subjecting the players to increasingly abject working conditions. (49)

The Theatrical Syndicate controlled the theatres in the United States for quite a few years until the early 1900s when the Shubert brothers--Sam, J.J., and Lee--began demanding “‘open door’ booking and casting policies” (Langley 123). The Shubert brothers were answering the industry’s call, creating a form of opposition to the Theatrical Syndicate. The Shuberts were able to pull enough of the theatrical community to their organization to combat the power of The Syndicate. However, instead of removing the iron grip on
the nation’s theatres, the control of the theatres simply transferred from the Theatrical Syndicate to the Shuberts. One business triumphed over another (Langley 123). Regardless of the organization controlling the theatres, one of the key elements of each organization was the mistreatment of the theatrical employees, the actors and the technicians, in order to maximize profit for the corporation.

This abuse of artists was a significant factor in the movement for the establishment of trade unions for actors. “Rather than fighting for artistic and economic control over their profession, actors embroiled themselves in a more fatalistic battle for workers’ rights” (Langley 124). The first such union, Actors Equity of Great Britain, provided the momentum for unions for all areas of theatre (Langley 49). The first union in the United States, the Actors’ Society of America, formed in 1896, the same year that the Theatrical Syndicate began (Langley 124). One of the most important unions, Actors Equity Association oversees “actors and stage managers in the professional theatre” (“About Equity” 2). Another important union that has developed in the United States is the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, and Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, its Territories and Canada, or IATSE. The rise of this union corresponded not only with the development of the “business” of theatre, but with the development of sophisticated technology as it relates to the field of theatre as well (Farber 113).

The escalating cost of technical equipment, well-trained technicians, and maintaining elaborate facilities had a dramatic impact on the field. Technical theatre as a profession became increasingly costly and potentially dangerous. New technology and
the financial and physical risks required skilled laborers, and these laborers were comparatively costly to hire. Also with this risk came a fine line between the artist as a laborer and the artist as an artist. Langley gives precise information about the roles of various employees within the theatre. With the unionization of artists in this country, actors “sealed their own status as mere laborers and simultaneously established the ‘right’ of business people to control the theatre and its artists. Thus began the labor-management syndrome that haunts the theatre to this day” (124). Technicians join this union in order to protect their rights as laborers in the field of theatre. In order for theatres to manage labor relations with all of the different unions in theatre, there must be individuals to handle negotiations with these unions. Now the production manager becomes central to the process.

Defining The Production Manager

What is a production manager? Dean provides a definition that sparked this particular research endeavor. Dean describes the production managers as, “the person responsible for everything on stage that is not an actor” (6). This definition is broad and encompasses many aspects of the theatre. As a result, it could be difficult to determine exactly what the production manager’s job responsibilities are. One way to approach defining the field of production management more appropriately is to examine where the production manager rests in the hierarchy of the average theatrical organization. The chart found on the following page, “Fig. 1.1” will visually demonstrate one example for the hierarchy of a typical theatrical organization.
Fig. 1.1. The Organizational Hierarchy of a Producing Theatre.

An elaboration on this information describes the position, saying, “[t]he production manager oversees the work of all of the technical and backstage areas of the production. They [sic] are responsible for budgeting, scheduling work, and coordinating the various production departments” (“Production Handbook” 1). J. Michael Gillette provides another definition of a production manager which further demonstrates the complexity of the position. Comparing the production manager to a, “mental gymnast,” Gillette also stresses the role of the production manager as an organizer and an administrator (8-9).

Robert Telford identifies the production departments as scenery, lighting, sound, props, costumes, and stage management (91). These different departments exist in all
types of theatres, whether professional, community, or nonprofit theatres. Consequently, every theatre needs someone with knowledge of both theatre production and administration to coordinate these areas.

As stated earlier, the only area of production that the production manager does not control is the cast. Working with the cast is the realm of the stage manager, who is responsible for being the principal communicator between the rehearsal room and the rest of the organization (Dean 33). Because the stage manager has daily contact with the entire cast, it is important that the stage manager and the production manager have strong lines of communication. It is also important that the stage manager and the production manager understand the distinct responsibilities of each position. Daniel A. Ionazzi tells stage managers to “depend on the production manager for the general allocation of rehearsal space and schedule, crew assignments, and other resources of the organization” (22). From this, the reader understands that the stage manager depends on the production manager for information and resources throughout the production process.

Production Process Overview

Dean’s book is one of the discussions of production management available. In several of the syllabi for graduate level production management courses obtained for this research study, Production Management is listed as a required text. The syllabi, provided by Professor Elisa Cardone and Professor William J. Byrnes, can be found in Appendix C and D. In order to better understand the role of the production manager, the four components of the production process will be briefly reviewed here. It is important to
note that the four components of the production process will often overlap; however, for
the sake of clarity the components will be introduced chronologically.

Pre-Production

The first component, the pre-production process, is divided into three fundamentals:
artistic, technical, and administrative. Gillette refers to this research and development
period as the production approach. The concept, developed from the script being
performed, “unifies the artistic vision of the producer, director, and designers” (2).
Artistic fundamentals include the director’s vision, the designs, and any other aspect that
affects the end result that appears on stage. These include such things as costume
choices, time period of the production, and choices of props and furniture. The artistic
fundamentals usually evolve during the pre-production process. This creative process
must take place early in the production process; all of the work to follow hinges upon the
decisions made by the director and the designers. All artistic fundamentals depend upon
the script. Everyone who works on the production must have a complete understanding
of the script, as well as an understanding of the director’s vision for the production
coming from his or her own interpretations of the text. Careful background research by
every team member will strengthen the process from the beginning (Gillette 22). At the
pre-production meeting the members of the team will gather together to discuss the
artistic vision. This meeting will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter II.

The second area of the pre-production process, technical fundamentals, involves the
successful execution of the director’s artistic vision. Technical fundamentals include the
careful execution of special effects, dramatic lighting to complement the action in the
script, or special music for the production. The production manager works closely with the technical director, the person who “manages the implementation of the design components and the engineering function” (Ionazzi 22). The responsibilities of the technical director include preparing drafts from the drawings supplied by the designers, supervising all construction, and working with the production manager to oversee the technical rehearsals which will be discussed later in this chapter (Gillette 9). In order to work closely with the technical director, the production manager must have open lines of communication allowing each person to reach the other quickly and effectively.

The third area of fundamentals of the pre-production process is administration. Administrative fundamentals focus on overseeing the artistic and technical aspects. Richard L. Arnold, author of Scene Technology, emphasizes that producing a show of any kind is a very collaborative process (Arnold 6). The administrative phase involves the hiring of the cast and any other staff, the design process, and the preparation for the beginning of rehearsals. The administrative responsibilities include ensuring that the artistic and technical staff is paid, the proper allocation of funds to accomplish the necessary tasks for the production, and preventing the entire process from running behind schedule. The administrator is usually concerned with the finances of the production and with the logistics surrounding it. In this situation, the production manager fulfills certain job responsibilities while following, “the established plans of the company administration” (Arnold 7).
Rehearsal

The second component of the overall production process, rehearsal, is the point at which the stage manager enters the production process. Rehearsal refers to the time period when the cast is memorizing lines and working on a regular basis with the director to create the show. Dean says, “a production manager’s involvement with rehearsals on a day-to-day basis is limited, but they [sic] need to know what should be happening and be sure that they have the staff in place to ensure that it does happen” (110). The main focus for the production manager at this point is targeting what is occurring to ready the performance space for the cast. Dean states that, “[a] production manager is directly or indirectly responsible for ensuring the safety of everyone in the production” (88). The production manager is in charge of assessing the safety risk of everything going on during rehearsals and later during performances. This information must be relayed to the cast and crew so each individual is fully aware of the safety issues being undertaken during the production. Should any health and safety problems or questions arise, the production manager must be on hand to find answers and solutions.

Technical Week

The third component, technical week, is the week before the show officially opens to the public. Although the week time frame is arbitrary and can be much longer in large professional productions, it refers to the time when all of the elements: the sets, lights, sound, and actors are added together to create the finished product. At this time, the cast will perform the entire show while the technical staff integrates the technical elements with the movement of the actors. This is usually the first time that all the designers, cast,
production management, stage management, and director are present at rehearsal at the same time. According to Dean, “[h]ow efficiently a production manager operates during production week can make a huge difference to how long everything takes” (143). In regard to the cast, Telford states that production week,

is the time when the actors are secure in their parts and capable of contending with the advent of sound, lights, and scene shifts. It is a time when the crews have finished their building, assembling, rigging and practicing and are ready to dovetail the results of their talents with those of the actors. It is a time -- or should be -- when everyone has done his or her job and is secure in the knowledge that everyone else has done the same. (184)

Show Run

The fourth and final component, the run, starts with the official opening of the show to the public for a specified length of time. The cast, stage manager, and any additional staff will perform the show as rehearsed and perfected during the technical week. Dean gives little information about the role of production manager during the run, consequently there is no independent chapter devoted to the run. Telford mentions that the production manager changes to solely a supervisory position during this time. The stage manager will alert the production manager of any problems, and the production manager will assist however necessary.

Core Competencies

With this overall discussion of how theatrical productions go together in mind, the core competencies that enhance the effectiveness of a production manager should be discussed. These areas have been developed by the researcher and have grown out of the marketplace, academic literature and academic programs. After reviewing the texts and
the interviews, these core competencies are the most commonly cited and discussed skill areas for the researcher. These will be the overarching areas that theatrical production management students must be well skilled in to succeed in this specialty.

The course will be divided into two main core competencies. The first, technical theatre and the history of theatre and drama, is intended to provide a strong foundation from which the contemporary production manager can draw. The education in technical theatre will teach fundamentals of theatre technology and will be useful when communicating with the technicians on staff. The history of theatre and drama teaches a background of artistic information and production styles and is useful when communicating with the artistic staff and relaying this information to the technical staff. A careful study of the history of theatre and drama will provide the production manager with knowledge that will enhance an understanding of artistic elements, including the study of theatre production methods that are productive and methods that are unproductive.

The second core competency is the broad discipline of administration. The production manager is required to be an expert in the areas of administration such as but not limited to, personnel management, financial management, contract development and specific bodies of knowledge such as safety and union rules. Therefore, the core competency of administration will be subdivided into four areas. These areas are problem-solving skills, leadership, communication, and financial management. The information in the chapters to follow will be organized according to these competencies.
The foundation set up in this chapter gives the reader basic definitions of the position of the production manager. However, as mentioned in this chapter, many of these definitions are broad and somewhat vague. To clearly define the roles of the production manager, the information to come in Chapter II will review the literature and the academic programs in production management.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE AND ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Dean says that, “[a]ll theatre is a dictatorship” (14). Some might find this statement strange. Anyone who works in professional theatre knows otherwise. While theatre is a collaborative art form, successful productions depend upon a single point of view, also known as the artistic vision. Everyone involved must support the person responsible for that view. Keeping this in mind, each member of the team must be an expert in some area of production. This chapter will survey available research in the field of production management as well as academic programs that prepare students for this profession. Works from numerous time periods are utilized in this review, to give a clearer picture of the field.

It is difficult to find specific and generally accepted descriptions for the job of a production manager because every theatre is run differently. Even the few academic programs that teach production management teach a variety of skills. Nonetheless, there appears to be core information and skills that every successful production manager needs to know. At the end of Chapter I the core competencies were introduced. The information to follow will be organized according to those core competencies, beginning with technical theatre and the history of drama and then moving to administration.
The production manager is involved in almost every artistic, technical, and administrative aspect of the theatre. This means that there is a broad spectrum of information and skills that production managers must have in order to survive in the field. The production manager is wise to learn through experience. Telford makes a suggestion for the best way for a production manager to conduct business:

One of the best bits of advice I ever read in a theatre book was to throw the book away once it was read through. That implied, of course, that in the arts it is best to go one’s own way once one has absorbed all the details. Slavish adherence only limits creativity (230).

Ultimately, Telford suggests experience may surpass any information found in a book. Learning begins by supplementing books that provide a base knowledge that will support the production manager during times of practical experience.

The first core competency, technical theatre and the history of the theatre and drama, is a very large category. Nevertheless, the production manager’s broad base of information begins with knowledge of the history of the theatre and drama. The history of the theatre and drama is a standard area of study for any liberal arts undergraduate theatre education. Therefore, much of this information will come from earlier courses. For the purposes of this portion of the study, the focus will be on technical theatre. To begin this discussion, the first area of study will examine the production process from the technical standpoint.

Technical Knowledge

Technical knowledge is important for a production manager to have because much of the work for a production manager involved communicating with technicians. In order to effectively communicate with the technical staff, a production manager must be able to
speak using the terms familiar to technicians. The first step in the production manager’s technical process is the pre-production process. As the name suggests, the pre-production process occurs before the show enters the building or rehearsal phases. The pre-production process involves the development of the stage director’s concept for the production. From this concept comes the basis for the design elements, the casting process, and the hiring of the technical staff. During the pre-production process, the production manager is responsible for developing a communication system capable of distributing large quantities of information to and from the entire staff. The information to be communicated includes such material as contact information, design issues, budget numbers, and space allocations for rehearsals and set construction.

The production manager oversees the entire production staff from the technical director to designers to the individual crews (Dean 29). The crews refer to any staff who are involved in some element of the technical production but who are not in a supervisory role. The production manager’s responsibilities are particularly focused on overseeing and monitoring the technical side of production and departments that deal with stage direction, stage management, musical director (if necessary), lighting, set, and sound design.

After the design team is selected and the designers begin the necessary work to prepare for the show, regular production meetings will begin. These meetings are a forum for the design staff, director, production manager, technical director, and other appropriate personnel to meet and share information (Gillette 2). The production meeting is one instance when the production manager’s technical knowledge will be useful. The
information to be discussed during these meetings will often be highly technical in nature, and in order to understand the needs of the technical team, the production manager needs to understand basic set construction, theatre electrical requirements, costumes, and other elements as they arise. This technical knowledge will allow the production manager to participate in discussions, to anticipate potential problems and to understand how discussions in one area will affect the other areas production.

Long before the production week begins, the production manager meets with the local union representatives to negotiate salaries, rehearsal times, and legal issues. Malcolm Black, author of First Reading to First Night, provides an example of the sort of information a production manager must possess. He points out that to ensure compliance; most unions will require the theatre to provide a bond. A bond is a deposit amounting to the sum of money needed to pay the employees’ salaries for a specified period of time. The actual amount is dependent upon the salary determined by the union and the reputation of the producing theatre (37). Typically, Actors Equity Association requires a two week bond, while IATSE requires a one week bond (Farber 219).

Because of IATSE regulations regarding breaks during working hours, the production manager must carefully plan out load-ins to control overtime payments. IATSE regulations stage that a load-in work call may not be shorter than eight hours with a one hour dinner break (Farber 122). With scheduled breaks and overtime to consider, the production manager’s careful control of the situation is necessary to prevent the production from running over budget. While all of these examples are helpful to understanding IATSE’s policies and procedures, it is important to note that a production
manager must understand the contracts more than the handbook. The regulations for each theatre are negotiated on a case by case basis.

While the unions just mentioned are two of the most important theatrical unions, it is important to note that there are many other unions such as those representing ticket office employees (Treasurers and Ticket Sellers Union), ushers (Legitimate Theatre Employees Union), costume shop employees (Theatrical Wardrobe Attendants Union), among others (Farber 114). According to Arden Fingerhut in Theatre, Choices in Action, dealing with these unions is less common because these unions “serve a more limited constituency, like those who work in Broadway theatres,” but a production manager should be familiar with all unions that might be in the area (Fingerhut 247).

The production manager also must consider union regulations for working hours, hourly rates, and work environments. In Producing Theatre, Donald Farber gives some examples of regulations that IATSE may place upon the theatres. “All calls, unless specifically provided for in the contract, shall be a minimum of four hours duration” (Farber 123). IATSE also regulates the minimum number of crew members that must be hired for the average day. As a general rule, at least four IATSE members must be on hand for a load-in: a carpenter, an electrician, a properties man and a curtain man (Farber 122). In addition to these manpower requirements and stipulations for working hours, the salaries of the IATSE members are carefully controlled by the IATSE administrators, and the production manager must be aware of standard hourly rates, overtime rates, and holiday pay.
Telford suggests that the production manager should also be intimately involved in auditions and in the rehearsal process. Telford teaches that the production manager should sit in on the auditions, and circulate amongst the actors auditioning. Dean also states that controlling traffic, managing the scripts and general involvement in the operation are the production manager’s duties (112). Later, the production manager should be a frequent visitor to rehearsals to answer any questions and to see how the show is progressing. As the liaison between the artistic side and the technical side, the production manager can explain any technical issues that the cast may discover during the rehearsal process or explain how the set is laid out.

Production week, or technical week, is the week before the official opening of the show when all of the technical elements are integrated (Telford 184). Before production week is the load-in. During the load-in the completed sets, lights, and other technical elements are brought in, or loaded into, the theatre. The production manager “will want to ensure that work is being carried out safely. He or she should monitor and enforce codes of practice and methods of working that have been agreed upon” (Telford 98). All of the work must be carefully supervised and coordinated to guarantee the entire staff is protected. Safety concerns during technical week are more critical than during any other period in the rehearsal process. The introduction of technical elements, furniture and set pieces, and stage lights can create potentially dangerous situations. The production manager must identify potential risks to the cast and staff in advance (Dean 164).

Often a “dry tech” is necessary before the official tech week begins. A dry tech involves running through all of the technical elements in the space without the cast.
present in order to identify any problems (Telford 185). Eliminating actors from the mix during a dry tech gives the technical staff the opportunity to focus on the technical elements without involving the actors, who could add further complications. During this time all production crews will run all of the technical elements. Dean’s view of the production manager during this process is one of a leader:

How efficiently a production manager operates during production week can make a huge difference to how long everything takes. [. . .] The production manager’s job at this point is to coordinate everybody’s work, and to make sure that everyone is fully occupied, and that they are working safely. They should keep themselves free from any specific jobs, but should also lead from the front if there are heavy pieces to move or jobs that everybody needs to be involved in (143 and 146).

The production manager’s most important duty during the technical rehearsals is to keep the process moving. To do this the production manager must understand what problems can be solved during the technical rehearsal, and what problems will have to be solved by individual designers and technicians on their own time. The overall effectiveness of this very tedious but important rehearsal often depends on the production manager’s understanding technical issues and his or her ability to manage the personnel involved. The same is true in subsequent final dress rehearsals which involve cast and possibly musicians (Dean 161).

After the show opens, the production manager’s involvement in the production decreases in comparison with the previous weeks of work. Technical aspects may need adjusting during the run, and the production manager would be responsible for handling such adaptations (Telford 215). More often the role of the production manager becomes completely administrative at this point. During the run of the show, the stage manager
writes performance or show reports for each performance. Dean instructs that these reports should discuss any problems in the show, aspects that need work, run times for the show, and audience information (171-172). Again, unambiguous performance reports and constant communication ensure a smooth and successful run.

In non-touring productions, the final step for a show is the “strike”. The term strike refers to the removal from the theatre of the set, lights, and anything else used for the show. The production manager is in charge of scheduling strike and assigning duties to every available employee. Often a production meeting to discuss strike is necessary, particularly if unions are involved. The production manager lists the tasks that need to be completed for the department heads, distributes job responsibilities, and determine if additional staff must be hired (Telford 222). Dean teaches that publishing lists assigning responsibilities is a good method of informing everyone of what must be done by whom.

The conclusion of strike is the official end of the show’s run. Because of the cost of such things as lights, sets, properties and costumes, most theatres store elements they own and rent elements to other theatres on an as-needed basis. Theatres also rent these items from other theatres and rental houses. The production manager’s duties include managing storage and making sure that any items that may have been rented for the production must be returned to the rightful owners. These pieces must be returned in a timely fashion and in good condition to prevent the owners from charging fines for damage or late fees for an untimely return (Dean 172-173).
Administration

Although a working knowledge of theatre and dramatic history and technology is essential, the production manager is not a historian or a technician. The production manager is an administrator. The second set of competencies that fall under the general heading of administration can be divided into the four subcategories of problem-solving, leadership, communication, and financial management.

Problem-Solving

The nature of the position of production management is that of a problem-solver. Arnold’s further description of a production manager states, “knowledge of time and work requirements, the production manager strives for efficiency within the limitations of the facility, budget, and personnel resources” (7-8). Given all of the tasks that a production manager must accomplish, in addition to the numerous restraints placed on the organization, the production manager must be a strategic thinker. The production manager must be able to take the given resources and set of circumstances, and find a solution to problems as each arises. For instance, if there are space limitations and the director wants to rehearse, but the technical director needs that space for additional set construction, the production manager must work with the departments to set up a schedule for the space to allow adequate time for all tasks to be completed.

In addition to general theatre knowledge to help solve the daily problems of the organization, the production manager should not simply wait for team members to come with problems to be solved. Dean believes that part of the production manager’s job is preventative problem-solving. The production manager should be out, observing the
actions of the staff and asking if there are issues that need clarification or problems that need to be discussed. By catching problems early, the production manager prevents larger problems from surfacing later. This is one reason why Dean suggests that the production manager pays visits to rehearsals. This face-to-face contact with the director and the stage manager allows for discussions of problems and options for solutions (141-142).

Leadership

For the purposes of this study, leadership will be defined as the ability to take a wide base of administrative knowledge and motivate other individuals to work as a team to successfully complete a given task. Leadership skills include the ability to be clear, firm, and fair in the workplace. There are many texts and experts that discuss qualities of leadership. Ultimately, leadership is learned through observance and trial and error. A production manager must be able to delegate effectively, which means empowering people, monitoring progress, and making sure that consequences are understood. There will be an entire team of designers, technicians, and office staff who will be looking to the production manager for answers and authoritative decision-making. The production manager will be instrumental in setting the tone for the entire production process and must lead everyone to the final product, which is the run of the show. The leadership of the team is evident with the selection of the members of the production team.

The department heads and the production manager work as a team to hire the staff that will build, light, costume, and stage-manage the production. A department head oversees the work of an individual area of theatre on a daily basis. These department
heads include the technical director, the master electrician and the properties master. The production manager oversees the work of all of the department heads.

Similar to union negotiations, the production manager also practices skills of negotiation during production meetings. The production manager is in charge of handling all production meetings. This responsibility includes scheduling, setting agendas, and overseeing the meetings themselves. These production meetings occur during the pre-production process and the rehearsal process. In particular, the first production meeting is critical to the success of the whole process. “This is the start of very important relationships for the production manager,” who must now demonstrate his or her leadership abilities to the entire creative (Dean 72).

Dean lists specific goals for the production manager to achieve at the first pre-production meeting. This list is a compact example of information to be found in literature on leadership, and is a good example of leadership challenges for any production manager. This list includes:

1. Make sure the creative team understands the scale of the production envisaged by the theatre or production company
2. Give the creative team a rough breakdown of how the theatre anticipates the production budget will be spent. This will give them an indication of how big the show is seen as being from each department’s point of view. It also gives a target figure to aim for later, if the costing is badly over budget
3. Agree on dates of future production meetings
4. Discuss what is needed from the team at each of the production meetings
5. Point out what can be done with the theatre – different seating layouts, orchestra pit possibilities, places for entrances and exits
6. Point out any problems to do with the stage – difficult sightlines, reduced wing space, fire or licensing regulations
7. Show the team, or discuss with them, any equipment or stock items that may be of use to the production
8. Note days when designers are committed elsewhere (their non-availability), and discuss how often they will need to attend during rehearsal and build
period. Days when designers are not available should go on the schedule for
the show when it is published
9. Agree on contracts and fees if they have not yet been finalized
10. Get contact details from the team (74-75).

The preceding list by Dean is representative of reasonable expectations in the field. This
list is provided as a sample logical format.

Dean writes that the final pre-production meeting is the most thorough meeting of
the entire pre-production process. Since this will be the last production meeting before
the show goes into rehearsals, any issues which could interfere with the beginning of the
rehearsal process should be thoroughly discussed and answered. Each department head
should inform the entire staff of the department’s progress. All major safety issues will
be discussed at this meeting. The bottom line of this meeting should be, “about the
practicalities of making the show happen” (86). With these careful discussions comes a
need for strong communication skills from all members of the team. Communication is
another portion of the core competency of administration which requires careful
discussion.

Communication

Communication lines between all members of the creative team, as well as opening
lines of communication between the cast and the creative team, are important in any
theatrical situation. It is the responsibility of the production manager, in conjunction with
the stage manager and the director, to ensure that everyone is aware of the vision, aware
of the plans, and completely informed at all times (Dean 71). For the production
manager, communication techniques are critical to guarantee that a production runs
smoothly. A production manager must be an active listener, have clarity of voice, and

27
maintain records others can easily comprehend. There are two common communication techniques that will be discussed here. The techniques are vertical communication and horizontal communication.

Many theatrical organizations utilize vertical coordination. Byrnes defines the concept of vertical coordination as “‘the process of using a hierarchy of authority to integrate the activities of various departments and projects within an organization.’ Vertical coordination is split into four areas: chain of command, span of control, delegation, and centralization-decentralization” (quoted in 111). Byrnes is essentially describing a hierarchical organization that enforces a policy of communication and cooperation. To fully understand vertical coordination, the theatre organizational chart from Chapter I is a helpful reference. Byrnes states that information from any organizational chart should identify six key elements, “divisions of work, types of work, working relationships, departments or work groups, levels of management, and lines of communication” (102).

Any organizational chart must visually represent the division of labor, the various departments, and how each relates to the rest of the organization. Vertical coordination focuses on the flow of information and job responsibilities through the hierarchical structure of the organization. At the first pre-production meeting a visual representation of the organization, such as the one developed in Chapter I, will help define responsibilities and appropriate lines of communication. The first production meeting is a demonstration of a production manager’s grasp of vertical coordination. By using visual presentation, the production manager can ensure that the entire team is aware of
his or her job responsibilities. However, this is not the only organizational communication method the production manager can work with.

Another common theatre organizational model is horizontal coordination. This structure is often used, “to promote interdepartmental cooperation” (Byrnes 111). This model may be appropriate when an organization is product-driven or is more concerned with the final production than the process. This method of organizational communication does not focus upon the division of labor between the individual departments. Instead, the organization is focused upon the end, rather than the means. An example of just such a situation could occur during a performance if a piece of scenery should break while in rehearsals. The stage manager may find a solution to the problem without waiting for approval from the production manager. This bears no effect on the authority of the production manager. Rather, communication is driven by a spirit of cooperation and a desire to get the job done regardless of who completes it. Knowing these two methods of communication, now the study will discuss the communication responsibilities within the organization.

Fingerhut gives practical examples of these communication structures while discussing collaboration in production. Horizontal structure is comparable to a totally collaborative production, “one that gives a nearly equal voice to every member of the company. Together, everyone is responsible for making all decisions concerning the company, its welfare, and the production itself” (67). These types of companies value working together and establishing a strong production process rather than the quality of the end product. On the other extreme is a more non-collaborative view, comparable to
vertical communication structures. The director or producer “makes all creative decisions and arbitrates any disagreements” (67). This method is more concerned with the appearance of the final product.

As has been mentioned earlier, during the rehearsal period the stage manager is responsible for communicating the vision for the production to the cast. This communication will prevent problems from occurring later on, especially during production week when time is restricted (Dean 71). For Dean, the production manager oversees the stage management personnel, and the stage manager, “is the member of the team in closest touch with the production” (34). The production manager is always aware of the events occurring in the rehearsals. However, the presence of the production manager is not required in every rehearsal. The production manager should rely on the information that the stage manager conveys in the daily rehearsal reports (Dean 33). A rehearsal report is a daily written report that the stage manager composes and distributes to every member of the production team. The events of the evening’s rehearsal are listed, questions that have arisen are mentioned, and the rehearsal schedule for the next day is given. The production manager should encourage the stage manager to “produce reports that are unambiguous to everyone’s interpretation of them” (Dean 114). Provided that all reports are clear and the staff attends the production meetings, the communication during the production process will go more smoothly.

Financial Management

The final portion of the core competency of administration is financial management. For the production manager, the requirements for financial management include
budgeting and financially responsible purchasing during the production process. Langley says that, “[g]enerally speaking, everyone within an organization who will eventually have an impact on expenditures or earnings should be involved in the budget-planning process; this will increase both accuracy and control” (283). While all budgets have two components -- revenue and expenses -- the production manager is primarily concerned with the expense side, and particularly those expenses related to production. The majority of the production budget is allocated towards the physical aspects of the production (sets, lights, and costumes) or cast and crew. The budget is the primary indication to the creative staff of the parameters in which the artistic visions can flourish.

Once a script is chosen, the first step of the process is to develop a budget. Byrnes defines a budget as, “‘a quantitative and financial expression of a plan’” (192). There are many considerations when preparing a budget for a production. Joann Green, author of The Small Theatre Handbook, discusses some of these considerations. The most important, the script, determines the type of production, the design for the sets, lights and costumes, the number of cast members and crew members that will be needed, the cost of royalties, and the potential length of rehearsal needed to properly prepare the production for opening (58-59). If the script chosen is a musical, the production manager may be negotiating with the American Federation of Musicians to determine salaries (Farber 191). In addition, the location of the theatre and whether or not it is an Equity or IATSE theatre will impact the funds needed for labor. Also, the type of season impacts the budgetary concerns. If the season is a calendar year, or if it is only a summer production, the budget will be evaluated in terms of those conditions. Housing for actors and
technicians can also be a consideration if the producing theatre is in a different location than the home base of the employees.

This careful allocation of funds will help keep the production and the organization on budget. Byrnes writes that, “[d]ecisions about how the organization will establish its budget and manage its income, expenses and investments in a fixed time period are critical if artistic goals and objectives are to be met” (227). Dean says that production “budgets can be little more than educated guesses,” however, the accuracy of these guesses will make the difference between financial success and failure (67). The ability to make informed guesses is one of the most important skills of a successful production manager.

There are several methods of budgeting that a production manager could use. For the purposes of this study, two such processes will be presented. The first is a fixed budget. “In a fixed budget, allocations are based on the estimated costs from a fixed base of resources. […] Typically, the fixed budget becomes the base budget for the work area and is increased or decreased on an incremental basis according to the activities and plans proposed each year” (Langley 192). This budgeting system operates on the assumption that income and expenditures will remain approximately the same from year to year, and that if budgeted expenditures are controlled there will be sufficient dependable income to cover them. The weakness of this model is that it assumes that nothing in the organization’s financial future will change. It does not encourage strategic evaluation of the costs and income produced by specific programs or productions. While this type of
budgeting is relatively easy to do, it does not maximize the planning element of budgeting.

Zero-based budgeting involves starting each year and each production with a clean slate, using the budget as a planning tool by looking at the real costs and benefits of each program or production. In spite of the time and labor involved with this budget approach, it is the most logical and effective approach for the production manager because it will result in the most accurate “educated guess;” and, because it involves the realistic generation of financial projections by the people charged with specific tasks, it results in the budget that is supported by the production staff. Byrnes also points out that this method of budgeting prevents, “an organization from creating budgets filled with underutilized line items” (194).

Creating a budget is a basis for strategic planning on every level. For example, choosing the plays for the season is an important aspect of the budgeting process because the budget will be determined by and will affect artistic choices. A good theatrical production manager must be capable of estimating the costs of specific production elements, and must have a working knowledge of dramatic literature as well. While meetings with the artistic director, the stage director and designers are important, nothing replaces a working knowledge of the budgetary implications that can be found in a script. The artistic vision of the stage director and the designers can only be reflected realistically in the budget if the production manager completely understands the basic requirements of the play from the outset. One of the top priorities for the production manager during this process is to remember that it “is the production manager’s job to be
realistic about what can be achieved with the resources available, and to point this out to the managers, particularly the artistic director, who, quite rightly, will have high expectations of each and every production” (Dean 70). The production manager’s financial responsibilities are central to the process of every aspect of the production and ultimately to the health of the organization itself.

Once the technical staff begins to build the set the production manager continues to monitor the budget. The budget is a good system of control for the organization.

“Control is the process of monitoring performance and making adjustments as required to meet planned objectives” (Byrnes 195). By having a working budget at the first pre-production meeting, the production manager establishes boundaries for the production costs. The department heads should submit regular expense reports to demonstrate how much money has been spent and how much work must still be done. Keeping a production on budget can be a difficult task. If a member of the artistic staff feels that going over budget will help achieve the vision, the production manager must work to find a solution (Byrnes 194-195). This is another area where management tasks and communication skills overlap. The production manager must stress the importance of remaining on budget for the sake of the individual production and the organization as a whole.

Production Management Programs

With all of this information in mind, the next step is to evaluate some of the graduate level production management programs to determine what is being taught. Two examples of syllabi from production management and theatre management programs can
be found in Appendices C and D. However, these four specific programs discussed here have been selected because of the differences between each institution and the positive reputation that each school has in the field of theatre.

The Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London is the home of Peter Dean. This three year program allows any student interested in the technical aspects of theatre to start at a general level. Over the three-year graduate program the students develop a concentration through practical experience and classroom work (“Programme Description”). The first year of the program starts with an overview of all technical aspects of a production: stage management, production management, sound, lights, props, roles of designers, and experience working with actors. The first year curriculum is designed to help the students choose their specialties. Those who choose production management will discover that the information provided in this first year at Guildhall gives basic information about all of the related positions in the theatre, information that will be useful while solving problems or leading a team as the production manager.

In the second year, the majority of the work is hands-on. Consequently, little time is spent in the classroom. Students work as assistant production managers, assistant stage managers, and assistants to designers. The advantage of this system is that the student is able to observe advanced students and professionals in the field and to begin to apply knowledge through practical application under expert supervision. In the third and final year, students work as heads of departments, assuming full responsibility for their areas of expertise. In the third year all of the work is hands-on. Guildhall also gives students at this stage the option of advanced research projects in a chosen specialty (“Programme
The program also offers lectures on how to locate jobs appropriate for the skills the students have. Those who choose to enter stage management are automatically eligible for student memberships in British Actors’ Equity, the United Kingdom’s form of Actors’ Equity Association (“Employment”). Graduates of Guildhall obtain employment at many theatres within the United Kingdom and the United States including the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Another graduate program exists at the National Theatre School (NTS) of Canada in Montreal, Quebec. As part of the admission process for this program NTS requires applicants to take an assigned play and prepare a thorough production concept, or vision for the artistic direction. This admission requirement is similar to requirements for admission to M.F.A. programs in the United States, and provides the school with the information about the undergraduate preparation of each applicant. Each student is given a month to develop and submit this production concept. Only eight students are admitted to the National Theatre School each year and students will go on to receive a certificate from NTS upon completion of the program (“Technical Production”).

The National Theatre School gives similar opportunities to their students as those offered to the students at Guildhall. The first year is a general immersion to all aspects of technical theatre. The second year at NTS differs from Guildhall in that it is more classroom-oriented, providing advanced study in such areas as computer-aided drafting (CAD) of scenic designs, union information, and budgeting. The third year is comprised of practical training both on the campus and in the professional theatre community. Only during the third year do students choose a specialty, such as production management, and
develop their skills in a professional setting. Because of the limited number of students admitted, the faculty is able to spend much time in one-on-one situations with the students. Also, because of the limited number of students, the content of the courses offered during the three year program can be adapted to meet the needs of the students (“Technical Production”). NTS does not assign grades or report cards to the students. Instead, “periodic evaluations give students the guidance, feedback and suggestions the need to improve and evolve their craft” (“Admission”).

In the United States, the University of Delaware’s Professional Theatre Training Program (PTTP) offers a three year MFA technical theatre training program similar to Guildhall and The National Theatre School of Canada. The University of Delaware Graduate Catalogue describes the goals of the program as follows.

Although graduates find themselves well prepared for employment in many styles and mediums, the Program is specifically designed to train through plays from the classic repertoire and seeks students with a particular commitment to, and appetite for, the acknowledged masterworks of dramatic literature (263).

A unique element of this program is that only one class is admitted every four years. This gives the faculty the time and resources to concentrate all of the department’s resources on a small group of future theatre professionals (“PTTP”). Also unique to the program is the fact that students are not required to hold a Bachelor’s degree to gain acceptance into the program. Instead, if the applicant holds equivalent professional theatre experience, and completes a statement of theatre equivalency experience, the Department of Theatre and the Office of Graduate Studies will evaluate those students to determine if the experience is strong enough to merit acceptance (Graduate Catalogue
The entire program focuses upon one-on-one mentoring with students. This extraordinarily intense situation allows faculty to tailor the program as closely to the needs of the students as possible. “Each curriculum is skill-oriented, emphasizing rigorous training in the craft areas appropriate to the specialization being pursued” (“Graduate Catalogue” 263).

After the faculty determine the direction for the particular class, the program starts with, “[. . .] a substantial foundation in all of the production areas, as well as CAD and computer skills, management techniques, and the distinctions of professional theatrical practice. Classroom work is combined with production assignments on two to four classic plays” (“PTTP”). The administrative skills taught by the PTTP are well-aligned with the core competency of administration designated for this particular study.

The second year advances the skills from the first year, and the number of productions increases from four to six. The third year curriculum emphasizes practical experience over classroom time and involves students in ten to twelve student produced productions (“PTTP”). Faculty evaluates finished productions and the work of the students against professional standards. As in the previous two programs, practical experience is considered the culminating and critical part of the PTTP curriculum (“PTTP”).

One of the most well-known drama programs in the country, the Yale School of Drama, also boasts one of the most well-respected production management programs in the country. The connection of the academic programs to the renowned Yale Repertory Theatre provides all students the opportunity to work in professional theatre during the
course of study (“About Us”). The School of Drama works with other departments to
develop a broad base of curricular opportunities. Examples of these collaborations are
courses that enhance design and technology training offered through the Schools of
Architecture and Engineering. In addition to the usual admission tests, Yale requires
every student to have a Bachelor’s degree. No exceptions are permitted as is the case
with PTTP. Detailed recommendation letters or references from professional experience
are also a must (“Admissions”). Similar to the program at the University of Delaware,
this three year practical MFA program starts with a broad exposure to technical theatre
and the basics of theatrical administration.

Two of the professors interviewed in Chapter III, Elisa Cardone and Frank
Wukitsch, discuss Yale in the interviews. Both Cardone and Wukitsch feel that Yale’s
program trains its production managers to also work as technical directors (TD).
However, Wukitsch feels that this is a troublesome distinction to make. “The line
between this type of PM and the TD was and is often very blurry and, consequently,
sometimes stormy” (Wukitsch 1). Cardone, on the other hand, firmly believes that any
good production manager must be able to work as a technical director. However, the
MFA program at Yale does not teach leadership or accounting to the production
management students. Cardone feels that this is a definite shortcoming of the Yale
program (Cardone Interview).

One of the required courses for the first-year students, Survey of Theatre and
Drama, fits with the core competency of technical theatre and the history of drama. Yale
demonstrates the importance of basic theatrical knowledge for any theatre professional.
The second year gives students the opportunity to specialize. In the second and third years, students have the opportunity to create their own curricula and can request the substitution of standard required courses with electives to focus their studies into some particular area. During the final year, students may enroll in a highly specialized class called Production Management: Organization and Administration (“Technical Design and Production”). The syllabus for this course is located in Appendix C. Yale’s course catalogue gives the following course description:

This course deals with the basic organizational structures found in not-for-profit and limited partnership commercial ventures. Students explore patterns of responsibility and authority, various charts of accounts and fiscal controls, estimating techniques, budgeting, and scheduling. Discussions include a variety of theatrical organizations, their artistic policies, and different processes and products that result (“Yale Online Course Information”).

In addition, Yale students are heavily active in professional theatres throughout the country while completing the MFA program. In addition to the Yale Repertory theatre, MFA candidates work in technical and production management positions in many locations in order to garner experience that will aid their future job searches (“Academics-Training”).

There are common patterns among the four programs surveyed here. Both of the schools in the United States are MFA programs, while the international programs are simply certificate programs. All four are three-year programs which begin with classroom work and gradually phase out the classroom time in lieu of practical experience in various theatrical positions. All require students to have demonstrated skills and interest in professional theatre before applying. However, PTTP’s admission
policies of accepting students without undergraduate degrees is worthy of note here. This act could signal a trend in theatre favoring experience over a degree even when applying for admission into a MFA program. Perhaps this one act signals that professional experience is more important than a degree.
CHAPTER III

“I DON’T BUILD SETS” – THE PRACTICAL LIVES OF PRODUCTION MANAGERS

In the previous chapter, the literature and program reviews presented the academic view of production managers. Graduate level programs demonstrate the broad spectrum of skills that are taught. To best obtain the opinions of the field, several production managers should be interviewed and asked the following questions: What do the production managers in the field believe? What skills do these employees feel are mandatory? Are these skills best learned in the classroom or in practice? Do production managers believe that graduate level education is necessary for entrance into this field? To answer these questions, four production managers currently working or teaching production management have been interviewed and their responses to these questions follow. These individuals are Alex Blunt, production manager at American Theatre Company in Chicago; Tim Stadler, production manager at Apple Tree Theatre in Highland Park, Illinois; Elisa Cardone, Professor of Theatre at Yale School of Drama; and Frank Wukitsch, Professor of Theatre at DePaul University. These interviews provide information from both the world of academia and the world of professional production managers. These individuals were selected because of their knowledge of the field and professional experience.
Alex Blunt

Alex Blunt is the production manager at American Theatre Company, or ATC, in Chicago, Illinois. ATC’s mission statement reads: “American Theater Company is an ensemble of artists committed to producing new and classic American stories that ask the question: ‘What does it mean to be an American?’ We provide a truly intimate home for the community to experience meaningful stories. We foster a nurturing environment for artists to take risks and create essential work” (“ATC History”). ATC opened its doors in 1985 with a production of Rick Cleveland’s Dogman’s Last Stand. Since its inception in 1985, ATC offers performances of the works of American authors such as Thornton Wilder, Eugene O’Neill and David Mamet (“ATC History”).

British-born, Alex Blunt came to the United States to attend Boston University’s School for the Arts. Blunt graduated in 1998 with a BA in Independent Theatre Studies, which gave her the opportunity to experience every aspect of theatre; from the various technical aspects to acting and directing. Blunt did not take a production management class in school. In fact, she says she was unaware that production management even existed as a field. “I knew it happened, but I didn’t know how it all happened” (Interview). Blunt says that she became a production manager by accident. Skillful in marshalling resources when necessary, Blunt inadvertently became the de-facto production manager at theatres such as Thirteenth Tribe and The Naked Eye, both small independent theatres in the greater Chicago area (Interview).

Now the full-time production manager at ATC, Blunt describes her duties: “I always think of production management as the bridge between the artistic director and the
managing director” (Interview). Blunt writes all contracts, hires the technical staff for the season, rents the space, and works with the artistic director to hire the design staff. She is careful to emphasize that the production manager and the technical director are two separate positions. The positions are so large and encompassing that to combine them would be disastrous. When Blunt says “I don’t build sets,” she is emphasizing that the production manager, unlike the technical director, is not in charge of building the set, but is involved with the costing of the build and the supervision of the construction.

Blunt also discussed how she plans and prepares for each production. The process begins about two or three months before the first rehearsal with design meetings. She believes that every show must begin with design meetings because theatre is a collaborative process; this is why the key people involved in each element of production begin to develop a show’s vision as a team. The first meeting, the pre-production meeting, takes place a month before rehearsals begin, and others should occur every two weeks until rehearsal start. Once the rehearsals start, Blunt holds production meetings every week until the show opens. At ATC, the production manager and the artistic director are in charge of scheduling and running the production meetings. Once the technical rehearsals start Blunt is always present, though not in charge. She is present in case something goes wrong, or in case the show involves a highly technical element. The technical director is often present for many of these discussions, but the safety of all involved is the production manager’s responsibility, so he or she must be present.

Blunt comments that she is reminded every day that, “nothing ever happens like you think it is going to happen” (Interview). A production manager must plan for everything
possible and not everything can be anticipated. The production manager must be willing to fix every problem. Often, these problems are complex and require the work of multiple people, including the production manager. This demands that the production manager be amiable and willing to troubleshoot with multiple people. Being detail-oriented while keeping the big picture, and recognizing that one person cannot know everything, are what Blunt says are the key skills for any good production manager (Interview).

When asked about graduate programs in production management, Blunt responded by saying that, not only had she never worked with anyone who had attended such a program, but that she valued practical experience over a graduate degree. Blunt views classroom education as a wonderful place to learn basic information; however, she thinks the key skills involved in production management are best learned while working as a production manager. Blunt’s belief is that each theatre has its specific challenges, and there is no way to anticipate these problems in a classroom setting. In her view, the best way for an aspiring production manager to break into the field is to learn in an internship setting with a good production manager (Interview).

Tim Stadler

Tim Stadler is the production manager at Apple Tree Theatre in Highland Park, Illinois. Stadler’s background is not in production management or any technical field. Earlier in life, Stadler studied musical theatre at the University of Cincinnati’s College Conservatory of Music, graduating in 1992 (“Staff and Board”). During his final year studying musical theatre, Stadler decided to get involved with stage management.
His stage management experience prompted Stadler to move in the direction of arts administration. Jessica Boevers, a CCM classmate and the daughter of Apple Tree Theatre’s founder, suggested that Stadler apply for a position at Apple Tree Theatre. Stadler began working there in 1993 as the director of education. Several years later, Stadler transferred to the position of production manager (“Staff and Board”).

Apple Tree Theatre started out at the Eileen Boevers Performing Arts Workshop in Eileen Boevers’ living room. The theatre officially opened in 1983, and its mission is the following:

Apple Tree Theatre is committed to producing a diverse and challenging selection of both dramas and musicals, from new works to classics, all of which illuminate the human condition, celebrate the tenacity of the human spirit, and expand the vision of artists and audiences alike—culturally, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually as they connect with one another. (“Our History”)

The work at Apple Tree is recognized regularly through both the Chicago area Tony Awards, also known as the Jeff Awards. Apple Tree is currently preparing to launch a capital campaign to raise funds to build a new building with a state of the art theatre in Highland Park.

Stadler describes the production manager as, “[. . .] the main conduit from which all information should flow” (Stadler Interview). This position requires Stadler, in consultation with Artistic Director Eileen Boevers, to hire all of the designers and oversee all technical aspects of Apple Tree’s productions (“Staff and Board”). The production manager is involved throughout the entire production process, from the budget planning before the season begins to the final strike at the conclusion of the run.
As the production manager, Stadler admits that much of his technical knowledge is self-taught or learned on the job. His education in stage management focused mostly on communication and organization. However important technical knowledge is, Stadler believes that nothing is more important than the key skills of communication, organization, and problem-solving. Without these skills, Stadler says that no amount of technical knowledge will help the production along (Interview).

At Apple Tree, Stadler begins each season by reading all of the scripts and estimating the cost for producing each show. These estimations become the preliminary budget figures that are taken to the board of directors for approval. Stadler is intimately involved with the entire production process: from preliminary budgets to set strike. During the run Stadler is available in case the stage manager encounters any kind of problem with cast, crew, or technical aspects. These problems might include personality conflicts, broken props, or damage to the set pieces. Once the show closes, it is Stadler’s responsibility to see that the set is taken down, props are returned or stored away, and any other loose ends are tied up. The stage management often moves into rehearsals on the next show, and the designers move onto various stages of preparation for the next show as well. After this is completed, it is on to the next show. However, most of the time the different shows overlap time frames. Often, while one show is in performances, the next show is in pre-production (Interview).

Stadler is another example of a production manager for whom the degree was not necessary for entry into the field. However, it took some time for Stadler to work up to the position. Stadler says that it is always good to be exposed to different ways of
performing the same task (Interview). A production manager must be willing to solve problems strategically, listen to and work with others. Stadler feels that interning under a production manager is the best way to gain experience. At Apple Tree, Stadler says the hardest part of his job is remembering the larger goals. In a small nonprofit organization, daily crises may obscure the bigger picture. Stadler insists that a production manager must, “[. . .] be able to put out the smaller fires without losing sight of the big picture down the line” (Interview). Knowing how professional production managers view the profession is only one half of the situation. Professors of production management must be discussed in order to determine the academic side of production management.

   Elisa Cardone

Professor Elisa Cardone at Yale University earned her BA from Brown University in English and Theatre in 1993, and her MFA in Technical Design and Production from Yale in 1996. She then moved to New York City. Cardone worked to build an impressive production management resume that included work with the Broadway and touring productions of Beauty and the Beast. Also while in New York City, Cardone started a production company that she runs to this day. In 2003 she was asked by her alma mater, Yale University, to teach graduate level production management classes. The syllabus from her course in Production Management is located in Appendix C.

Cardone notes that production management evolves out of technical direction. Many of the job responsibilities that production managers fulfill were once considered the responsibilities of the technical director. As theatre has become more involved and the job requirements have increased, the position of production management became a
separate entity. Like Alex Blunt, Cardone believes that when theatres combine the positions of production manager and technical director, the theatre is placing an impossible burden on one person. Cardone emphasizes the importance of a production manager being aware of all technical aspects of a particular production. When communicating with technical directors and design staff, the production manager must have a broad enough background to handle these exchanges (Interview).

In the course of a phone interview, Cardone made interesting points about production management. First of all, she is concerned with the structure of the production management program at Yale. MFA candidates are not required to take any management or leadership courses, skills that Cardone considers an essential for any production manager. Cardone says management and leadership skills are essential for a production, and she believes that these skills can be learned through experience rather than in the classroom. Cardone also places a strong emphasis on accounting skills for production managers. Again, this is another course that Cardone would like to see required for production management majors (Interview).

Communication skills are also critical according to Cardone. The core of a production manager’s job is communication. From the beginning, during the pre-production meetings, it is the production manager’s responsibility to inform and educate the entire team about rehearsal information, budget numbers, staffing issues, and other pertinent details. If the lines of communication break down between the design team, the show could face some serious problems. Consequently, Cardone continually emphasizes the importance of communication to her students (Interview).
When asked about her graduate degree, Cardone believes that it is not necessary for a production manager to obtain a graduate degree to break into the field, although the career path may take longer. The individual would be required to work hard for several years to learn the technical knowledge that it takes an MFA candidate three years to learn. The MFA from Yale School of Drama, according to Cardone, permits its students to break into highly competitive specialties in theatre fairly early in life. For Cardone, the MFA allowed her to become a production manager in New York City at the age of twenty-five. Referring to Yale as the, “[…] sixty-thousand dollar little black rolodex […]”, she emphasizes how important the connections that production managers make early in their careers (Interview).

Frank Wukitsch

Professor Frank Wukitsch of DePaul University believes that the profession of production management, “[…] is in a state of flux” (1). Wukitsch gives a very intense description of the state of theatre today:

In large companies the PM has become probably the most important person in the day-to-day operation. Theatre has become so complicated with multimillion-dollar season budgets, overwhelming tech, unions in every aspect of what we do, government regulations and safety issues, legal liabilities, enormous and intricate physical facilities that someone needs to be in overall charge and have a big picture view of what is happening. That person is often the PM. (Wukitsch 4)

According to Professor Wukitsch, employees in the theatre are “[…] often give[en] titles in place of money” (1). The field of production management came about for two reasons: first, there was a means of rewarding individuals in larger companies; and second, it was a way to combine the business and technical aspects of a production under
one individual manager. As a professor, Wukitsch has the opportunity to observe individuals who do attend graduate level production management programs. Wukitsch feels that these programs emphasize the technical aspect of production management, specifically scene design, and often inadvertently perform many of the duties of the technical director. Such training, from Wukitsch’s perspective, can create tension and difficulty between the technical director and the production manager (1).

Even with clearer job responsibilities, Wukitsch feels that the job descriptions of the technical director and the production manager are often so blurry that the two overlap and create confusion. Often the training of managers is indistinguishable from that of technical director. This, according to Wukitsch, is the problem with most of the training programs today. He suggests there must be a clearer job description for the production manager with more business elements such as contract writing and union negotiations. The job is so large that Wukitsch feels that an undergraduate program is no longer a possibility. “Today, PM requires a graduate program or lots of experience after an undergraduate program” (2). However, regardless of schooling, Wukitsch believes that “[. . .] the best way to learn what a PM does is to do it. I tell my students to get a job as an assistant to a PM or do an internship. Choose carefully to find out what type of PM they have and find out if your talents and skills fit the job or can fill in the PM’s weaknesses” (2).

Each production manager interviewed had a strong opinion about the balance of programs over practical experience. Though the opinions may have been biased by the position -- professional or academic -- held by the interviewee, a common thread of some
classroom time with some practical experience resonates throughout, and perhaps this is the first evidence of a balance to be found.
CHAPTER IV
PROCESS AND PRODUCT -- COURSE DESIGN

This study now comes to the crux of the matter: which combination of training, education or practical experience, produces the best production managers? The four production managers interviewed all suggest that a combination of education and practical experience is necessary in order to become a well rounded production manager. Additionally, all four believe that a production manager who lacks either education or experience will find it more difficult to be successful in the world of theatre. A careful examination of the information presented in Chapters II and III helps create a template for a semester-long graduate-level course in theatrical production management, detailing course objectives, projects, and practicum requirements. The intent is to develop a course for the Arts Administration program at The University of Akron, which is comprised of students from very diverse backgrounds. This course, however, is intended for students who wish to complete advanced work in theatre. A certain amount of knowledge about theatre will be required for a student to successfully complete this course. If students with other backgrounds wish to take the course, alternate reading lists could be developed to target the varied disciplines.

The core competencies developed in Chapter I will form the basis of all assignments and practicum experience. The fundamental concept behind this course is the dichotomy
of classroom instruction and practical learning. The learning begins in the classroom. After the fundamentals have been taught in the classroom, the production manager’s learning experience continues on the stage, in the office, and in real life. Consequently, the production management course should have some element of practical experience, a practicum requirement. An example of the information for this course is presented in a mock syllabus located in Appendix E.

Course Description and Overview

First to consider are the goals for such a class. These goals should include a combination of the acquisition of fundamental information, and the application of these fundamentals in a practical experience. With this in mind, the goal for the class might read: To introduce students to the fundamentals of production management in order to prepare them for a career in the field. This course will be designed around the two core competencies for production management, which are: Technical Theatre and the History of Drama, and Administration. Individual units will be designed to allow for in-depth study. The students will also complete a twenty-five hour practicum requirement during the semester with a professional production manager, and the assignment of the student to a production manager will be at the discretion of the professor. In order to evaluate the achievement of this objective, the instructor will not only be able to examine the scores that each student achieves on the assignments, but also to examine how well the students perform in the production management practicum.

The classroom time will be structured around fifteen week semesters, assuming three hours of class time per week, with the practicum structure to be determined between
the individual student and production manager. Because of the nature and volume of material to be covered, the course would seem best presented in an intensive, once-weekly class meeting. This would allow for time to thoroughly discuss reading assignments, allow time for students to share events from their internship opportunities, and allow for a student to thoroughly question and comprehend the material.

The practicum component of the course will consist of approximately twenty-five hours of time working with a production manager. The students will be required to complete two to three hours a week of work with the production manager. The work will likely include helping with daily tasks to see what a production manager does on a regular basis. The instructor will have selected production managers to pair students with, and the instructor will have the task of placing each student. The students will keep journals that chronicle the experience, and these journals will be checked on a regular basis. Ideally, class projects would parallel practical experiences. An example of this might be the budgeting assignment. If a student has an assignment related to a hypothetical budget preparation, participating in similar budget work during the practicum would be a useful too. The journal should also describe any new or interesting information, and should be a way to record any questions for class discussion. The journal will be evaluated at the end of the semester on the basis of the number of entries and the quality of the writing in terms of the mechanics as well as the thought process.

Required Texts

The selection of textbooks for such a course deserves serious consideration. Dean’s Production Management would be one of the fundamental course resources because of
the quality of the information, the ease of the presentation, and the overall layout of the book. Another book that demonstrates a strong integration of all of the disciplines in theatre management is Byrnes’ *Management and the Arts*. This book is particularly strong in presenting information about effective delegation of duties, and management skills that can be put in practice by the production manager. Budgeting, organization, and the flow of information within an institution are all topics discussed in Byrnes’ book. Supplemental readings could also be taken from books such as Langley’s *Theatre Management and Production in America*, Farber’s *Producing Theatre*, Schneider and Ford’s *The Theatre Management Handbook*, and Gillette’s *Theatrical Design and Production*. These textbooks provide different views of the same material so students can find the author who writes for the individual learning style.

Despite the numerous similarities in the information found in Chapters II and III, there are still some differences. For example, two of the production managers interviewed have never worked with anyone who had studied production management at the graduate level. Therefore, these two individuals felt that perhaps a graduate program in production management is unnecessary and the information is best learned while working under a production manager. The two professors interviewed, however, have mixed feelings on the issue. One professor asserts that the majority of the introductory material is best taught in the classroom, the other counters that much of it is best taught in practice. With this knowledge in mind, the course units will be broken down.
Technical Theatre and Theatre History

The goal for this section of the course reads: to understand the fundamentals of technical theatre in order to facilitate communication between the Production Manager and the Technical Director. While this section might have no written assignments, technical knowledge will be evaluated in later assignments when students will use the technical knowledge in conjunction with other information. As discussed in Chapter II, this course would assume that the incoming student would have the history of theatre and drama provided in an undergraduate, liberal arts theatre background. However, for this course to be applicable at The University of Akron, this assumption is frequently unfounded. Students enter the arts administration program with different backgrounds in different disciplines. For this reason, it would be wise to have optional review sessions outside of class time to discuss some basic technical knowledge and theatre history. While this approach does not provide a thorough background, it can be structured to provide students enough background in theatre and drama to continue with the course.

Similarly, if the incoming student does not have background in the technical aspects of theatre, review sessions might be advisable. This unit also will bring a Technical Director into the classroom to lecture and lead discussion related to the relationship and the differences between the Technical Director and the Production Manager.

Administration

The goal for this unit is: to apply the four subdivisions to the daily tasks for the Production Manager. The production manager must have a general knowledge of the business and management aspects related to theatre. Unlike the technical director, the
production manager does not need to be an expert in all of the highly involved technical aspects of the theatre. Rather, the production manager must be able to identify a problem and assign an experienced individual the task of solving that particular problem.

Administrative skills are many and varied. Reading assignments from a text such as Byrnes’ *Management and the Arts* are essential for this unit. Administrators in the theatre must have a working knowledge of such topics as union information, contracts, labor laws, and income taxes. This is by no means a complete list. Other administrative skills are those needed in any business setting and include such things as staff systems, general office management, and facility management.

This section will come with an administrative case study assignment. A working situation in which there is a potential problem between an employer and employee will be presented and the task will be to find a solution which takes into account legal regulations, financial guidelines, union regulations, and the mission and organization of the company. The assignment will consist of a three to five page paper, and will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of the writing, the accuracy of the research into unions and legal guidelines, and the proper application of the research to the given situation.

**Administration -- Problem-Solving**

The goal for the problem-solving unit is: to learn to apply skills learned from the history of theatre and drama, technical theatre, and administration units to real situations. The textbooks and interviews assert that a production manager must be a good problem solver. While many problems may be familiar, unique and new situations are bound to
arise. As Blunt mentioned, in the field of production management, “[n]othing ever happens like you think it is going to happen,” and the production manager must be willing to deal with every situation as it arises and work with the rest of the team towards a solution (Interview). There is no way to anticipate every problem or situation that could arise in the course of the production period. Rather, the best way to practice problem solving is to study past situations and present the students with hypothetical scenarios to teach the process of successful problem-solving.

This unit will utilize role playing scenarios to give the students the opportunity to develop detailed solutions for hypothetical problems. For example, during an in-class role play, a student serving as the production manager might be asked to deal with an issue regarding the technical director’s need for lumber when the production is already over budget, with other students serving as the managing director and the technical director. Students will be evaluated upon the quality of knowledge applied to the situation and the methods of negotiating with the various individuals involved in the role playing situation. If the student is able to take charge, make an effective and well thought-out decision while still maintaining control, then he or she will fair well.

Administration -- Leadership

Leadership is an elusive quality. Keeping the definition of leadership from Chapter II in mind, the goal for this unit is: to understand what it takes to motivate a team of professionals to complete a production in a timely fashion. Leadership also requires leading by example; therefore comprehensive knowledge of the profession is essential. A production manager will lead a team of various designers, technicians, and office staff
who will look to him or her to provide answers and to make decisions. To develop motivational skills, a text such as Developing the Leader Within You by John C. Maxwell provides useful information.

While leadership is a skill that can be taught in the classroom to some degree, much of the skill of a leader is learned, internalized, and fine-tuned in practice. Therefore, the importance of practical experience in production management should be emphasized. During this section of the course, students will be assigned to interview the production manager each is working with to learn what he or she feels about leadership skills for the production manager. Questions such as: how do you inspire to lead your team will give students a framework for one style of leadership. After the interviews are completed, each student will present the information to the class during an oral presentation. The goal of this presentation will not only be to learn about leadership but to develop oral communication skills. The various skills of oral presentation -- clear voice, preparation, eye contact -- will be included in the evaluation, in addition to the depth of the material obtained from the interview. Also, a trip to the performing arts hall to speak with the production manager and the executive director to discuss leadership at that organization will give additional practical information to the students.

Administration -- Communication

The third subdivision would be based on the core competency of communication, both written and oral. The goal for this unit is to develop the ability to set up systems and effective methods to properly inform every staff member of all appropriate information. The essence of communication is preventative management. If everyone is properly
instructed, fewer problems might occur during the process. All four production managers interviewed stressed the importance of communication skills for anyone who works in theatrical administration. Oral communication is necessary during the numerous production and staff meetings, as well as daily phone calls with department heads, other organizations, directors, technicians, and stage managers. Written communication is expressed in the form of e-mails, production meeting minutes, and reports to the administration. All of these forms must be clear, easy to understand, and concise. There is no room for misunderstanding; everyone must have an equal understanding of the events to occur and the work to be completed. Practicing both forms of communication is essential, and while the basics of communication can be learned in the classroom, it must be put into practice in real life.

As mentioned in the last section, the oral presentation for the leadership interviews will give students the opportunity to develop their oral communication skills. The students will have to practice creating detailed meeting minutes, production reports, and e-mails during role playing situations similar to those discussed earlier in this chapter. Examples of e-mails and reports from professional production managers will be useful here, because they will provide the students with opportunities to study the ways professional production managers communicate. The students will be evaluated on the basis of the mechanics of writing, the clarity and depth of the material, and whether or not all questions are answered in the messages conveyed to the staff.
Administration -- Financial Management

This unit’s goal is to understand the production manager’s role in creating and maintaining the budget, to understand fiscal policies for the organization, and to communicate financial information to the staff. In order to properly develop and maintain a budget, the production manager must be able to determine the price of goods and services to work with budgeting and accounting software, and to keep the entire staff on track. Management and the Arts and Production Management have detailed chapters discussing budgeting and accounting, and these chapters provide a good base for the study of this topic. A guest expert in the field of financial management would enhance discussions and help students understand the application of fundamentals of accounting practice.

This unit’s assignment, a budgeting exercise, gives the students situations in which each will receive a series of figures for a production. The production expenses must be determined, and a budget for the entire process must be prepared and turned in to the instructor in hard copy in a format demonstrated in Management and the Arts. The costs for all of the areas of the budget, such as lumber and other supplies, will need to be researched, and citations must be given to demonstrate the accuracy of the information. The budget will be evaluated on the basis of accuracy of the figures and whether or not the student makes good decisions about the allocation of financial resources. The students should also be given examples of budgets to evaluate in the manner of case studies.
Final Project

The final assignment of the course will bring together all of the material studied. In teams of two to three students, a set of complex tasks will be distributed and each team will be required to compose well thought-out and researched answers for each, following all guidelines and requirements studied throughout the semester. These tasks could range from set construction issues, budgetary problems, or complex legal problems surrounding employees. The students will submit one written report per team documenting all of the information in essay format or budget format when required. A bibliography will be required documenting all books and interviews used to gather the information.

As with other assignments, the students will be evaluated on the basis of the quality and accuracy of the research and the quality of the writing. However, since there is an element of teamwork involved with this project, the students will also be evaluated on how well the group worked together to find the solutions. A team manager will be designated, and he or she will be responsible for relaying the activity of each team member to the instructor when the assignment is completed. This element is included in the grade because the ability to collaborate is essential in this field. This project also will test communication skills. The students must be capable of communicating with one another about the material, and will be evaluated on communication skills on the basis of the information provided by the team manager. If a production manager cannot work well with a team, then the productions will never run smoothly or successfully.
Other syllabi could be developed from the same material and could achieve the same effect. This particular course is structured in the manner presented to allow for the theoretical presentation at The University of Akron.
CONCLUSION

PRACTICAL, ACADEMIC OR BOTH

What is the best method for a production manager to train for the field? Some production managers will adhere to the belief in practical experience, and some production managers will strive for a strong educational background. While the course template presented in the previous chapter gives an overview of production management, it is only the beginning. Clearly, in order to obtain employment, any production manager must be willing to work hard and work well on a team. Some of these skills -- leadership and communication -- would be best learned in practice. Clearly there is no one perfect method for anyone to become a production manager. A combination of methods, along with a will and a desire to become a production manager could very well be the best way to enter the field. Most of the production managers interviewed believe that education is important for building a strong skill base. The rest should be learned in practice, while working as an assistant production manager or during an internship.

As discussed in Chapter II, knowing the duties of the position is critical. Just as critical is the understanding of separation of duties. If one individual attempts to handle all of the responsibilities, nothing will ever be completed on time. If the production
manager is not aware of the changes in technology, then management will suffer and the work will not be completed in a timely manner.

Further research in this field might be to interview more professional production managers to discuss their views on practical experience versus classroom education. Another option would be in-depth research on the academic programs mentioned in Chapter II with course reviews, textbook lists, and interviews with the professors, and examinations of job placement for the program graduates.

In theatre, the world is always changing and evolving. Those who work in the field must be willing to change and evolve with it. Perhaps the end result of employment should not be the optimal achievement, the goal is continued education. Anyone who desires a position as a production manager should make the most of whatever training is available, and understand that the learning process, both academic and professional, makes all the difference. As Dean says, “[i]n theatre no one ever stops learning; that is part of its attraction” (173). As the practices of theatre evolve and technology changes, the production manager must always be studying to remain current and relevant in the field.
Bibliography

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Cardone, Elise. Telephone interview. 3 October, 2004.
---. “Re: Production Management Class Information”. E-mail to the author. 12 September, 2004.


“Graduate Catalogue”. The University of Delaware Catalogue.  

Heiser, Mark. “The Martin-Harvey Letters; A Case Study in Theatre Management”. 
Theatre Design and Technology. 32 no 1 (Winter 1996).


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“Programme Description”, “Employment”. The Guildhall School of Music and Drama. 

“Our History”, “Staff and Board”. Apple Tree Theatre. 


“Admission”, “Technical Production”. The National Theatre School of Canada. 


APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
(330) 972-7000 Office
(330) 972-8281 Fax

May 14, 2004

Rachel Kirley
406 Sumner St. Apt. B6
Akron, Ohio 44304

Dear Ms. Kirley:

The University of Akron’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) completed a review of the protocol entitled “The Education and Practical Experience of Theatrical Production Managers”. The IRB application number assigned to this project is 20040502.

The protocol qualified for Expedited Review and was approved on May 11, 2004. The protocol represented minimal risk to subjects. Additionally, the protocol matched the following federal category for expedited review:

Collection of voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes

Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

This approval is valid until May 11, 2005 or until modifications are proposed to the project protocol, whichever may occur first. In either instance, an Application for Continuing Review must be completed and submitted to the IRB.

Enclosed is the informed consent document, which the IRB has approved for your use in this research. A copy of this form is to be submitted with any application for continuation of this project.

Please note that within one month of the expiration date of this approval, the IRB will forward an annual review reminder notice to you by email, as a courtesy. Nevertheless, please note that it is your responsibility as principal investigator to remember the renewal date of your protocol’s review.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, you must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

Sharon McWhorter, Associate Director

CC:
Heili Sapienza, Department Chair
Randy Pope, Advisor
Phil Allen, IRB Chair

The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Institution
APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD RENEWAL LETTER

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
(330) 972-7666 Office
(330) 972-6281 Fax

April 10, 2005

Rachel Kirley
406 Summit Ave., Apt B6
Akron, Ohio 44304

Ms. Kirley:
The University of Akron’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) completed a review of your application for continuing review entitled “The Education and Practical Experience of the Theatrical Production Managers”. The IRB application number assigned to this project is 20040502-2.

The protocol qualified for Expedited Review and was approved on April 15, 2005. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal categories for expedited review:

(6) Collection of voice, video, digital or image recordings made for research purposes

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation or quality assurance methodologies

This approval is valid until May 11, 2006 or until modifications are proposed to the current project protocol, whichever may occur first. In either instance, an Application for Continuing Review must be completed and submitted to the IRB.

Please note that within one month of the expiration date of this approval, the IRB will forward an annual review reminder notice to you by email, as a courtesy. Nevertheless, please note that it is your responsibility as principal investigator to remember the renewal date of your protocol’s review. If your project is funded, failure to comply with IRB requirements could jeopardize your continued funding. Please submit your continuation application at least two weeks prior to the renewal date, to ensure the IRB has sufficient time to complete the review.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, you must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

Sharon McWhorter
Associate Director

Cc: Neil Sapienza, Department Chair
    Randy Pope, Advisor
    Phil Allen, IRB Chair
APPENDIX C

CARDONE SYLLABUS -- YALE UNIVERSITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-Sep</td>
<td>Introduction to Production Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introductions/Syllabus. Write a job description. Overview of Theatrical Organizational Structures and the Role of the PM. Review resume basics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-Sep</td>
<td>Good Leadership vs. Good Management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the difference? Can you be good at both? Due: Assignment #1 - Resume</td>
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<tr>
<td>17-Sep</td>
<td>Dirty Rotten Scoundrels: A Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An overview of a current Regional to Broadway transfer that will be used as a basis for group discussions and assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24-Sep</td>
<td>Production Process I: Managing the Creative Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-Oct</td>
<td>Production Process II: Budgeting &amp; Scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Brief Look at Theatrical Accounting Practices. Creating and Managing Production Budgets. Creating the Production Schedule.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-Oct</td>
<td>Production Managing Live Broadcasts, Video and Special Events – On The Air</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Marc Bauman, Coordinating Producer / Live from Lincoln Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-Oct</td>
<td>Production Process III: Managing the Technical Process</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeing the Big Picture. Production Meetings 101. Accountability as a Manager. Assembling a Bid Package. Dealing with Shops. Due: Assignment #2 - Production Schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>22-Oct</td>
<td>Production Process IV: Putting in the Show</td>
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<tr>
<td>29-Oct</td>
<td>Production Management for the Regional Theatre</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Ruth Sternberg, Production Manager, Trinity Repertory Theatre</td>
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</table>
05-Nov  Production Management for International Tours - At The Met
Guest Speaker: Suzy Gooch, Director of Presentations /Metropolitan Opera
Due: Assignment #3 - Labor Estimate

12-Nov  Production Process V: Moving a Show / Transfers & Touring
Site Surveys. Technical Riders. Pink Contracts, Yellow Cards & BA’s.
Coordinating Travel.

19-Nov  Production Process V (cont.): Moving a Show / Logistics

26-Nov  NO CLASS / HAPPY THANKSGIVING

3-Dec   Production Management for Corporate Theatre
Guest Speaker: Rik Kaye, VP Production, Concentric Communications
Due: Assignment #4 – Group Project

10-Dec  FINAL CLASS:  Discuss Assignment #4. Review & wrap-up.

Contact Info
Elisa Cardone
Home phone: (401) 364-2234 Fax: (401) 364-2236
Cell: (401) 529-8355 e-mail: epcardone@aol.com

Assignment Due Dates
Sept. 10th : Assignment #1 – Resume
Oct. 15th : Assignment #2 – Production Schedule
Nov. 5th : Assignment #3 – Labor Estimate
Dec. 3rd : Assignment #4 – Group Project

Grading
Assignment 1 must be passed in, but will not be graded.
Assignments 2 & 3 = 40% of final grade
Assignment 4 = 40% of final grade
Class participation = 20% of final grade
Assignments turned in more than one week late will receive no higher than a “HP” (High Pass) for a grade. Assignments turned in more than two weeks late will receive no higher than a “P” (Pass) for a grade.

Required Reading
Production Management, Making Shows Happen: A Practical Guide
Dean, Peter 2002, The Crowood Press
(see Marla in Ben Sammler’s office to purchase)

Source Material / Recommended Reading

*Theatre Management and Production in America*
Langley, Stephen  1990, Drama Book Publishers

*Stage Specs: A Technical Guide to Theatres*
1999 Edition

*The One Minute Manager*
Blanchard, Kenneth, Ph.D and Johnson, Spencer, Ph.D.  1981, Berkley Books

*Developing the Leader Within You*

*The Accounting Game: Basic Accounting Fresh from the Lemonade Stand*
Mullis, Darrell and Orloff, Judith  1998, Sourcebooks Trade

*The Elements of Style*
APPENDIX D

BYRNES SYLLABUS -- FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

Theatre Management
TPA 4400-01 or 5405-01 (3cr) Fall 2000 – Tu/Thur 12:30-1:45pm, Rm 201

INSTRUCTORS:

Wm. Byrnes, Professor of Theatre, Associate Dean & Director of Theatre Management Program
FAB: 326 – Ph: 4-5557 or email bbyrnes@mailer.fsu.edu
Office Hours: M-F 8am to 6pm or by appointment

I COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop an overview of the history, theory, principles and practices of management of theatre and the performing arts.
2. To apply this overview through a project which will develop your skills and abilities as a future manager.
3. To improve your writing and presentation skills.

II. REQUIRED BOOK


Other Books of Interest:

III CLASS PROCEDURES

Most classes have a reading assignment along with the expectation that you will prepare short written responses to the chapter questions. In some chapters there is also a case study assigned to read and additional questions to answer. Most classes have a general
topic for the day. The classes are a mixture of lecture and discussion and you are
expected to participate on a regular basis in the discussions.
Other meetings are marked as presentation classes. You will be expected to make an oral
report about the project theatre you are working on this semester (see Class Project).

**IV. EXAMS & CLASS PROJECT**

**Exams:** There will be two essay exams during the semester. Each exam will cover the
readings in the sections designated in the syllabus. Each exam will be taken in the 75-
minute class time scheduled.

**Class Project:** The major project for this class involves your creating a hypothetical
theatre company from the ground up. You will work in teams of two to create the mission
for the organization and then program a season. You may select an existing venue or, if
you are feeling ambitious you may design your own space. I suggest you consider
locating your theatre in a city with enough of a population base to support your
organization. You will be expected to staff the organization, create an overall operating
and revenue budget and a production calendar for the season. The assignment deadlines
are as follows:

- September 21  #1 - Mission and Purpose Statement presentation
- October 5    #2 - Organizational charts, job titles and job descriptions presentation
- November 9   #3 - Budget and overall production calendar presentation
- November 23  #4 - Marketing and fundraising plan presentation
- December 5   #4 - Continue marketing and fundraising plan presentation

**V. GRADING**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following break down of 100%:

- Exam #1 = 30%
- Exam #2 = 30%
- Project Theatre = 40%

Grade Ranges:
- A=100% to 95%, A- = 94% to 90%, B+ = 89% to 86%, B = 85% to 84%, B- = 83% to
  80%, C+ = 79% to 77%,
- C= 76% to 74%, C- = 73% to 70%, D+ = 69% to 66%, D = 65% to 63%, D- = 62% to
  60%, F= below 60%

NOTE: Graduate students enrolled in this class will be expected to answer one addition
question on the exams and write a 15 page research paper on a subject to be agreed upon
no later than October 17th.

**VI. ATTENDANCE & TARDINESS**
Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to be on time. A maximum of two unexcused absences are allowed during the semester. Excessive absences not documented by a written excuse will result in your grade being lowered by 5% for each absence. Each lateness reduces your grade by 1%.

**VII. ADA STATEMENT**

The School of Theatre desires that all of our students fully participate in our classes. If you have a disability or condition that compromises your ability to complete the requirements for this course you should register with the Office of Disabled Student Services. We will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate you in this class. If you do not understand, or as the result of a disability, cannot accept the contents or terms of this syllabus, you must notify the instructor by the beginning of the second week of classes.

**VIII. Religious Holidays**

Students are not penalized for absences due to observance of religious holidays. Students who miss class due to such observation should notify the instructor in advance so assignments may be completed.

**IX. GENERAL INFORMATION**

This course syllabus is posted on the School of Theatre‘s WWW site under course information. Questions about course material and discussion topics through email are welcomed. I will try to get back to promptly.

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**CLASS MEETING SCHEDULE**

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**WEEK 1**

**Tuesday August 29**
Course overview and review of syllabus and course requirements

**Thursday, August 31**
Read: M & A - Chapter 1 – Management and the Arts
Prepare: Responses to chapter questions
Discussion Topic: Overview of theatre management and discuss Analysis Focus.

**WEEK 2**

**Tuesday, September 5**
Read: M & A - Chapter 2 – Evolution of Arts Organizations and Arts Management
Prepare: Responses to chapter questions
Discussion: Focus on NFP Theatres and Commercial Theatre

**Thursday, September 7**
Read: M & A - Chapter 3 – Evolution of Management
Prepare: Responses to chapter questions
Discussion: Management as an art and science

**WEEK 3**
**Tuesday, September 12**
Read: M & A - Chapter 4 – Arts Organizations and Multiple Environments
Prepare: Prepare responses to chapter questions
Discussion: Your theatre company and its environment

**Thursday, September 14**
Lecture Topic: Starting your own theatre company – outline of steps required
Read: *Producing Theatre* – Chapters 1 through 4
Discussion: Just why DO you want to start a theatre company?

**WEEK 4**
**Tuesday, September 19 – Dr. Deborah Martin**
Read: M & A - Chapter 5 - Strategic Planning and Decision Making and Case Study – Karamu Theatre Co.
Prepare: responses to chapter and case study questions

**Thursday, September 21**
**Presentation #1**: Mission and Purpose Statements about the theatre organization you want to create

**WEEK 5**
**Tuesday, September 26**
Read: M & A - Chapter 6 – Organizing and Organizational Design
Prepare: responses to chapter questions
Discussion: How organizations really work?

**Thursday, September 28**
Read: *Producing Theatre* – Chapters 5, 6 and 7
Discussion: Vision and financing

**WEEK 6**
**Tuesday, October 3**
Read: M & A - Chapter 7 – Staffing the Organization and Case Study – Should Equal Opportunity Apply on the Stage?
Prepare: responses to the chapter and case study questions
CLASS MEETING SCHEDULE CONTINUED

**Thursday, October 5**
**Presentation #2** – Organization design and job descriptions for key staff in your theatre
**WEEK 7** *(Mattress Theatre Night Oct. 11)*
**Tuesday, October 10**
Read: Chapter 8 - Leadership
Prepare: responses to chapter questions
Discussion: Leadership issues in operating a theatre

**Thursday, October 12**
Read: *Producing Theatre* – Chapters 8 through 11
Discussion: The league, Contracts, Contracts and More Contracts

**WEEK 8**
**Tuesday, October 17**
Review session for Exam #1 – *Management & the Arts* Chapters 1-8 and *Producing Theatre* Chapters 1-11.

**Thursday, October 19**
Exam #1

**WEEK 9** *(Twilight LA Theatre Nights Oct 22-24)*
**Tuesday, October 24**
Read: M & A - Chapter 9 – MIS and Budgeting
Prepare: Chapter questions
Discussion: Selected chapter questions

**Thursday, October 26**
Read: M & A - Chapter 11 Financial Management
Prepare: Questions and Case Study from instructor

**WEEK 10**
**Tuesday, October 31**
Return Exams
Read: M & A - Chapter 10 – Economics and the Arts and Case Study
Prepare: Chapter questions and Case Study Questions
Discussion: Selected chapter and case study questions

**Thursday, November 2**
Read: *Producing Theatre* – Chapters 12 through 14 plus review appendices
Discussion: Out of town performances and Previews
Presentation: Budgets for your project theatre

**WEEK 11**
**Tuesday, November 7**
Read: M & A - Chapter 12 Marketing
Prepare: Chapter questions
Thursday, November 9  
**Presentation #3:** Budgets and overall production schedule for your theatre

**WEEK 12** *(Comedy of Errors Theatre Night Nov 15)*

**Tuesday, November 14**  
Read: Chapter 13 – Fund Raising  
Prepare: Chapter questions and Case Study Questions  
Discuss: Selected questions from chapter and case study  
**CLASS MEETING SCHEDULE CONTINUED**

**Thursday, November 16**  
Review Session – *Management and the Arts* Chapters 9-12 and *Producing Theatre* Chapters 12-14

**WEEK 13**

**Tuesday, November 21**  
Exam #2

**Thursday, November 23**  
Read: M & A - Chapter 14 – Integrating Management Styles and Theory  
Prepare: Chapter and Case Study questions theatre

**WEEK 14**

**Tuesday, November 28**  
**Presentations #4:** Marketing and fund raising plans for your project

**Thursday, November 30**  
*No Class – Thanksgiving Break*

**WEEK 15** *(Stop Kiss opens – Lab Theatre Dec 6)*

**Tuesday, December 5**  
**Continue Presentations #4:** Marketing and fund raising plans for your project

**Thursday, December 7**  
Final Class Meeting  
Read: Chapter 15  
Discussion: Thoughts about the future  
Course evaluation

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

Throughout the semester we will give up updates of books and resources that you may find handy. Of course there is a wealth of information on the WWW. Everything from
Playbill to virtual backstage tours. For purposes of this course our focus will be on management related issues. Here are just a few other books to consider.


APPENDIX E

THEORETICAL SYLLABUS

PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT

Course Objective: To introduce students to the fundamentals of production management to prepare them for a career in the field.

Description: Production Management is a growing specialty in the field of theatre. This course will be designed around the two core competencies for production management, which are: Technical Theatre and the History of Drama, and Administration. Each of these competencies will be discussed in an individual unit, allowing for in-depth study. The student will also complete a twenty-five hour internship requirement during the semester with a professional Production Manager, and the assignment of the student to a Production Manager will be at the discretion of the professor. The students will be expected to devote three hours a week to the internship in order to observe problems or projects for extended lengths of time. The students will keep a journal that chronicles the experience, which will be checked on a regular basis. The journal should also describe any new or interesting information, and logging any questions for class discussion. Class participation is a necessary component for effective learning. Consequently, every student must be an active participant in class and the internship.

Required Textbooks: Production Management: Making Shows Happen by Peter Dean Management and the Arts by William Byrnes


Project Lists
Goals of Projects: To develop materials for students to use in a portfolio for future job interviews.
• Project One – Administrative Issues – A potential problem between the employer and the employee will be assigned, and the task will be to find a solution which meets all legal and financial guidelines while still following the rules of the organization and any union regulations.

• Project Two – Budgeting Exercise – Each student will be given a set of figures for a season budget, and the production expenses must be planned out accordingly, research into production costs will be necessary.

• Project Three – Production Manager Interview – Each student will set up an interview with the production manager he or she is interning with to discuss leadership in the production manager’s job. The material from these interviews will be presented to the class and discussed.

• Project Four – Final - In teams of two or three, a set of complex tasks will be given out, and each team will be required to compose well thought-out and researched answers for each following all guidelines and requirements learned throughout the semester, a bibliography will be required documenting all books or interviews used.

• Internship Journal – Will be maintained on a weekly basis, subject to review at any time.

Unit One: Technical Knowledge
Goal: To understand the fundamentals of technical theatre in order to facilitate communication between the Production Manager and the Technical Director.
Desired Student Outcome:
• Week One – Course Introduction, Review of technical knowledge
• Week Two – Guest Speaker: Technical Director of the Department of Theatre, will provide a discussion of the relationship and the differences between the Technical Director and the Production Manager

Unit Two: Administration Overview
Goal: To apply the four subdivisions to the daily tasks for the Production Manager.
Desired Student Outcome: To be capable of overseeing daily administrative tasks and make clear decisions while remembering legal, financial and ethical regulations. If a student is given a case study he or she must be able to take it, evaluate the situation and come up with reasonable solutions given the information in the case study and knowledge of administration.
• Week Three – Overview of labor laws, unions and code of ethics
• Week Four – Contract writing and income tax information

Unit Three: Problem-Solving
Goal: To learn to apply skills learned from the history of theatre and drama, technical theatre and administration to tackle situations as they arise.
Desired Student Outcome: To develop the tools necessary to tackle situations and apply the knowledge to be capable of problem-solving while working as a production manager. The student should be able to problem-solve as an individual and as a team when presented with case studies or while working during the practicum experience.

- Week Five – In-class role playing situations: scenarios will be given, and each group of students must come up with detailed solutions

Unit Four: Leadership
Goal: To understand what it takes to motivate a team of professionals to complete a production in a timely fashion. Leadership also requires leading by example. Therefore, much of leadership requires a production manager to be knowledgeable of the profession and set a good example for proper working conditions.
Desired Student Outcome: For a student to be able to motivate others to work as a team in a production setting. The measure of this ability will be a test of the student’s knowledge of the basic procedures of a theatre, and the ability to communicate this information to others in written or verbal form.

- Week Six – Overview of the production manager’s team
- Week Seven – The class will have a question and answer session with the Executive Director of the Performing Arts Hall to better understand the flow of information and job responsibilities within a theatre

Unit Five: Written and Oral Communication
Goal: To develop the ability to properly inform every staff member of all appropriate information. The essence of communication is preventative management. If everyone is properly instructed, fewer problems might occur during the production process.
Desired Student Outcome: To produce a written document that is clear, easy to read, and grammatically correct with all of the necessary information as stipulated by the various assignments. To give an oral presentation that follows the generally accepted principles of public speaking with proper materials, power point presentations, and other literature.

- Week Eight – Format for production reports, meeting minutes, and communication through e-mail
- Week Nine – In-class critique and discussion of sample e-mails and meeting minutes and rehearsal reports

Unit Six: Financial Management
Goal: To understand the production manager’s role in maintaining the budget, to understand fiscal policies for the organization and emphasize this to the staff.
Desired Student Outcome: To comprehend the format of a budget as well as be capable of reading, interpreting, and composing a budget from given figured or from self-researched figures.

- Week Ten – Overview of accounting software, explanation of the budgeting process within the organization and how it pertains to production management
- Week Eleven – Guest Speaker from local Accounting Firm
Presentation of Production Manager Interviews

- Week Twelve – **Presentations on Interviews**
- Week Thirteen – **Presentations on Interviews**
- Week Fourteen – Course Wrap-up
- Week Fifteen – No Class, Finals Week