A “Wicked” Comparison of Commercial, Freelance and Academic Stage Management to develop Best Practices and Techniques for the Practical Stage Manager

THESIS

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Eric Hans Mayer

Graduate Program in Theatre

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Master's Examination Committee:

Professor Mark Shanda, M.F.A., Advisor

Professor Mary Tarantino, M.F.A.

Professor Lesley Ferris, Ph.D.
Abstract

A “Wicked” Comparison of Commercial, Freelance and Academic Stage Management to develop Best Practices and Techniques for the Practical Stage Manager examines three book musicals produced in three different theatrical venues to identify key principles and essential methodology of a practical stage manager. Once established, through experience, review and analysis, a sampling of those principles will be applied and tested under the most extreme conditions – a new devised work created by the Department of Theatre during the 2010-2011 academic year and fully mounted spring quarter 2011 – The Camouflage Project.
This document is dedicated to my Mom and Dad for their years of never ending love and support, John Snedeker for never saying no, and to my stage management colleagues Allison Walker, Emily Thiel, Brandon Curtis, Sarah Helgesen, and Sarah Hurwitz.
Acknowledgments

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Vita

1998..........................................................Portsmouth High School

2003..........................................................B.A. Theatre, The Ohio State University

2003-2011 ...............................................Freelance Stage Manager

2007.........................................................._The Secret Garden_, Stage Manager

2009.........................................................._The Miracle Worker_, Stage Manager

2009..........................................................M.F.A. Acting Solo Projects, Stage Manager

2009..........................................................M.F.A. Acting Showcase, Stage Manager

2010.........................................................._Wicked_, Stage Management Intern

2010.........................................................._Aida_, Stage Manager

2011.........................................................._Cinderella_, Stage Manager (BalletMet)

2011.........................................................._The Camouflage Project_, Stage Manager

Fields of Study

Major Field:  Theatre

Area of Emphasis:  Stage Management
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Chapter 1: Definition of Stage Manager

My first introduction to a theatrical stage manager was during a high school production of *The Sound of Music* in which I was cast to play the role of Rolf. An upper level student was assigned to serve as the stage manager and her primary responsibility was to sit offstage against the main curtain so that she could literally prompt actors who forgot their lines. Needless to say, the role of the stage manager did not leave a lasting impression.

My first **real** introduction to an effective stage manager was in college shortly after declaring a major in Theatre. Wanting a more stable career than that of an actor I turned my focus to sound design (while lighting was also a fascinating option, I could not figure out how I would have a stable career as a color blind lighting designer). To this day I remember sitting with fellow undergraduate crew member Mollie Workman at the first tech of *Orpheus Descending* (The Ohio State University, 2000) and asking her something along the lines of “who is that person organizing everything and telling everyone what to do? That’s what I want to do!” Mollie responded, “That is the stage manager, Kristen Kidd.” From that point on I looked for every opportunity to work with and as a stage manager on future productions.

What I did not realize, though, were the many differences between what I experienced as an undergraduate student working on academic productions in a very structured environment and what I would eventually experience as a freelance stage
manager. So began my journey to study the differences between academic, freelance and commercial stage management experiences. Initially through observation, then participation and ultimately direct involvement as a stage manager I have learned a wide variety of stage management practices and tools of the trade, e.g. methods for organizing, coordinating, communicating, and problem solving.

Information on commercial theatre practices, which serve as the foundation for most academic theatre programs, was gathered through observation and participation on the 2004 Tony Award winning musical production *Wicked*, with songs and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz. Over the course of eight weeks in the summer of 2010 – five weeks with the Broadway company while in residence in New York City at the Gershwin Theatre, and three weeks with the 1st National Tour while performing in the Ohio Theatre in Columbus, Ohio, I served as a stage management intern.

My stage management of a bilingual production of the musical *The Secret Garden*, book and lyrics by Marsha Norman with music by Lucy Simon, produced for venues in Columbus, OH and New Haven, CT serves as the exemplar for freelance stage management. Lastly, The Ohio State University Department of Theatre’s November 2010 production of the 2000 Tony Award winning musical *Aida*, with music by Elton John and lyrics by Tim Rice, serves as the academic theatre model. Through the productions of these three book musicals I have identified key principles and essential methodology of an effective stage manager. To further prove the validity of my findings, a sampling of those principles has been applied and tested under the most extreme production conditions – a devised, new work created by the Department of Theatre
during the 2010-2011 academic year and fully mounted spring quarter 2011 – The Camouflage Project.

In order to fully understand both the uniqueness and similarities between each of these experiences, as identified in the following chapters, it is important to first define what it means to be a “stage manager” – a term that is used very broadly throughout the theatre community and which, unfortunately, has multiple meanings. As Larry Fazio writes in his book, Stage Manager: the Professional Experience, “[o]ften there is a difference between what a stage manager does in college and community theatre and what a stage manager can or cannot do in professional theatre” (1). On Broadway the stage manager is required to be a member of the Actors’ Equity Association (AEA), the union of professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. An “Equity contract” identifies a list of twelve specific obligations that the stage manager is required to perform and includes a detailed list of prohibited duties, as well. The list of obligations, titled Definition of Duties of a Stage Manager, will serve as the basis for comparison between each of the three experiences. Professional non-profit regional theatres which do not hire AEA stage managers\(^1\) will often impose additional responsibilities beyond the union’s specified twelve. Theatre produced by a university or college within a degree granting program, generally referred to as academic theatre, often attempts to mirror the duties defined by AEA within their own production program parameters. Like regional theatres, though, there are often many additional demands placed on a student stage manager. One of the biggest challenges is that the student

\(^1\) This thesis does not examine professional non-profit regional theatres that hire AEA stage managers, often referred to as resident theatres.
stage manager is also placed in a role requiring a delicate balancing act between faculty
and staff mentors and the stage manager’s fellow student actors and technicians.

The following list (table 1 and appendix A) defines the minimum duties for which
“A Stage Manager under Actors' Equity Contract is, or shall be obligated to perform” as
stated in AEA’s *Definition of Duties of a Stage Manager*.

Table 1

AEA Definition of Duties of a Stage Manager

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference #</th>
<th>Definition of Duty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEA-1</td>
<td>Shall be responsible for the calling of all rehearsals, whether before or after opening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEA-2</td>
<td>Shall assemble and maintain the Prompt Book which is defined as the accurate playing text and stage business, together with such cue sheets, plots, daily records, etc., as are necessary for the actual technical and artistic operation of the production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEA-3</td>
<td>Shall work with the Director and the heads of all other departments, during rehearsal and after opening, schedule rehearsal and outside calls in accordance with Equity regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEA-4</td>
<td>Assume active responsibility for the form and discipline of rehearsal and performance, and be the executive instrument on the technical running of each performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Maintain the artistic intentions of the Director and the Producer after opening, to the best of his/her ability, including calling correctional rehearsals of the company when necessary and preparation of the Understudies, Replacements, Extras and Supers, when and if the Director and/or Producer declines this prerogative. Therefore, if an Actor finds him/herself unable to satisfactorily work out an artistic difference of opinion with the Stage Manager regarding the intentions of the Director and Producer, the Actor has the option of seeking clarification from the Director or Producer.

Keep such records as are necessary to advise the Producer on matters of attendance, time, health benefits or other matters relating to the rights of Equity members. The Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Managers are prohibited from the making of payrolls or any distribution of salaries.

Maintain discipline as provided in the Equity Constitution, By-Laws and Rules where required, appealable in every case to Equity.

Stage Manager duties do not include shifting scenery, running lights or operating the Box Office, etc.

The Council shall have the power from time to time to define the meaning of the words "Stage manager" and may alter, change or modify the meaning of Stage Manager as hereinabove defined.
The Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Managers are prohibited from handling contracts, having riders signed or initialed, or any other function which normally comes under the duties of the General Manager or Company Manager.

The Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Managers are prohibited from participating in the ordering of food for the company.

The Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Managers are prohibited from signing the closing notice of the company or the individual notice of any Actor's termination.

Source: Actors Equity Association

The balance of this chapter attempts to break down each duty in order to develop a complete understanding of what it truly means to be a stage manager, and what it means to maintain the “artistic intentions of the Director” and to be “the executive instrument on the technical running of each performance.” After we know what the expectations are, we will be able to better understand how those expectations vary between commercial, freelance and academic stage management opportunities.

The first responsibility is to call “all rehearsals, whether before or after opening” (AEA-1). The term “call” in this case means that the stage manager will decide whether a rehearsal is needed, notify the cast and other appropriate personnel of the rehearsal, attend and manage the rehearsal, and file a report of the rehearsal activities at the
conclusion of the rehearsal. If the production has not yet opened, the decision to hold a rehearsal will be made in conjunction with the director and/or choreographer’s input and, if technical or dress rehearsals have started, the input of the appropriate designers and department heads (e.g. wardrobe, lighting, automation, sound, orchestra, rigging, special effects, etc.). If the production has opened, then the stage manager may decide to hold a rehearsal without input from any other individuals, although they will often consult with department heads and dance captains as appropriate. As we will see in chapter 2, where we look at the roles of more than 130 people backstage during a performance of Wicked, there can be a lot of people involved in a production and it is the stage manager’s primary responsibility to best utilize everyone’s time.

To achieve this goal, the stage manager is responsible for consolidating as many purposes into one rehearsal as possible. For example, during one rehearsal of Wicked that I attended, the stage manager organized and led a rehearsal where the understudies rehearsed the lead roles while a new actress performing Madame Morrible rehearsed for the first time on-stage.

The second responsibility requires the stage manager to “assemble and maintain the Prompt Book which is defined as the accurate playing text and stage business, together with such cue sheets, plots, daily records, etc., as are necessary for the actual technical and artistic operation of the production” (AEA-2). Responsibility of the prompt book is perhaps the most standard responsibility across the theatre community. Usually maintained in one or more large three-ring binders, the prompt book is a working document of organized lists, schedules, notes, reports, and an annotated script, etc., with page dividers and pockets for easy and swift reference. Most prompt books also contain
at a minimum a contact list, calendars and weekly schedules, and emergency procedures. Given the importance of this binder, prompt books are typically kept in the theatre building where they are secured in a stage management office when not in use at the rehearsal room or stage. The practice of keeping the prompt book in the theatre reduces the possibility of theft (while a prompt book for a production of Aida may have limited dollar value, the laptop in the next pouch of a backpack was too enticing for the thief to pass up), absentmindedness (Wicked has over 300 light cues, leaving your prompt book at home and calling the show from memory is not an option), and bad luck (unless you consider getting hit by a bus to be a cruel form of fate).

The “playing text and stage business” consists of the script, articulated character choices and blocking notation. Often times a script can still be in development as it is being rehearsed, so it is important that all of the changes are maintained in one master document so that the entire production team has a point of reference during the rehearsal process and so that the script can be published once finalized. Recording the character choices is useful for training replacement actors, as will happen several times in long running productions, or maintaining the artistic integrity of a production once the show has opened and the director has moved on to another project.

Blocking is the movement and positioning of actors on the stage as determined by the director to achieve dramatic effect and to continue the action of the play. During the pre-production rehearsals the stage manager is responsible for maintaining a blocking script which contains diagrams and detailed notation regarding the actions of every character, including how an actor enters and exits the stage and what props they may take with them or pick-up along the way. Blocking notation is useful to a variety of
individuals – the director, the actors, the wardrobe crew, and the lighting designer, just to name a few. During early rehearsals, the director and actors will rely on the information recorded by the stage manager as they worked through a scene – moments of brilliance are often followed by moments of short-term memory loss. This notation is also used by the stage manager to teach blocking to replacement actors who, due to costs, only receive one or two rehearsals with the full company. The wardrobe crew uses the blocking information to determine where an actor is exiting for a quick costume change. The lighting designer needs to know what parts of the stage should be lit and sometimes what parts should not be lit. The design team will use virtually all of the information kept in the prompt book to develop individual cue sheets and plots which identify the who, what, when, where and why for lighting effects, sound effects, costume changes and much more. The stage manager will find that consolidating this information becomes particularly useful during tech rehearsals in order to keep track of everything happening both on and off the stage.

Daily rehearsal reports or records summarize everything that happened during the day for quick reference by any member of the production team. Rehearsal reports include attendance, materials rehearsed, time spent on specific sections of material, script changes, overall length of rehearsal, quantity and duration of breaks, and notes to specific departments, such as lighting, sound, wardrobe, props and scenery. Performance reports should include run times, audience size, audience reaction, technical problems, artistic quality and issues, issues with blocking or choreography, dropped lines, ad-libbed lines, and added stage business to a scene. Productions with an AEA contract will also list
temperature and humidity on stage and in the house in accordance with the contract requirements.

All reports must be detailed and fully convey critical and time sensitive information to the rest of the production team. For example, instead of writing “wand needs to be fixed” after one of Galinda’s wands has been damaged during a rehearsal or performance, the stage manager should write “Galinda’s wand for Popular snapped in half when it hit the light ladder as she threw it over her shoulder and off stage as directed.” In addition to maintaining a copy of the report in the Prompt Book, reports are distributed to the producer and other members of the production team via email immediately following each rehearsal or performance to assist each in determining their next actions to support the production.

The third responsibility is for the stage manager to “work with the Director and the heads of all other departments, during rehearsal and after opening, schedule rehearsal and outside calls in accordance with Equity regulations” (AEA-3). This is a common responsibility across all theatre environments, as is the fourth responsibility, to “assume active responsibility for the form and discipline of rehearsal and performance, and be the executive instrument on the technical running of each performance” (AEA-4). A stage manager not only manages the stage but also more importantly the people involved in production. Just like in any business setting, the stage manager is a manager who must work with other managers, referred to in theatre as department heads, to assist in achieving the company’s mission through maintaining and upholding company policies.

As the “executive instrument on the technical running of each performance” (AEA-4) the stage manager gives commands for the execution of all cues:
Such as a doorbell, a car horn, lights being turned on and off in a room, or streaks of lightening [sic] that momentarily light up the stage. All cues are called by the stage manager. … The dialogue or action takes place, then the cue is called and executed. (Fazio, 176)

Calling cues, as it is often referred to, is perhaps the most common responsibility of the stage manager, it is also the duty that is the most misunderstood by the audience, “to call the cues wrong in a major scene change during a performance [could cause] the scenery [to come] crashing together and possibly caus[e] injury to someone” (Fazio, 200).

During a performance the [Stage Manager (SM)] must now sit at the console and, like the conductor of a musical score, lead the technicians through the technical movements for the show. Like the musicians, the technicians have noted on paper their parts, but it is the SM who, from the console, coordinates all the parts, keeping things together and in the order they have been set, seeing that all things work in harmony, with the proper timing, and are done safely. In addition, the SM keeps a watchful eye for any mistakes, correcting them as they happen or better still, anticipating them before they happen. When an SM does the job well, calling the show with impeccable timing, no one is aware of this work. Often people will forget the SM's presence and the part the SM plays in creating the magic of theatre for each performance. (Fazio, 193)

Alas, the audience does not come to the theatre to see what makes the show happen, they come to be entertained. Thus the stage manager is like a magician’s assistant – the true magic maker standing just outside the spotlight.
In most commercial and regional theatre productions the director leaves upon opening to pursue other projects, providing the stage manager with their next responsibility to, “Maintain the artistic intentions of the Director and the Producer after opening, to the best of his/her ability” (AEA-5). This responsibility to uphold the original artistic intentions of the director is another key reason for the stage manager to maintain detailed notes on blocking and character choices in the prompt book. When a stage manager notices actors deviating from the original blocking or character choices, e.g. turning a serious moment into a joke, the stage manager notes the deviation and brings it to the attention of the actor. If an actor is having trouble with a particular moment or movement, the stage manager may choose to call a rehearsal so that the issue can be addressed, for example in Wicked there is a nightly call to rehearse dance lifts whenever the dance partners have changed for both continuity and the safety of the actors. If an actor ignores the notes given by the stage manager, the stage manager warns the actor and AEA in writing of the issue. After three written warnings the company manager, acting on behalf of the producer, has the right to terminate the actor’s contract.

The next responsibility again looks to the stage manager as a manager of the personnel, “Keep such records as are necessary to advise the Producer on matters of attendance, time, health benefits or other matters relating to the rights of Equity members” (AEA-6). At Ohio State the majority of the cast is made up of students who are registered for practicum credit and thus receive a grade. Students are graded by a combination of objective and subjective evaluation around the standards of attendance, attitude and ability. Therefore, accurate attendance records are very important to provide the factual data to support any grade being earned. Attendance records are maintained on
the daily rehearsal and performance reports. Actors in a regional theatre production are usually contracted and payment is distributed based on that contract – sometimes weekly, biweekly or in installments at each major change in the production process, e.g. upon signing the contract, first rehearsal, first performance, last performance. Failure on the part of the actor to follow the guidelines of their contract could cause the theatre company to withhold payment.

Detailed records submitted to the company manager on a consistent basis benefit both the actor and the company. Commercial theatres compile a weekly report from the daily rehearsal or performance reports to submit to company management and the local AEA office. Company management uses the data to prepare paychecks, adjust leave balances, and verify workers compensation expenses. The Actors’ Equity Association office uses the data to make sure that the company is following the requirements of the contract and to investigate issues presented to their office by disgruntled actors.

Here we also find the first duty that stage managers are prohibited from performing, “the making of payrolls or any distribution of salaries” (AEA-6). Contracts, payroll and company business, that is any business that does not specifically relate to what the audience may see on-stage, must be handled by company management, with union representation by the Association of Theatrical Press Agents and Managers (ATPAM). Company management is also responsible for “handling contracts, having riders signed or initialed” (AEA-10), “participating in the ordering of food for the company” (AEA-11) and “signing the closing notice of the company or the individual notice of any Actor's termination” (AEA-12). As we will discover in chapter 2, there are many duties separated across several unions in commercial theatrical productions, so it is
in each union’s best interest to prevent their union members, such as an AEA stage manager, from performing the duties for which another union is responsible, such as the ATPAM company manager previously mentioned. This respect between unions protects all theatrical employees by preventing the producer from eliminating necessary positions.

The stage manager must also “maintain discipline as provided in the Equity Constitution, By-Laws and Rules where required, appealable in every case to Equity” (AEA-7). Although there are specific references made to Equity, this responsibility applies to all theatre models. Just as most businesses have a set of company policies or guidelines, so should every theatre company. The stage manager should become very familiar with these policies. At Ohio State there are specific guidelines and rules for actors and crew that are read and posted by the stage manager while the producer provides each director with contractual requirements (appendix B). The Phoenix Theatre for Children, a regional theatre company, has a set of company rules that every company member must agree to when they sign their contract.

Just as an AEA stage manager’s responsibilities do not interfere with the responsibilities of a company manager, “Stage Manager duties do not include shifting scenery, running lights or operating the Box Office, etc.” (AEA-8), as these are duties performed by members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE). That is not to say that a stage manager cannot be a member of both AEA and IATSE, but a person can only be employed by a production through one union contract, despite multiple personal memberships at any point in time. In academic theatres and
some regional theatres\textsuperscript{2}, where there is no union representation, the list of stage manager’s duties often times can include responsibility for installing and operating running lights, or in the case of assistant stage managers, shifting scenery. As we will discover in chapter 4, larger academic theatre programs frequently choose to follow the traditional union separation of duties whenever possible.

As with any contract, “The Council shall have the power from time to time to define the meaning of the words "Stage manager" and may alter, change or modify the meaning of Stage Manager as hereinabove defined” (AEAE-9). AEA does allow for a stage manager to have additional responsibilities as long as they are contracted and compensated accordingly through a separate written contract that must be approved by AEA. AEA stage managers may also receive additional compensation for performing in hazardous working conditions, cast recordings, and working overtime. In any non-union theatre a stage manager can be required to do any combination of these duties and more – so if given the chance to stage manage be sure to review your contract carefully. A course syllabus or practicum handbook serves as the contract for student stage managers working on an academic production.

We now know what the 12 duties of a stage manager are, but stage managers are also known for their practical ability to anticipate and solve problems, adapt to the situation at hand, and maintain a friendly and respectful atmosphere. So while AEA has provided us with a comprehensive definition of the technical and managerial duties of a stage manager, they mention nothing about the requirements of the individual holding the

\textsuperscript{2} Many regional theatre companies do have AEA contracts.
title of stage manager. Daniel Ionazzi best defines the humanistic side of stage manager in his text, *The Stage Management Handbook*:

A stage manager is a leader, who is self-motivated and even-tempered, with the ability to anticipate and adapt to constantly changing conditions. Stage Managers are dedicated to and responsible for every aspect of their productions without losing their sense of humor. They provide an efficient and organized work environment while remaining empathetic to the people and the process. … Stage management is an art. A stage manager is as creative as any other member of the production. (11)

These may appear to be additional qualities that a stage manager should strive for and not part of an exacting definition, but how can a stage manager be successful without these qualities? Theatre is a hectic, stressful and sometimes hazardous work environment (see chapters 2 and 3). As we will see in subsequent chapters, to successfully accomplish the AEA duties one must, at the very least, strive to achieve all of these qualities.
Chapter 2: Lessons in “Defying Gravity”: Wicked

This chapter examines the stage management practices used on the 2004 Tony Award winning musical production Wicked. Information was gathered through observation and participation during a five-week residency with the Broadway company in New York City’s Gershwin Theatre and three weeks with the 1st National Tour while performing at the Ohio Theatre in Columbus, Ohio. Wicked premiered on Broadway in October 2003 featuring music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz and book by Winnie Holzman based loosely on the novel Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West by Gregory Maguire. Told from the perspective of the witches of the Land of Oz, the story parallels the 1939 film of L. Frank Baum’s The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. The plot begins with the birth of Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West, and follows her through school where she meets Galinda, who becomes Glinda the Good. The script and design elements include several references to the events depicted in the 1939 film The Wizard of Oz as a backstory.

To date, Wicked is the 17th longest-running Broadway show in history. In addition to the Broadway production, 321 Theater Management/Wicked, LLC manages two national tours; several international productions (London, Japan, Germany, and Australia); several sit-down productions4 (Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco); and

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4 A production with an open-ended production run in a location other than Broadway, also referred to as a resident commercial production.
an Australian tour. According to Playbill.com, “The Broadway production of the international hit musical *Wicked* grossed $2,228,235 for the week ending Jan. 2 [2011]. The total was not only a new house record at the Gershwin Theatre but also the highest gross for a week of performances in Broadway history” (Gans). *Wicked* is produced by Marc Platt, Universal Pictures, The Araca Group, Jon B. Platt and David Stone and managed by 321 Theatre Management. Opening night production credits include:

Directed by Joe Mantello; Choreographed by Wayne Cilento; Assistant Director: Lisa Leguillou; Assistant Choreographer: Corinne McFadden. Scenic Design by Eugene Lee; Costume Design by Susan Hilferty; Lighting Design by Kenneth Posner; Sound Design by Tony Meola; Projection Design by Elaine J. McCarthy; Hair and Wig Design by Tom Watson; Associate Scenic Design: Edward Pierce; Make-Up Design by Joshua Dulude II; Assistant Scenic Design: Armand D. Francone; Oz Map Design: Francis Keeping; Draftsman: Ted LeFevre; Associate Costume Design: Michael Sharpe and Ken Mooney; Assistant Costume Design: Maiko Matsushima, Amanda Whidden and Amy Clark; Associate Lighting Design: Karen Spahn; Associate Lighting Designer / Automated Lights: Warren Flynn; Assistant Lighting Design: Ben Stanton; Associate Sound Design: Kai Harada; Assistant Projection Design: Jenny Lee, Michael Patterson and Jacob Daniel Pinholster; Associate Hair Design: Charles LaPointe. (*Wicked*)

The stage management staff during my internship included Marybeth Abel, Production Stage Manager, Jennifer Marik, Stage Manager, J. Jason Daunter, Assistant Stage Manager, and Christy Ney, Assistant Stage Manager. *Wicked* also has a Production Supervisor, Thom Widmann, who oversees the stage management and technical
production aspects of all the Wicked, LLC productions. My experience with this commercial theatre production highlighted many differences in what the professional world expects of a stage manager and the demands of academic and regional theatres on stage managers. Now in its seventh year of production, the Broadway production of *Wicked* runs like a well-oiled machine and offers a stable and well-organized environment for everyone involved in the daily operations.

The Broadway production of *Wicked* has eight principles (Elphaba, Galinda\(^5\), Fiyero, Madame Morrible, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Nessarose, Boq, and Doctor Dillamond), twelve male ensemble members, ten female ensemble members, two standbys (one each for Elphaba and Galinda), three swings, and two dance captains who also serve as a swings. Some of the 22 ensemble members are also understudies. The standbys are required to sign-in and remain at the theater in case something should happen to the principle for which they are the standby, such as illness or injury. Standbys also cover for the principle during vacation and paid leave. The standbys have their own custom tailored set of costumes and can replace the principle with very little notice. For example, one evening Galinda was not feeling well and tried to make it through the show, but just before she started the number *Popular* she informed the stage manager that she would not be able to continue after the number. The stage manager notified the standby actress and wardrobe and in the scene after *Popular* the standby Galinda entered the stage as the sick Galinda was on her way back to the dressing room. When a standby is not needed she will be released at the end of intermission, still receiving her full salary for

\(^5\) In Act I, scene 10, Galinda changes her name to Glinda.
the performance. This was usually the case; although the actress playing Galinda (KRC) had a tendency to call in sick for the Wednesday matinees, so the Galinda standby (LW) would do the entire performance and the Elphaba standby would be released at intermission.

The ensemble (non-principle characters) consists of understudies, on-stage swings, swings, and universal swings. The ensemble, aside from being broken down by gender, is also organized by several types of specialties, but primarily singers and dancers. While every ensemble member must sing and dance, some of the ensemble members are stronger singers and some are better dancers. The stronger dancers will do the more difficult parts of the dance numbers while the singers fill space, so to speak. The singers, on the other hand, make sure all of the vocal parts are covered and reinforced, sometimes singing from off-stage. Other specialties include tumbling and flying. Tumbling is a specialty needed for the actor playing the role of Chistery, the Wizard’s pet monkey, and flying is a specialty needed for the monkeys that fly both on-stage and over the audience. Actors qualified for the flying specialty have been fitted and trained to use the flying harnesses.

The understudies learn and know specific principle roles, sometimes just one and sometimes two or three. If a principle character (who does not have a standby) is out, then the understudy takes on that role. As the understudies are also ensemble members someone else will need to cover their “track” (the songs, dance numbers, physical activities such as moving a cart, etc.). Swings are also identified by specialty and know the track for every ensemble member with the same specialty.
To continue with the earlier example where Galinda (KRC) called off for the Wednesday matinee and the standby (LW) took over the role for that performance, the ensemble member (Y) who is the understudy for Galinda would be pulled from the performance in case something happened to the standby actress who was no longer on standby (LW). The track for that ensemble member (Y) would still need to be covered, so a swing (S) with the same specialties as the ensemble member (Y) would perform her track during the performance. Typically, unless filling in for someone, a swing will not be on-stage during the show. If stage management knows at the top of the performance that a swing will be performing then Actors’ Equity Association (AEA) rules state that a sign must be posted in the lobby that says “The following swings will be performing today.” The communication of these casting changes to other members of the production team will be examined a little later in this chapter.

Some of the swings are called on-stage swings and do have regular ensemble roles in a few of the scenes or numbers. The on-stage swings help to make a fuller stage picture, so when the director wanted a large crowd of angry villagers carrying pitchforks and other farm tools the on-stage swings were added. If someone gets injured during the performance, then one of the on-stage swings will assume the injured ensemble member's track. For example, during a dance number in one of the matinee performances an actress’s head and an actor’s arm tried to occupy the same space at the same time, which, as we know, is not physically possible. The actress’s head was hit pretty hard and she was out for the rest of the show, so the on-stage swing assumed the injured actress’s track and another swing covered the on-stage swing's track in the crowd of angry villagers. The
stage manager maintains a chart (fig. 1) which tracks the understudies, swings and their specialties for quick reference when someone calls off before a performance.

Figure 1. Sample *Wicked* Understudies, Swings and Specialities reference chart.

Wicked, LLC also employs several universal swings who can cover any ensemble track within any of the US companies. This is useful when a regular cast performer has scheduled a two week vacation or an actor is out for an extended period of time due to injury. The universal swing can be called in to cover the role so that the regular swings are still available to cover the roles of the other cast members.

Now that we have established the basic layout of the company let us examine the observed stage management practices organized to align with AEA’s *Definition of Duties*.
of a Stage Manager (table 1), starting with the first duty of the stage manager – to call rehearsals (AEA-1). There are several different purposes for having a rehearsal so there are several different types of rehearsals. The first rehearsals before a production opens are referred to as pre-production rehearsals. Pre-production rehearsals for Wicked began in April 2003 and lasted just over a month before the first public pre-Broadway tryout performance opened on May 28, 2003. Chapters 3 and 4 will examine pre-production rehearsals in more depth.

The choreography of some productions requires a mini-rehearsal before the rehearsal or performance. Both the Broadway production and 1st National Tour of Wicked had two types of mini-rehearsals. The first type of mini-rehearsal is referred to as a fight call. Fight calls are held for actors to rehearse stage combat in slow motion, preferably on-stage and in costume. Wicked holds fight calls to rehearse the fight between Glinda and Elphaba in Act II, scene 5 whenever a standby or an understudy is playing one of these two lead roles. I observed the Broadway production of Wicked hold one of these fight calls when Mandy Gonzales returned to the role of Elphaba after taking a two week vacation. Wicked also holds a second type of mini-rehearsal, referred to as “lifts,” whenever there is a change in the ensemble dancers. The lift rehearsal provides a male dancer and a female dancer the opportunity to rehearse dance lifts at slow speed so that they can adjust to the change in body type and shape. Looking back at the example where Galinda has called in sick for the Wednesday matinee, the stage manager would need to call both mini-rehearsals. A change has been made to who is playing Galinda, so a fight call is needed to reduce the chance of injury between Galinda and Elphaba. The ensemble member (Y) who understudies for Galinda has been pulled out of the ensemble in order
to standby for Galinda, so a lift rehearsal is needed so that the male actor can rehearse with the swing female (S) who will be covering the ensemble (Y) track.

Looking back at the example of “Understudies, Swings and Specialities” (fig. 1), you may notice that the individual listed as M12 (BW) is also listed as a swing for the eleven other men. That is a lot of dancing, singing and lines to remember – so how does he do it? One of the tools that the stage management team utilizes to help the understudies and swings remember their multiple rolls is known as an understudy rehearsal. The AEA contract requires an understudy rehearsal to be held at least once every six weeks and allows the production to rehearse understudies up to 12 hours per week (all other actors are limited to eight hours of rehearsal per week). During the understudy rehearsal actors playing the principle characters are not called, so the stage manager will identify the role that each understudy will play as well as the tracks that will be covered by the ensemble and swings. In Wicked, some actors are assigned to understudy more than one role, so understudy rehearsals happen more frequently as the AEA contract requires that understudies have the opportunity to “rehearse in each part assigned at least once … every six weeks” (Production Contract, 57(J)(3)). During these understudy rehearsals the production is required to provide a piano and accompanist, but no other elements (costumes, props, scenery, etc.) are required.

Another set of rehearsals occurs when a new actor joins the company. Regardless of the role this new actor plays, be it a principle, an ensemble member, an understudy or a swing, AEA requires a minimum of eight hours of rehearsal with a piano and adequate technical rehearsal, as deemed necessary, for these replacement actors before performing in front of an audience. AEA defines technical rehearsals as including “rehearsal on the
set with such props, lighting effects, mechanical or pyrotechnical devices, weapons, costumes and other cast members” (Production Contract, 57(K)). During my time with the Broadway Company of *Wicked*, Kathy Fitzgerald was hired to replace Rondi Reed as Madame Morrible. Approximately three weeks prior to her first performance, the Production Stage Manager would rehearse with Fitzgerald in a rehearsal studio located on the fourth floor of the Gershwin Theatre. According to the stage management staff, tenants of the Gershwin Theatre are very fortunate to have a rehearsal studio on the premises as most Broadway theatres do not have adequate space for a rehearsal studio and must rent a space elsewhere. The replacement rehearsals with Fitzgerald were generally held during performances and were one on one with the Production Stage Manager who would read the lines of the other characters. A rehearsal accompanist was also provided so that Fitzgerald could learn the musical cues for entrances, exits and specific stage movements.

The purpose of replacement rehearsals is three-fold. First the actor must learn the both the spoken and sung text of the play. Replacement actors are expected to start the replacement rehearsals with the majority of their text memorized. Stage managers can assist with the memorization of lines through a process known as running lines, where the stage manager sits down with the script and reads the parts opposite of the actor’s character while the actor recites the memorized lines. The stage manager will prompt the actor when needed, usually after the actor says “line,” a term used throughout the industry to indicate that the actor cannot remember the next line. Running lines is generally considered a courtesy role of the stage manager and is often given to assistants or interns.
The second purpose of replacement rehearsals is to provide the actor with information about the character’s background and how they fit into the overall story of the play. During some of Fitzgerald’s replacement rehearsals the assistant director would come in to talk through the dramaturgy of the play. This provided Fitzgerald with a historical background of the story within the play as well as the play’s development over time. During these dramaturgical sessions, the assistant director would teach Fitzgerald elements of the character that were hard-and-fast rules (in other words, things every Madame Morrible must do) and elements of the character that she could adapt to make her own, such as a particular twitch of the hip or how she would react to another character’s line.

Last, but not least, during the replacement rehearsals it is the stage manager’s responsibility to teach the actor the blocking. Remember that blocking includes how an actor enters and exits the stage, their movement around the stage and what props they may take with them or pick-up along the way. While chapters 3 and 4 will take a more detailed look at the development of a blocking script, there is one technique that appears to be common in commercial theatre and not used in either regional or academic theatre. Figure 2 is a complete stage breakdown with common terminology. A ground plan is a diagram showing a view of the stage from above. In the blocking script a stage manager makes blocking notations on a ground plan, usually using a new copy of the image for each page of text in the script. Notice on the diagram the numbers that start on the left with 6 and gradually decrease to zero and then increase back to 6 on the right hand side of the diagram. On the Broadway production of Wicked the even numbers, starting with 16, are marked on both the stage floor and the floor of the rehearsal room. When giving
blocking notes to the actors the stage manager uses the numbers as reference points. When referenced in relation to other elements on the stage floor, such as the automated scenery tracks used in Wicked, this reference system provides a greater level of accuracy for the actor. Having these numbers and the automation tracks marked on the floor in the rehearsal studio not only allows the stage manager to quickly indicate where an actor should be, for example ‘cross to right 1 on track 1,’ but it also provides for a more efficient transition for the actor from the rehearsal studio to the stage. A similar set of numbers can also be found on touring floor for the 1st National Tour of Wicked making the transition from one theatre to the next that much smoother for the actors. We will return to this concept of referencing the numbers and the automation tracks in chapter 4 where we will also examine how referencing numbers also makes for more efficient blocking notation in the blocking script.
The final replacement rehearsal prior to the actor’s first performance is referred to as a put-in rehearsal because it is the rehearsal where they put-in the new actor. For Fitzgerald, this was the only rehearsal where the actor had the opportunity to work with the full company on-stage with all of the theatrical elements in place, including costumes, scenery, props, automation, lighting, and sound. The only scenes run during the rehearsal are those impacting the new actor, so the stage manager would identify a place to start in the scene prior to the replacement actor’s entrance, notify the technicians of which cues to be ready for and provide the actors with the appropriate lines in the music or dialogue. Once the replacement actor had run the scene and exited the stage the stage manager stops the rehearsal, determines whether the scene needs to be run again and, if it does not need to be run again, identifies the next starting point. During the put-in rehearsal and the first few performances an individual, sometimes a dresser and sometimes an intern, is assigned to assist the replacement actor with their travel patterns off-stage so as to make sure they are not only ready for their next entrance in the correct costume with the right props, but so that they also are not interfering with the running of the rest of the show.

This is particularly important when there is automated scenery moving automatically to predetermined locations along paths that must be kept clear.

Prior to the put-in rehearsal, the stage manager creates a “Put-In Rehearsal Breakdown” (fig. 3) which is distributed to all of the area heads in an effort to expedite the set-up between scenes needing rehearsed. The stage manager gathers the information for this spreadsheet from the production’s prompt book. As discussed in chapter 1, the stage manager is also responsible for assembling and maintaining “the Prompt Book which is defined as the accurate playing text and stage business, together with such cue
Sheets, plots, daily records, etc., as are necessary for the actual technical and artistic operation of the production” (AEA-2).

The prompt book for *Wicked* was developed by the first production stage manager, Steve Beckler. As changes are made to the production it is the responsibility of the production stage manager to make sure that the prompt book maintains the most up-to-date record of playing text, stage business and cue sheets. Since the production opened in 2003 both minor and major changes have been made: including complete re-writes of scenes, including the opening number; changes in blocking; and changes in cue placement. The Production Supervisor, Thom Widmann, is responsible for maintaining an archive of these changes and monitoring the ongoing maintenance of the production’s prompt book.

As defined by AEA, the prompt book also includes “daily records.” The production stage manager for *Wicked* produces a daily performance report (appendix C) which includes the day and date of the performance; the run time for each act and the duration of intermission; the name and role of each of the three stage managers running

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**Figure 3.** Scene Work & Put-In Rehearsal Breakdown for Kathy Fitzgerald.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Starting</th>
<th>Thru</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Props</th>
<th>Wardrobe / Hair</th>
<th>Lx / Sound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RUN SHH THRU TOP OF WIZ AND I</td>
<td>&quot;Well, what are you looking at...”</td>
<td>Morrise exit</td>
<td>SITTING IN: AD 70 complete</td>
<td>Magic wheelchair (charged)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STOP AND RESET CLASSROOM</td>
<td>JUMP TO: AD 204 complete</td>
<td>RAIL: RAIL 8</td>
<td>STANDBY TO: RUN AD 75-92</td>
<td>Suitcases, books, clipboard, pile of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>papers, Luggage Cart</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NO prologue bed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the show; the name of the conductor; the name of the technician mixing the audio; the climate (temperature and humidity) backstage and front of house at the beginning of each act; performance notes; a list of actors not performing (listed as “out”), the name of the actor performing in their place, and the reason the actor was not performing; a list of actors who did not arrive at the theatre on-time; a list of actors performing for the first or last time or who have given notice that they will not be renewing their contract; a list of accidents, injuries and illnesses; a list of technical issues; miscellaneous notes; and a list of rehearsal calls held during the day. As we will examine shortly, the information contained in the report is used by a variety of sources: to produce payroll, respond to Worker’s Compensation claims and initiate the search for replacement actors. The information in the report also serves as a historic record of the performance and is used to generate a weekly report to AEA that is mainly focused on injuries and actors’ rights. The reports are distributed to the directing staff, designers, department heads and company management. Performance notes were written by the production stage manager and were generally upbeat and positive. Actor issues with the performance were usually handled before the report was distributed so that no negative information would go out to the production team. The production supervisor maintains a collection of the performance reports for all of the Wicked, LLC productions and tracks issues to identify any recurring problems that may need to be addressed.

The production stage manager also generates a weekly rehearsal schedule to accommodate the required replacement, put-in and understudy rehearsals. As defined by AEA, the stage manager “[s]hall work with the Director and the heads of all other departments, during rehearsal and after opening, schedule rehearsal and outside calls in
accordance with Equity regulations” (AEA-3). While developing the weekly rehearsal schedule, the production stage manager for Wicked checks with key individuals, such as the dance captains and the conductor, to identify specific rehearsal needs for the coming week. Once this information is gathered, the production stage manager coordinates the needs of the other departments with the AEA mandated rehearsals, such as the understudy rehearsal that is required once every six weeks for every role an understudy plays, to develop a schedule that satisfies all of the needs while working within the limitations of the AEA regulations.

One such limitation is the number of rehearsal hours an actor can work in a given week and these hours are even more limited on days with multiple performances. Whenever possible, the production stage manager will consolidate rehearsals to best utilize the productions resources. Consolidating rehearsals means that the IATSE union stage crew members do not need to be called as often which saves the production money, especially since a union crew member gets paid for a minimum of four hours whenever they are called in for a rehearsal.

The manner in which the stage manager schedules rehearsals is further defined by the next responsibility which states the stage manager must “[a]ssume active responsibility for the form and discipline of rehearsal and performance, and be the executive instrument on the technical running of each performance” (AEA-4). This underscores the necessity of the stage manager to schedule an efficient rehearsal that is not only well organized, but also a rehearsal that is run smoothly and effectively. Maintaining a pattern of effective rehearsals develops stability in the cast and crew, making the responsibility of being the “executive instrument on the technical running of
each performance” a little easier. While the production stage manager is ultimately responsible for the day-to-day operations and adherence to the AEA contract it is important to understand that all of these functions are divided up amongst the stage management staff.

If you will recall, Wicked has a production stage manager (MBA), a stage manager (JM), and two assistant stage managers (JD and CN). As a team these individuals respond to the needs of the production and work together to balance the weight of the responsibilities assigned to the stage manager. For example, the production stage manager identifies the need for a rehearsal, places it on the schedule and then delegates the preparation and running of that rehearsal to another member of the stage management staff. Looking back at the put-in rehearsal for the new Madame Morrible we can see that it is easy to identify the need for the rehearsal because there is a replacement actor beginning the show on a specific date that relates to the date that the outgoing Madame Morrible’s contract expired. Due to the performance schedule and AEA regulations regarding rehearsals on performance days there are only two days that a put-in rehearsal can be scheduled for – Thursday or Friday6. The production stage manager would then consult with the department heads to identify the best day for the rehearsal, which is in part dictated by the availability of the replacement actor’s costumes and any other work calls already scheduled by the departments. Work calls are used for general repair and maintenance, as well as emergency repairs of the automated equipment, flying elements, electrical elements, electronic keyboard tuning and programming, etc. Once the

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6 Based on a performance schedule of Tuesday at 7pm, Wednesday at 2pm and 8pm, Thursday at 8pm, Friday at 8pm, Saturday at 2pm and 8pm and Sunday at 3pm.
production stage manager identifies and confirms the date of the put-in rehearsal, the task of creating the “Put-In Rehearsal Breakdown” (fig. 3) is assigned to an assistant stage manager. Then the assistant stage manager distributes the breakdown and checks-in with each department in anticipation of the put-in rehearsal.

As mentioned in chapter 1, as the “executive instrument on the technical running of each performance” (AEA-4) the stage manager gives commands for the execution of all cues. Calling the show, as this is more commonly referred to, is another instance where the stage management team fulfills this responsibility. Each member of the stage management team is trained to call the show. At any given performance any member of the stage management team may call the show while the other members of the team fulfill other stage management responsibilities. On a typical night at the Gershwin Theatre one can find an assistant stage manager calling the show (JD), an assistant stage manager (CN) running the stage left deck, the stage manager (JM) running the stage right deck and the production stage manager (MBA) maintaining the show files that we will examine momentarily when we look at AEA-6. Working together, the stage management team serves as the executive instrument for the performance.

The calling stage manager, JD in the example above, is responsible for giving commands to operators who execute the cues. For example, to dim the house lights before the show begins the calling stage manager will say “House to half, go.” The technician that is responsible for dimming the house lights will turn them down to a glow. In chapter 4 we will examine where a cue comes from, but in short each theatrical element, such as lighting, scenery, and sound, has a designer who determined during the pre-production rehearsals and technical rehearsals what should happen and when it
should happen. That information is then communicated to the stage manager who compiles all of the cues from the various designers into a calling script. Each calling stage manager has their own copy of the calling script so that they can make notes that assist them in the calling of the cues. Regardless of which stage manager is calling the show, however, cues must be executed at the same time for every performance.

The calling stage manager has several tools with which to communicate with the technicians executing the cues. The primary tool, commonly referred to as a headset, is an intercom system. The headset has a microphone and one or two headphone style speakers with adjustable volume. Both productions of *Wicked* utilize an integrated wired and wireless system. This allows technicians moving around the deck to communicate with the calling stage manager and other technicians without the trip hazard of a wire following them around. The calling stage manager and technicians who do not leave their post use a wired headset to limit the risk of lost communications due to wireless interference and dead batteries. Different groups of technicians work on different channels so that they can communicate with other technicians in their group without disturbing the calling of the show. The calling stage manager can be heard on every channel and has the ability to listen on any of the channels. This can sometimes be confusing for those listening on headset as you may only hear half of the conversation if the calling stage manager is talking to someone on a channel other than the channel to which you are connected. The benefit of the intercom system is the two-way communication that is available between the calling stage manager and the technicians.
The second communication tool for the calling stage manager is a cue light system. At the calling desk, the location where the calling stage manager sits to observe and call the show, there are two panels of switches. The primary panel has 12 (fig. 4) color coded switches, three switches (red, blue and yellow) to communicate with the flying automation (automated scenery that moves up and down, referred to as autofly), three switches (red, blue and yellow) to communicate with the deck automation (automated scenery that moves side to side, referred to as autodeck), and three switches (red, blue and yellow) to communicate with the fly rail (scenery that is manually moved, or flown, up and down, referred to as rail). The last three switches serve as a master for each color – a red master, a blue master and a yellow master. Lights can be switched on and off independently or as a group. The technicians in these three areas have a panel of six light bulbs, two per color in case one burns out during the show, in the same order – red, blue and yellow. The second panel of switches is used to communicate with the conductor, the sound mixing technician, and both actors and technicians on the stage floor, more commonly referred to as the deck. To warn the technician that a cue is coming up the calling stage manager will turn on the appropriate cue light. The technician will then refer to a cue sheet to confirm that the appropriate cue is loaded into the automation or sound system, or to identify what should be flown and the direction it
should be flown in the case of the fly rail when the appropriate color light is turned off.

To let the technician know that the cue should be executed the calling stage manager will turn off the cue light. If several cues need to happen simultaneously the calling stage manager can use the master switch to turn off a group of switches that are the same color (figure 5). The advantage to this communication tool is that it enables the stage manager to simultaneously cue several technicians with a limited amount of dialogue. Looking at

![Diagram of primary panel of cue light switches indicating master control.](image)

our example before with the house lights, the amount of time it would take a stage manager to say “house to half, auto fly cue 70, auto deck cue 92, rail cue 13 and sound cue 27 – go” is much longer than the amount of time it would take the stage manager to flip the red master switch which would translate into the “go” for the technicians. One disadvantage of a cue light system is that it lacks clarity. An operator receiving information over a headset will be given a specific cue number to execute. That information cannot be relayed through a cue light system. Cue light systems also only offer a one-way mode of communication – the stage manager to the technicians. Cue
lights provide no method of communication for the operator to respond to the stage manager to say “I have a problem.”

The calling stage manager on *Wicked* uses both methods of communication to provide an efficient relay of information to the technicians. In advance of a cue, or series of cues, the calling stage manager will warn the technicians over the headset system of the upcoming sequence. Figure 6 is an excerpt from the *Wicked* calling script that shows a warning for autodeck cues 150 on the red cue light and 160 on the blue cue light. When the character Elphaba sings the first word, “unlimited,” the calling stage manager says over the headset “warn autodeck 150 red and 160 blue” while turning on the red and blue lights for the autodeck. When Elphaba sings the word “Oz,” the calling stage manager says “lights 49” then listens for a musical chord. In the text based calling script, this musical chord is indicated as “bum.” On that musical chord the calling stage manager

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UNLIMITED
MY FUTURE IS UNLIMITED
AND I’VE JUST HAD A VISION
ALMOST LIKE A PROPHECY
I KNOW -- IT SOUNDS TRULY CRAZY
AND TRUE, THE VISION’S HAZY
BUT I SWEAR, SOMEDAY THERE’LL BE
A CELEBRATION THROUGHOUT OZ
THAT’S ALL TO DO (BUM) WITH
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Figure 6. *Wicked* Calling Script and diagram of associated cue lights (Schwartz I-2-17).
says “go” and flips the red master switch, indicating to the deck automation technician that cue 150 should be executed. Immediately after switching the red master switch, the calling stage manager says “lights 50” then five beats after Elphaba sings the word “me” the calling stage manager says “go” and flips the blue master switch indicating to the deck automation technician that cue 160 should be executed.

Figure 7 provides an example where the master switch will indicate to the flying automation technician that cue 290 should be executed while simultaneously indicating to the deck automation technician that cue 520 should be executed and to the rail technicians that cue 28 should be executed. At the same time those three cues are being executed the stage manager has also given the command for the lighting console operator to execute light cue 180. The warning for these cues appears approximately one page of text prior to the execution, allowing the calling stage manager ample time to provide the verbal warning over headset and pay attention to the show to call a light cue on the line immediately prior to the example. Without a cue light system, the stage manager would
have had to give the verbal warning for these cues followed by “lights 179, go; lights 180, autofly, autodeck and rail, go.” That translates into eight syllables for the stage manager while on-stage there are only three syllables of spoken dialogue after the execution of light cue 179. The cue light system provides for more cues to be called in a shorter amount of time. While the majority of the technicians executing cues are on the headset system there remain a few technicians on the deck and on the rail who are not. These individuals rely solely on the cue light system and their cue sheets to execute their cues. For these individuals there is also a crew chief that is on headset and always in close vicinity monitoring their actions and preparations.

The deck stage managers serve as the eyes and ears backstage for the calling stage manager. The agreement with the International Alliance of Stage and Theatrical Employees (IATSE) limits the activities that can be performed by the stage manager on the deck as does the AEA definition of a stage manager, which states specifically that “Stage Manager duties do not include shifting scenery, running lights or operating the Box Office, etc.” (AEA-8). One of the duties of the deck stage manager is to verify that the stagehands are where they need to be and preparing the correct props, scenery and costumes for the upcoming scene. The deck stage manager is also responsible for providing verbal communication to the calling stage manager regarding the safety of the actors and crew prior to the execution of a cue.

For example, when Galinda first appears in *Wicked* she travels to the stage on a large bubble that is controlled by the automated fly technician. During the scene, Galinda returns to the bubble to be lifted back to Munchkinland. Prior to the bubble leaving the deck with Galinda in it an actor walks up behind the bubble and clips a safety harness to
secure Galinda to the bubble. Upon successfully securing Galinda to the bubble, the actor signals the deck stage manager to indicate that Galinda is secured. The deck stage manager relays this information to the calling stage manager by saying the word “clear” over the headset system. The calling stage manager then knows that it is safe to execute the autofly cue that lifts the bubble off the deck.

As mentioned before, *Wicked* utilizes two deck stage managers, one to manage stage right and one to manage stage left. Each deck stage manager has specific responsibilities, such as clearing Galinda from the bubble, lighting the path for actors running off-stage in a black out, and cueing actors for their entrance from under the stage. To maintain a consistent running of the deck, the deck stage managers utilize running sheets, printed on index cards, which identify their responsibility for each scene and transition (figure 8). Use of the running sheets make for efficient use of headset communication with the calling stage manager and creates a regular pattern for the deck stage managers to follow ensuring that nothing gets missed or is assumed to be handled by someone else. This regular pattern also provides comfort to the actors and technicians as they know where to find the deck stage managers at any point during the performance.

Figure 8. Stage Right Deck Stage Manager run sheet, Act I, scene 1.
and they are able to trust the deck stage manager will be there when needed. This especially important when something goes wrong.

Looking back at the example used earlier, where the standby replaced Galinda in the middle of the first act due to illness, the actor playing Galinda knew where to find the stage manager and was able to quickly communicate the problem. The deck stage manager then took charge in solving the problem by notifying the production stage manager, the standby, wardrobe, and sound. The production stage manager then took over as the point person for transitioning out the sick Galinda for the standby. Wardrobe quickly switched out the costumes scattered about the backstage area for Galinda’s various quick changes and put the standby in the appropriate costume and make-up. Sound made sure that the standby had a correctly configured wireless microphone and updated the programming in the mixer to reflect the appropriate microphone assignment and EQ settings for the standby. This team effort by the stage managers allowed the calling stage manager to focus on the calling of the cues and not on solving problems.

Maintaining consistency within the stage management team comes not just from a stage manager’s overwhelming desire to be organized, but as we learned in chapter 1, after a production opens the stage manager is responsible for maintaining the artistic intentions of the director and producer (AEA-5). The ability for the stage management team to rotate positions is just one of the many tools used to maintain the artistic intentions. One benefit to rotating positions on a regular basis is that each member of the stage management team has the opportunity to observe the production from different points of view. In addition to the calling stage manager being responsible for the execution of over 300 light cues and hundreds of automation, rail and sound cues, leaving
little time for the calling stage manager to observe and note consistency, the calling desk for *Wicked* has a limited view of the stage. The calling desk is the location where the calling stage manager sits or stands to call the show. This station should have all of the equipment needed to communicate with the various operators and theatre personnel, such as an intercom system, a cue light system and a public address system. There may also be one or more video monitors for the stage manager to observe while calling the show to verify actor safety or to see parts of the stage that are not visible from the calling desk.

During the run of the show, the deck stage managers are a lot closer to the action and have a more direct line of sight to what is happening on-stage, whether it is special effects, moving scenery, or the stage business of the actors.

The production stage manager will also observe the show from the house to get the audience perspective. Together the stage management team can compile notes for actors and technicians to ensure that the show that tomorrow’s audience experiences is the same show that the director and the design team created in 2003. The production stage manager will take the compilation of notes and address each issue on a case-by-case basis. To resolve technical issues the production stage manager will consult with the technician responsible for that technical element. If the technician is unable to resolve the problem, or if the problem is the technician, the production stage manager will consult the department head and then, if necessary, the designer, all the while documenting the communication, whether it be verbal or in writing. Documentation is important in resolving disputes and other issues that will be identified momentarily. To resolve issues with actors, which could include messing up a dance number, not hitting the correct notes
in the music, skipping lines of text, or attitude issues with other cast members or the crew, the production stage manager will talk directly with the actor.

If there are a number of actor issues, or if the production stage manager feels that the company will benefit from a rehearsal then the stage manager is expected to call a rehearsal (AEA-1, AEA-3, AEA-4). This rehearsal could be for the whole company or just a group of actors. If the production stage manager has identified a dance issue then the dance captains will be consulted and a dance rehearsal may be called. For example, during my first week with Wicked the dance captains and assistant choreographer met with the ensemble to review some recent changes that had been made to a dance number that seemed to be causing confusion amongst the cast. At the rehearsal they talked through the dance number and then worked on the dance until everyone felt comfortable with the changes.

Another benefit to rotating the stage management team through each position is that no particular stage manager becomes overly relaxed or bored in a position. By doing something different every performance, the stage managers are not only constantly seeing the show from a different point of view, they are also that much more involved in the action on-stage. For an individual to only be the calling stage manager show after show it would be easy for them to become disconnected from the cast as they sit at the calling desk which is located away from the deck. Rotating through the deck positions provides each stage manager with the opportunity to get to know the cast and crew, which also strengthens the production by encouraging a connected and caring community of actors and crew members working together behind the scenes.
Another step to maintaining the production is to ensure that everything is well documented and that everyone is treated the same and in accordance to the agreements with each union involved in the production. The stage manager is required to “[k]eep such records as are necessary to advise the Producer on matters of attendance, time, health benefits or other matters relating to the rights of Equity members” (AEA-6). Again there are several tools for the stage manager to compile this information. The most important tool is the performance report. Completing the daily performance reports accurately allows the stage manager to quickly compile the information that is needed by company management and AEA regarding attendance, time and health benefits. If you will recall, the performance report (appendix C) includes information regarding attendance, accidents/injuries/illness and time. Figure 9 shows how attendance and health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Out(Role(s))</th>
<th>In</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T. Parker</td>
<td>B. Munn</td>
<td>Sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st &amp; Final perfs / Notices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents / Injuries / Illness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Excerpt from Wicked performance report. (June 15, 2010).

benefit needs are tracked. The out column indicates actors and stage managers not present for the performance with one of four simple reasons: sick, vacation, personal day, or no show/no call. As with most businesses in which employees receive benefits, actors and stage managers accrue vacation time and sick time based on the number of weeks worked. For every 26 weeks worked, the actor or stage manager accrues one week of vacation. A similar plan exists for accruing sick leave. Actors and stage managers who
are injured during a performance are entitled to claim workers compensation until they are able to return to work. Claims for workers compensation are approved once the actor or stage manager files an accident report with the company manager, which will then be verified against the performance report’s list of accidents/injuries/illness. Actors and stage managers also receive three personal days per year which are unpaid but can be taken without risk of losing their job or retaliation. No show/no call, which was never used during my time with *Wicked* indicates that the actor or stage manager made no effort to communicate with the stage management team and did not appear for the performance.

The stage manager must also indicate rehearsal calls so that AEA can monitor the production’s use of the actor’s and stage manager’s time, ensuring that the production is compliant with the AEA agreement. The same information is also used by the company manager to approve the timesheets for the stagehands. At the conclusion of each week, the stage manager consolidates the information from each performance report to generate a weekly report for the company manager and for AEA. The company manager uses this report to generate payroll while AEA monitors for contract compliance and watches for recurring injuries.

Another role of the stage manager is to “[m]aintain discipline as provided in the Equity Constitution, By-Laws and Rules where required” (AEA-7). Therefore, it is also important for the stage manager to track the number of times an individual is late as they receive written warnings for each occurrence. After writing up an actor or stage manager three times, for being late or for other infractions against the AEA agreement, the producer can terminate the actor or stage manager’s contract without penalty. Other infractions include missing an entrance (where the actor is late or does not enter the stage
as scripted), failure to maintain the appropriate hair style, failure to shave facial hair, continued failure to properly execute a dance number or particular move, deviating from the script, etc. The production stage manager for Wicked works with the company manager to resolve any disputes and discipline issues.

The company also has an elected deputy to whom the actors can go to if they have an issue that they feel needs to be addressed. During my five weeks with Wicked the deputy only reported one minor grievance to the production stage manager. The production stage manager quickly identified the problem and the solution and met with both parties, an actor and a substitute crew member, to resolve the issue before the next performance.

The balance of the AEA’s Definition of the Duties of a Stage Manager refers to things that stage managers are prohibited from doing, including handling contracts (AEA-10), ordering of food for the company (AEA-11) and signing the closing notice or individual notice of termination (AEA-12). The stage management team at Wicked is very careful to observe the rules defined by AEA and works closely with the company manager to achieve the daily business of the production. Two converted dressing rooms serve as the office space for the stage management team, company management and the production supervisor. The stage manager and two assistant stage managers share one office while the production stage manager, company manager and production supervisor share the second office, promoting communication between stage management and company management. While the company manager also has an off-site office, where the general manager and general support staff, including accountants and IT support, are
located, the company manager arrives before each performance call and makes regular rounds to check-in with stage management, actors, front of house staff and the box office.

The stage management offices and the rehearsal studio also include a microphone that is used for one-way communications throughout the building, such as announcements and actor calls prior to the start of the show, as well as equipment to communicate over the two-way intercom system. Several video monitors are located throughout the space as well so that the stage management staff always has a view of the stage. This allows the stage managers to check the status of pre-show set-up and to multi-task while working in the office. For example, the production stage manager can be working on paper work and stop for a minute to watch a particular dancer who may have been having trouble at the previous performance.

Based on my eight-week experience with Wicked, I have identified the following key principles and essential methodology of an effective stage manager. First and foremost, yet probably the most challenging, it is important for the stage manager to have a group of individuals upon whom they can rely. Ideally this would be a stage management team that can support each other in the expansive role that is the definition of stage manager, but even having a trustworthy and efficient company manager or support staff can make the job of the stage manager less stressful and more enjoyable. This is followed closely by having clear methods of regular, detailed yet effective communication. Identify key methods of distributing information, such as rehearsal and performance reports, identify who should be in the know, and make regular contact with those individuals. Make the best use of everyone’s time by including enough detail that the reader does not need to open up additional methods of communication with you to
solve the simple problems, but refrain from writing so much information that nobody will have the time to read your daily reports. Also keep in mind that as the stage manager your responsibility is **not to tell someone how to fix something that is broken, rather you want to identify what is broken**, how it broke, whether or not it was being used properly when it broke and follow through to make sure that it gets fixed. In your own work, identify what is working efficiently and what could be improved, but think through a process before trying to fix something that is not broken; the most common answer to my question of “why is it done this way” was “because that’s how it’s been done since the show opened.” They have a point, if something has worked since 2003 then think through the benefits of making changes and weigh those benefits against the problems that could arise from making changes to a production that has been running for seven years. Also **find time to explore technology and ideas that could make your life better**. For example, cue lights sound old school, but they are more efficient than trying to get twenty syllables out of your mouth in the blink of an eye. Last, but not least, **take the time to get to know the people with whom you are working**. Not only will it make your job more enjoyable, there could come a time when you can help each other out once the show closes.
Chapter 3: “Show Me the Key”: *The Secret Garden*

This chapter examines the stage management practices on a 2007 bilingual production of the 1991 Tony Award winning musical *The Secret Garden*, book and lyrics by Marsha Norman and Lucy Simon, as gathered through direct participation in my role as stage manager. The musical is based on the 1911 novel *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Set in the early 20th century, the story follows the life of a young English girl, Mary Lennox, who is sent to live with her relatives, whom she has never met, in Yorkshire, England after her own family dies in a cholera outbreak when she is 11 years old. While struggling to fit into this new life she befriends a young gardener and together they bring life to a neglected garden and the entire household.

In 2006, CAPA (a Columbus based presenter of performing arts and entertainment), who served as a co-producer for both the Broadway and national touring production of Deaf West Theatre’s 2004 Tony Award Nominated *Big River*, a production in which “spoken English and American Sign Language [were] interwoven with music, dance and storytelling techniques from both hearing and deaf cultures into a “third language” creating a unique theatrical event” (Deaf West Theatre), announced plans for the musical production of *The Secret Garden* in spoken English and American Sign Language (ASL). While Deaf West Theatre provided limited consultation, they ultimately chose not to become a partner in this enormous undertaking. CAPA chose Artistic Director of the Phoenix Theatre for Children Steven C. Anderson to serve as the
director, who in turn teamed up with Jody Daulton and the Ohio School for the Deaf to provide ASL translation of the script as well as rehearsal interpretation and consultation. Other partners included Opera Columbus, ProMusica and The Ohio State University Department of Theatre which provided substantial support, albeit unofficially. The production staff consisted of one stage manager; an assistant director/child wrangler/guest artist chauffeur; and a music director/rehearsal accompanist.

The cast for this production included 17 actors. Seven of the actors were deaf, including the male lead (playing Archibald Craven), the three children (playing Mary Lennox, Colin and Dickon) and three supporting characters (playing Martha, Ben and Shaw). Performers from Opera Columbus and Phoenix Theatre for Children played the remaining characters and provided voices for the deaf actors. Leading actors were notified shortly after casting that they would have a fair amount of sign language to learn, but it was not until the first day of rehearsal that the entire hearing cast was aware that they would be signing everything that their characters said.

Pre-production rehearsals for *The Secret Garden* lasted four weeks in a rehearsal space beneath the Ohio Theatre. As you will recall AEA’s *Definition of Duties of a Stage Manager* (table 1) assigns several rehearsal responsibilities to the stage manager including the calling of rehearsals (AEA-1), scheduling rehearsals in accordance with company rules (AEA-3), and being responsible for the form and discipline of rehearsals (AEA-4). A generic rehearsal schedule, listing the dates and times of rehearsals, was developed by the director and distributed with the contracts for the actors. As stage manager, I was responsible for working with the director to determine which actors and what scenes would be rehearsed on a weekly basis to fit within the previously distributed
schedule. Stage managers are also responsible for setting up and cleaning up the rehearsal space, something that is not specifically stated in AEA’s list of duties. This need for setup can include putting out tables for the stage managers and directors, putting out chairs for the actors, moving pianos, finding objects to stand-in as set pieces, putting out rehearsal props and rehearsal costumes, and yes – even making coffee. After rehearsal is over, the stage manager then puts all of these items away and picks up the trash often left by company members. Sometimes as a stage manager you are lucky and the rehearsal space is not used for other purposes, so while you still must secure the rehearsal pieces to prevent theft, there is sometimes less that needs to be done between rehearsals. The rehearsal space for *The Secret Garden* served a variety of other purposes and every weekend the room had to be completely stripped of everything related to *The Secret Garden*.

Another responsibility of the stage manager is to tape the ground plan of the set on the rehearsal room floor. This is usually a two person job, handled by the stage manager and an assistant stage manager or an intern, which consists of taking a scaled drawing of the set and outlining, with multiple colors of cloth tape, each element of the set. Different levels, such as a raised platform, are indicated in different colors so that the actors and director know that there is a change in elevation. Generally speaking actors should be trained to identify the gaps, doorways and stairs so as not to walk through the invisible walls that have been indicated by the tape. In academic theatre, as we will discover in chapter 4, a production often rehearses in one rehearsal room until it is time to move into the theatre. On the Broadway production of *Wicked* there is a dedicated rehearsal studio in the building that has a taped out ground plan and the dance numbers as
discussed in chapter 2. As I mentioned before, the rehearsal space for *The Secret Garden* was used for a variety of other purposes, so every Friday the tape had to be pulled up and every Monday the floor had to be taped out again. On a few occasions, a different rehearsal room would be used during the week, which required another round of taping out the ground plan. With the help of some student stage managers from Ohio State, I created a taping template out of large sheets of Kraft paper that I would roll out and outline with tape. After marking the intersections I would fold up the template and literally connect the dots, usually with the help of the assistant director.

Rehearsals lasted from four o’clock in the afternoon until ten o’clock in the evening Monday through Friday with individual actor call times varying as we covered blocking and music. The ASL consultants provided DVDs of the show’s sign language synced to a voiceover for the actors to memorize outside of the scheduled rehearsal time. After the first week of rehearsals, it was evident that the hearing actors were going to need more than just a DVD to teach them the show’s sign language, and limited one-on-one sign language training sessions were squeezed into the already tight rehearsal schedule. Conversational communication was never taught; however the interpreters would often help the hearing actors learn common words and phrases. Stress levels were very high for almost everyone involved in the production, overwhelmingly so for the hearing actors who were playing leading roles. The amount of sign language that they were required to learn brought several of them to tears in the rehearsal room.

One of the largest problems for the deaf actors was the speed of their dialogue. ASL typically only emphasizes the key words of the dialogue and therefore does not use as many words as the English language. For example, Archibald’s spoken line reads, “Do
you care about gardens so much, then?,” while the signed line reads “Care flowers really?” (Norman 22). Additionally, a single sign or gesture in ASL could be the equivalent of a complete sentence in spoken English, leaving deaf actors lines ahead of the hearing actors. A lot of work went into slowing down the signing of the deaf actors and training them to watch their “voices” so that they could stay together.

As a stage manager it was also challenging to maintain the prompt book, which includes “accurate playing text and stage business” (AEA-2). As with spoken English, there are many different dialects and regional differences in ASL. In order to have consistent signing from one actor to the next, the ASL consultants prepared a gloss, or transcription of the script. Unfortunately, we learned in the middle of the first week of rehearsals that the hearing actors were using one version of the original script while the deaf actors were using a gloss transcribed from a different version of the script. Often there would be a lot of confusion as to who was where in the script since the production team was not fluent in ASL, and the consultants were coaching in a different room. We also discovered that the original gloss prepared by the consultants was printed specific to each character. In other words, the deaf actors did not know who or what line happened before their own and would start signing after the last person stopped, not knowing that a third character had the next line of dialogue. After a very long weekend spent combining all of the scripts, we were able to quite literally put everyone on the same page.

Challenges such as this occurred for many reasons, including a shortage of staff and poor preliminary communication. As the stage manager, I take responsibility for not asking more questions or getting involved before my contract went into effect. However,
this was also part of the learning curve for everyone involved in, what was to us, a new
theatre practice.

Once the script was compiled, though, the rehearsal process began to go much
more smoothly. An example of the gloss, with the spoken line on the left and the signed
line on the right, reads:

MARY. It’s been locked up out there, just like you’ve been locked up in here, for ten years.
Your father doesn’t want anybody in it. Only I found the key. And the other night, after
Dr. Craven and Mrs. Medlock found us here together, I ran out into the storm, and found the
door. And now Dickon and I are working on it every day, and you can come too and…

BEEN LOCK-UP THERE LIKE YOU BEEN TRAP HERE SAME SINCE 10 YEARS. BECAUSE YOUR FATHER
DON’T WANT ANYBODY IN. BUT I FIND KEY. 3-DAY-AGO AFTER DOCTOR (Dr. Craven) AND
HOUSEKEEPER (Mrs. Medlock) FIND US-2 HERE I RUN-OUT STORM FIND DOOR. NOW
DICKON WE-2 WORK ON GARDEN EVERYDAY YOU CAN COME TOO ---

(Norman 69)

This example shows how words get rearranged, changed, or even cut from the signed version. As
with spoken English, ASL uses nicknames, or name signs, to identify people or
characters. Notice how when Mary speaks about Dr. Craven and Mrs. Medlock in the
above example the signed dialogue says doctor, which was the name sign for Dr. Craven,
and housekeeper, the name sign for Mrs. Medlock. The use of name signs prevented the cast members from having to finger spell, spelling the word out letter by letter, the character’s name every time it was “spoken.”

The use of student sign language interpreters during the rehearsal process created another challenge, particularly for the director. While the interpreters were knowledgeable in conversational interpretation, they had great difficulty interpreting stage directions, directorial concepts and inspirational ideas between the director and actors. The team of three interpreters each had their own shift, that is interpreter ‘A’ attended Monday, Wednesday and Friday rehearsals while interpreter ‘B’ attended Monday, Tuesday and Thursday rehearsals and interpreter ‘C’ attended Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday rehearsals. Truly serving as hired hands, pun intended, the interpreters had no knowledge of the script or even the theatrical process. When the director would tell the actor something, the interpreter would interpret what she heard and explain it to the actor the best she knew how, which rarely resulted in what the director had intended. Sometimes the lead consultant would be available and would provide a much better interpretation as well as necessary bluntness for the children, for instance, “how would you feel if we said you had to walk home tonight in the snow – now that is the fear we want to see.” At other times the director, who knew a fair amount of sign language, would communicate directly with the actor.

This direct, yet silent communication with the actor was a small hindrance for me as the stage manager as it prohibited me from knowing what the director was saying in those instances, and therefore delayed the recording of that information in the prompt book for future reference, but that situation is really no different than when a director
goes up to an actor and provides inspiration in a hushed or whispered voice. Working with the lead consultant and the lead deaf actor, I was able to improve my sign language skills, although due to a lack of continued use of signed stage terminology, my strength remains in finger spelling.

After the first two weeks of pre-production rehearsals The Secret Garden began to follow a more traditional day-to-day pre-production rehearsal pattern for musicals, which we will continue to examine in chapter 4. After the fourth week of pre-production rehearsals, the production moved to the Shubert Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut. The producers had not originally planned to send the consultants or any interpreters with the production to New Haven, intending to rely solely on a staff member at the Shubert Theatre who was coincidentally trained as an interpreter; however, the lead consultant convinced the director and producer that she should join us on the trip and met us in New Haven. The executive assistant to CAPA’s President and CEO made the flight arrangements for the cast and production team. The General Manager of CAPA’s Shubert Theatre office made the hotel accommodations and arranged for local transportation while in New Haven. Although this production was not under an AEA contract, it was nice that these accommodations, which would normally be handled by either a company manager or tour manager for an AEA tour (AEA-10), were not my responsibility as stage manager. The cast was split between two flights with the director and the majority of the hearing cast on the first flight and the remaining cast members and myself on the second flight. I distinctly recall feeling overly protective of the deaf cast members as they checked in, helping each one through the process and interpreting between them and the airline and security personnel. Many of the deaf cast members had never flown before
and one had not flown in over fifteen years, so I tried to be the calming ‘voice’ and face of reassurance that everything would be okay.

Much like the opening scene of Michael Frayn’s play Noises Off, where the cast does not know if they are holding a technical rehearsal or a dress rehearsal, the final rehearsals in New Haven were a nightmare. We were, however, prepared for some of the integration challenges. To compensate for sightline issues, where the actors off-stage could not see the actors on-stage and therefore could not see the dialogue, cue lights had been installed at all of the actor entrances. The deaf actors would stay in the vicinity of their next entrance route and the cue light would be turned on to warn the actor that their entrance was moments away and turned off when it was time for the actor to enter. The deaf actors were very fearful about missing an entrance and rarely left the stage. At the fervent request of the deaf actors, a closed circuit system was also installed so that the lead consultant could help the deaf actors keep their place and pace during many of the musical numbers.

In New Haven, the consultant was set up in the trap room under the stage with a monitor so that she could see and hear what was happening on stage, and video monitors were placed in the box seats on either side of the stage so that the deaf actors could see her. In Columbus, where the production had a wealth of local resources, flat screen monitors were mounted on the first balcony so that the actors were more appropriately angled towards the audience. During the initial process, the young boy playing Colin and his voice, Christopher Storer, created their own signaling system where each phrase of the song had a number assigned to it and when Storer moved on to the next number, Colin knew that he could move on to the next bit of signing.
One of the unforeseen challenges came from not having been able to put the cast on the set until arriving in New Haven. The multiple levels of the set created sightline issues on-stage which prevented the hearing actor from seeing the actor for whom he or she was voicing. Since the words were to align with the signing, minor blocking adjustments had to be made. The major challenge, however, was not having an interpreter available near the stage in order to communicate with the deaf cast members. We had been promised a member of the Shubert staff to serve as our interpreter for the two final days of rehearsal, however she ended up having other commitments and was not able to be in the theatre. The lead consultant, positioned in the trap room beneath the stage floor, was unable to hear much of the conversational dialogue happening in the theatre, and therefore I had to serve as the interpreter on-stage while juggling the other stage management responsibilities. This communication challenge probably served as the most stressful aspect of our time in New Haven. These two challenges, combined with a few other challenges, especially not having an assistant stage manager or a technical director, prohibited a full technical rehearsal from taking place before the production’s first performance. The combined effort of everyone involved, however, did lead to a successful run in New Haven and Columbus.

In addition to the responsibilities reviewed earlier in this chapter, and although The Secret Garden was not under an AEA contract, several other responsibilities from the Definition of the Duties of a Stage Manager applied to my role as the stage manager. In addition to the playing text and stage business the prompt book also includes cue sheets, plots and daily records “as necessary for the technical and artistic operation of the production” (AEA-2). I discovered, very late in the process, that cue sheets do not grow
on trees. In academic theatre the designer provides the stage manager with cue sheets, or more elegantly referred to as cue orchestrations, and props tracking is inevitably assigned to an assistant stage manager who is eager to make tracking sheets as well, also referred to as run sheets. Each member of the run crew, as mentioned in chapter 2 during the review of cue light systems, is given a run sheet (fig. 10) that lists their responsibilities. For the run crew on the deck this includes scenery that will need to be shifted and, depending on the breakdown of your crew, props that will need to be moved on and off stage or preset off-stage for an actor to pick-up. For the crew on the fly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cue #</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Set</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Trim</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>What’s Moving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT 1</td>
<td>Deck</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td>In</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td>House Curtain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESET</td>
<td>Rail</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scrim</td>
<td>DSC Frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>Rail</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td>Out</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>House Curtain</td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ 3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>DQ 4.5</td>
<td>Deck</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>On</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>DSL Frame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10. Deck and Rail Cues for *The Secret Garden*.

rail this includes what they are flying, the height to which it is being flown, and the speed with which it is flown. As was the case with *Wicked*, I was accustomed to the assistant stage managers preparing this information and working directly with the crew members to communicate all of the details. The majority of my professional work prior to *The Secret Garden* was as a calling stage manager – productions would hire me to run the
technical rehearsals and performances, so most of the pre-production work was already done. I would receive a copy of the script, a pile of cue sheets and I would consolidate the information into the prompt book as I watched the final pre-production rehearsal. The run sheets for the crew had been created by the rehearsal stage manager or the designers. As the stage manager for *The Secret Garden* I did not even think about these documents until the night before technical rehearsals started. I went into the production offices first thing the next morning and worked my way through the script to create the run sheets for the deck stagehands and the fly rail. Luckily the week before we left for New Haven the production team and I held a “paper tech,” which is a meeting where the designers and the stage manager go through the show from start to finish and talk through all of the technical elements, so all of the cues were already in the prompt book and I was able to finish printing the run sheets just before the first technical rehearsal.

In my role as stage manager I served as the “executive instrument on the technical running of each performance” (AEA-4) by calling each show and serving as the point person for the technical crews. During the performances I “maintain[ed] the artistic intentions of the Director and the Producer after opening” (AEA-5) by taking and giving notes after performances and holding rehearsals as needed to fix problematic transitions and on-stage moments. During the rehearsals and performances I filed daily reports with the producer and director, which included information regarding attendance and rehearsal times (AEA-6). Due to the limited number of support staff, however, I did distribute payroll on a regular basis which would have been a violation of my role as stage manager had this been a production with an AEA contract. The company rules, as established by the Phoenix Theatre for Children, were available for use to maintain discipline if needed,
however there were no disputes of merit (AEA-7). Both the Shubert Theatre and the Southern Theatre are under an IATSE contract limiting the shifting of scenery and running of lights to the stagehands in accordance with AEA’s *Definition of the Duties of a Stage Manager* (AEA-8). During *The Secret Garden* I was also fortunate to not have to perform the duties of a general manager or company manager as defined by AEA (AEA-10, AEA-11 and AEA-12).

At the conclusion of the previous chapter, I stated that it is “important for the stage manager to have a group of individuals that can be relied upon.” *The Secret Garden* had very limited resources, preventing a sizable group of individuals to rely upon. As the stage manager I should have identified the need early in the process for an assistant stage manager or an intern to assist with many of the logistical items that I was doing at the last possible minute. Some of the key elements which needed to be worked out in advance of a project such as this include creating script versions and transcriptions; researching Deaf culture in order to provide coaching to the traditional actors with regards sign language, proper etiquette and terminology; providing accessibility logistics and compliance; having essential trained personnel at the appropriate calls and locations; setting aside extra time for communication or artistic exploration for non-traditional actors; identifying local resources, such as a local school for the deaf or wheelchair repair service; and communicating known challenges with the local stage crew.

Based on this six-week experience with *The Secret Garden*, I have identified these additional key principles and essential methodology of an effective stage manager. First, **research the project that you have been offered.** Find out how long the project has been in development, who the keys players are, and what resources are available to
you as the stage manager. Second if the project has unique elements like *The Secret Garden* find out what local resources are available to help you and to help the cast, for example a local sign language interpretation service. Lastly, **create a checklist that you use on every project you undertake.** The more projects you work on the longer your list may grow and while not every item on your list will be applicable to every situation, having a list will at least keep you prepared for the known elements so that you have more time to focus on the unknown elements.
Chapter 4: “My Strongest Suit”: Aida

The final production which we will examine in order to develop the key principles and essential methodology of an effective stage manager is The Ohio State University Department of Theatre (OSU Theatre)’s 2010 production of the 2000 Tony Award winning musical production Aida, music by Elton John, lyrics by Tim Rice, and book by Linda Woolverton, Robert Falls, and David Henry Hwang; as gathered through direct participation in my role as stage manager. The musical originated from a children’s storybook by Leontyne Price based on Giuseppe Verdi’s 1871 Italian opera also titled Aida. Original Broadway Director Robert Falls explains that the musical “opens in the present day, and then, as if a dream, dissolves back to ancient times and ancient lands for the telling of the story proper” and goes on to say that “[t]he scenes dissolve freely one to the other, moving the story forward with the fluidity, and inevitability, of a dream - until we are "awakened" into the hard light of the present day at the curtain” (John 1).

Ohio State’s 2010 production of Aida enlisted Assistant Professor of Theatre Jimmy Bohr to serve as the director, G. Theo Jackson to serve as the musical director and Professor of Dance Susan Hadley to serve as the choreographer. The production team included lecturer Chris Zinkon, Technical Director; lecturer Brad Steinmetz, Scenic Designer; MFA student Divya Murthy, Assistant Scenic Designer; MFA student Shiree Houf, Costume Designer; undergraduate Haley Wilson, Assistant Costume Designer and Wardrobe Head; MFA student Jarod Wilson, Lighting Designer; undergraduate Terita
Parms, Sound Designer; undergraduate Gabe Solomon, Sound Engineer, MFA student
Phil Garrett, Assistant Director; undergraduate student Emily Mills, assistant Musical
Director; MA student Gianna Pandolfi-de-Rinaldis, Dramaturg; continuing education
student Eve Nordyke, Assistant Dramaturg; undergraduate Kurt Heimbrock, production
Electrician; Dayna Schleinstein, Assistant Production Electrician; undergraduate Evan
Derr, Programmer; and MFA student Marty Savolskis, Props Master. The stage
management team consisted of three undergraduate assistant stage managers, Angela
Cutrell, Sarah Hurwitz and Christine Skobrak, and myself, an MFA student stage
manager. Pre-production rehearsals and technical/dress rehearsals were held at the Drake
Performance and Event Center on the campus of Ohio State followed by two
technical/dress rehearsals and six performances in the CAPA managed Southern Theatre
in downtown Columbus, Ohio.

The cast list for Aida was posted on September 28, 2010 following the
Department of Theatre’s autumn quarter unified auditions, September 23-24, 2010, with
singing and acting callbacks on September 26 and dancing callbacks on September 27.
The department’s unified audition process begins with a planning process approximately
four weeks prior to the date of the auditions, with the autumn quarter auditions
traditionally being held on the first week of classes, winter quarter auditions held mid to
late October and spring quarter auditions being held at the end of January. The timing of
the winter and spring quarter auditions allows ample time for the costume studio to gather
measurements of the cast and to build costumes as needed. Autumn quarter auditions,
however, are held the first week of autumn quarter in order to capture the greatest pool of
eligible\textsuperscript{7} actors. Holding auditions during spring quarter of the previous year excludes first quarter freshman and transfer students who will not start until autumn quarter while holding auditions over the summer excludes students participating in internship programs or who do not live in the greater Columbus area. Unfortunately this creates a significant increase in workload for the costume studio staff, particularly when a production has a large cast, as was the case with \textit{Aida}. During the planning process the stage manager meets with the director of the production to identify the roles that need to be cast and a list of individuals who will be attending auditions. Three weeks prior to the auditions a staff member from the Theatre Office generates and circulates a draft copy of the audition notice to the directors who in turn provide feedback to the Theatre Office. Two weeks prior to auditions the Theatre Office posts the audition notices on the theatre’s callboard, on the department’s website and distributes the notice electronically.

The director’s concept for the production of \textit{Aida} required the ensemble to be made up of both strong dancers and strong singers. The department strategically elicited the assistance of Professor of Dance Susan Hadley as choreographer to assist in finding a strong ensemble of dancers. In order to accommodate the potential dancers, who are not located in the general vicinity of the Department of Theatre on campus, an online registration system was implemented for audition registration. This online scheduling system, powered by Acuity, is available free of charge, and has a variety of options which allowed the Theatre Office to recreate an online replica of the audition form completed by each actor so that the actor could complete their paperwork in advance of the audition.

\footnote{Casting is open to any member of the university community who is eligible to register for class credit. All cast members are required to register for the appropriate level of practicum credit.}
and have more time to focus on audition preparation when they arrive at the unified auditions. Prior to auditions the information from the online registration was downloaded and merged into the department’s audition form. When a student checked-in for their audition they were asked to review the merged information and to complete any additional questions that may have been added between their registration and the actual audition.

While the Actors’ Equity Association’s (AEA) *Definition of the Duties of a Stage Manager* does not list organizing and running auditions as one of the duties of a stage manager, the date of auditions often defines the start date for the stage manager. As Larry Fazio states in *Stage Manager: The Professional Experience*, “With most auditions, the time, date, and place is set well in advance and the SM is brought in a week before – sometimes in less time” (104). Fazio goes on to say that “Auditions are created and tailored to suite the producing company’s needs. They are also set up for the actor. It is the SM’s job to service both, each in their own way, meeting each of their needs” (104). The unified auditions for *Aida* were held similar to the AEA process for open auditions, “which means no appointment times are set, the field rep has the actors sign in, keeps them gathered in the reception area, and sees that they are taken in to the audition room in the order in which they signed in on the list” (Fazio 104). Members of the stage management staff fulfill the responsibilities of the field rep for Ohio State’s audition process. Following the unified audition, which consisted of each actor presenting a prepared monologue and singing 16 bars of music, the director, the musical director and the choreographer met to create a callback list. Callbacks are a second round of auditions where the actors are given selections from the script, called sides, to read from as specific
characters so that the director can make a better choice as to what actors should be paired together and how well particular actors take direction. For a musical, such as *Aida*, callbacks also include time with the musical director where the actors learn a short selection of music so that the directors can check vocal ranges and listen to various combinations of singers as well as time with the choreographer who will teach short sections of dance to get a feel for how well the actors move, take direction and retain choreography. Once the directors identified the actors to callback, the stage management team typed the callback lists, notified the actors and prepared the appropriate sides and selections of music. During callbacks the stage management team stays “alert and ready to facilitate, implement, work out logistically, and make successful whatever it is the audition staff sets out to do” (Fazio 104). Following callbacks, the director, musical director and choreographer identified their ideal casting choices and created a preliminary cast list. The director then took this preliminary cast list to a meeting with the producer and the directors for the other autumn quarter productions to negotiate a final cast list for each production. Once the final cast list is prepared a member of the Theatre Office staff prepares the cast lists for posting and registers students for the appropriate credit.

During the audition process for *Aida* the directing staff was unable to find an actress to fill the title role, Aida. The producer and I contacted several colleagues and identified a few potential candidates. As stage manager I contacted these individuals and scheduled individual auditions from which we were able to cast Keyona Willis in the role of Aida. In the 48 hours following the audition and after having offered her the role, Ms.

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8 Occasionally more than one director will want to cast the same actor.
Willis and I had several phone conversations to discuss the opportunity and to work out a few accommodations for her prior commitments, such as paid church choir services. On September 30, one day after the first rehearsal, Ms. Willis accepted the role. In commercial theatre the company manager would have handled these negotiations. In most academic settings the casting is handled by the director and a producer, but in this particular instance my role as a long time staff member and the role of an academic stage manager were somewhat blurred in an effort to get the title role cast so that rehearsals could begin. I also believe that, in the absence of a company manager, the actor felt more comfortable talking with me as both a calm and collected stage manager and a fellow student, than the overly eager, somewhat desperate, and a bit pushy faculty director.

Pre-production rehearsals began on September 29, 2010 in the Harbor Room of the Drake Performance and Event Center. In attendance were 30 members of the cast, the directing staff, the production staff and members of the design team. The first rehearsal began with a quick round of introductions followed by the distribution of production paperwork generated by the stage management team. This paperwork included a set of company rules, a generic rehearsal schedule, specific technical and dress rehearsal schedules, contact sheet, and an actor information form with several items for the actors to complete and return to stage management.

Ohio State has a standard template for the company rules designed to follow similar guidelines as set forth by AEA. The stage manager for a production simply inserts the appropriate show information, such as the title of the production, contact information for the theatre, how to contact members of the stage management team, and venue specific information regarding the location of restrooms, parking accommodations, etc.
The generic rehearsal schedule identifies the days rehearsals will be held and the time frame for those rehearsals. Actors are told that specific rehearsal schedules will be distributed weekly based on rehearsal progress. The technical and dress rehearsal schedule is pulled from the Department of Theatre’s master production calendar, which is generated and maintained by the Chair/Producer in consultation with the Resident Technical Director and other members of the production staff. The contact sheet contains contact information for the production staff and the actors as collected at production meetings and from audition information. The distributed contact sheet only contains email addresses and preferred phone numbers. An actor information form is used to collect the following data from each actor: legal name, name as it should appear in the program, daytime phone number, evening phone number, mobile number, email address, date of birth, weekly schedule, known conflicts, emergency contact information and health insurance information. This information is kept confidential and not stored in a publically accessible location, including websites or servers where access is not restricted by username and password. This is particularly important for academic theatre, given the greater awareness of data security and the impact that this awareness has had on public institutions. The concern for data security is becoming more and more widespread and anyone with access to an individual’s social security number and personal information should identify strong security standards. Health insurance information is optional and is collected to expedite medical treatment in the case of an emergency. Actors are asked to mark on the form whether they would like the document to be returned or if the stage manager should shred the document at the conclusion of the production. Once the actor
information has been collected the stage management team compiles the information in a variety of formats.

In order to take advantage of contemporary technology, I chose to use a secure online system called Virtual Callboard, a subscription based arts management system available from EmptySpace Technology at http://www.virtualcallboard.com/. This system maintains the actor information and the majority of the paperwork that will be discussed throughout the balance of this chapter to be stored online and updated by a variety of users. The Virtual Callboard was one of two commercially available web based electronic callboards. On previous productions I had maintained this information on a local database. Using a local database meant that the information was either stored on a computer or a portable jump drive, thus preventing other production personnel from having access to the information and requiring me to make all of the updates.

By using the Virtual Callboard I was able to access the information from anywhere in the world avoiding the limitations of using the department’s server, which restricts access to specific locations within the building and therefore no access is available from the off-site theatre. Virtual Callboard also allowed me as the stage manager to grant and restrict access to the entire company. Each company member received a unique login and password and had access to the information that I granted them, for example the actors could access various schedules, reports and basic contact information but could not access the emergency contacts or attendance information for anyone other than themselves. The data entered into Virtual Callboard could be exported and printed in a variety of formats in order to generate the necessary documents that will also be discussed throughout the balance of this chapter.
Following the distribution of paperwork and reading of the company rules (AEA-7) at the first rehearsal, the director and each member of the design team was given an opportunity to present the actors with their research, concepts and designs for the production. This time for presentation is important as it gives the actors a little insight into the months of work that have already been put into the project as well as information and inspiration on their own character development and the direction that the production is taking. After the design presentations and a short break the company read through the play from beginning to end so that everyone would have some knowledge of the storyline. The director also took this opportunity to identify specific actors to cover the various ensemble roles, such as Soldier #1 and Handmaiden #2. One of the ensemble members was asked to read the role of Aida, as that role was not cast until the following day.

The following day we started blocking rehearsals, music rehearsals and dance rehearsals. As the stage manager I was in constant communication with the director, musical director and choreographer to identify their rehearsal needs (AEA-1, AEA-3). Throughout the pre-production rehearsal process I scheduled simultaneous blocking, music and dance rehearsals in order to provide each director with the amount of time desired to teach and work their artistic element of the production. By scheduling these simultaneous rehearsals I was able to fit nearly seven weeks of pre-production rehearsals into the four and a half weeks of allotted rehearsal time, given that a rehearsal week consists of 25 hours of rehearsal time. In order to schedule these simultaneous rehearsals I developed a chart (appendix D) to organize which individuals were in what scenes and what type of activity they performed in those scenes – acting, singing, or dancing. This
chart allowed me to identify which individuals were required for which rehearsals and which rehearsals could be held simultaneously. To monitor the simultaneous rehearsals I assigned each member of the stage management staff to a specific activity. This provided each assistant stage manager with ownership in an element of the pre-production rehearsal process and helped to maintain consistency in each rehearsal room and with each director or choreographer. I would move between rehearsals based on what was being rehearsed at any given time, although the majority of my time was spent in the blocking rehearsals with the director (AEA-4). The bulk of the information that needed to be shared with the production team came from blocking rehearsals while the director was working with the actors.

During these blocking rehearsals the director would be giving directions to the actors and mention a prop that someone should carry on or that would be preset on a scenic element. It is important for the stage manager to know what props are needed and how they are used so that the information can be communicated to the props master and so that it can be added to the “prop tracking sheet (appendix E).” The stage manager must also pay attention to the specific directions given to an actor and record the information in the blocking script. It is also important to think through the direction being given and how the actor will need to interact with the set elements to achieve that direction. For example, while blocking the beginning of Act I, scene 5: The Baths, the director indicated to four actors that they would be seated on a set piece as it was moved on to the stage. While I knew from production meetings that the set piece had been designed to be rolled on and off-stage and that it could be used for the actors to sit on, I did not know if the designer or technical director had designed the piece to carry four people on it while it
was moving. In the rehearsal report for September 30, 2010 I made a note to the technical director that read “The wagons for I.5 (The Baths / Strongest Suit) will each carry 3-4 women as they are pushed in. Please confirm structural integrity and feasibility.” I followed up in person the next day with the technical director and he showed me how the wagons, or rolling scenery, functioned so that I could relay this information to the director and actors in rehearsal. At the dance rehearsal for the same scene the choreographer told the dancers to jump through a large ring, or circle unit, that was flown in during the scene. In the rehearsal report for October 5, 2010 I wrote “How high is it from the floor to the finished inside edge of the circle unit (LS #19)? To ask it another way - what kind of step/jump/dance leap would someone need to take/make if that someone were passing through the circle unit?” Again, I followed up in-person with the technical director the next day to determine how high the dancers would need to jump to clear the bottom edge of the hanging scenery.

While it can be more convenient to communicate in writing, particularly with the advanced search features available on most of today’s email systems, in-person communication helps to avoid confusion and often provides a hands-on answer to the question. More importantly, if the question in the rehearsal report was not clear, or if the response to the question creates another question, both individuals will find it much less time consuming to communicate in-person where the questions can be answered on the spot and not be delayed by waiting for someone to respond to their email. Regular in-person check-ins with each member of the production team, while not always possible because of physical location, also promotes better communication by letting the production team know that the stage manager is approachable and that the stage manager
is a team player. The stage manager should try to keep a regular check-in schedule that works well with each member of the production team so as not to become a nuisance by constantly interrupting them during their busiest time of the day or on their break. Mutual respect and open lines of communication will go a long way in making the pre-production process more enjoyable and can help to create a positive environment that will promote harmony throughout the entire production process.

In chapter 1 we learned that rehearsal reports provide a summary of everything that happens during a rehearsal for quick reference by virtually any member of the production team (AEA-2, AEA-6). One feature of the Virtual Callboard is that it has a built-in function that allows the stage manager to create a variety of rehearsal report templates that can be completed and posted online. Once posted, these rehearsal reports can be distributed by email to a predefined list of individuals, such as the production team, and made accessible online for future reference. The online rehearsal reports also allow a user to filter the notes so that they can just look at notes given to specific departments. This feature makes it easy for a stage manager to find notes that have been given several times or to see when they asked a question that has not yet been answered. Since some of the answers are received during the in-person check-ins, it is important for the stage manager to recap the discussion in the daily rehearsal report. For example, following the discussion with the technical director regarding the inside height of the circle unit I should have put a note in the rehearsal report thanking the technical director for helping me to identify the inside height as 18” off the deck. By including it in the rehearsal report anyone with access to the rehearsal reports or the Virtual Callboard would have that information at their fingertips and it allows the technical director to
correct a misunderstanding from the in-person meeting. The height of the circle unit should also go in the blocking script so that it is readily accessible when working on that scene in rehearsal.

The blocking script (AEA-2), as we learned in chapter 1, has a variety of purposes, but most importantly it is a record of the movement and positioning of actors on the stage as determined by the director to achieve dramatic effect and to continue the action of the play. In the rehearsal studio, as we discussed in chapter 3, many of the set pieces are not yet available, so a ground plan is taped to the floor. Not only does taping out the ground plan help the actors learn where they should go, but it also provides the stage manager with reference points for recording the blocking. It is much easier to note that a person is one foot downstage of the staircase than it is to note that a person is twenty-one feet downstage of the back wall and seventeen feet to the left of center. In chapter 2 we briefly touched on the numbers at the edge of the stage for Wicked. While this practice of marking every two feet of the front edge of the stage is not common practice in most academic and non-commercial theatres for the purpose of acting, it does improve blocking notation in the blocking script and communication of blocking information to designers during the pre-production rehearsals. This practice is similar to a tick strip or ruled line approach to dimensioning that is often used on a light plot or line sets dedicated to electrics.

Figure 11 is an excerpt from Act I, scene 2 of the blocking script for Wicked. Here we see that on the first word of Madame Morrible’s line “Oh – you must be…” Madame Morrible is to cross to Nessarose and then to stage right 1, an imaginary number located between the 0 and 2, and Elphaba crosses upstage. Notice the “R1” near the top right
hand corner of the page indicating that Madame Morrible will move to the stage right number 1, which is a much more efficient notation than to write “moves slightly to the right of center.”

![Diagram of stage layout]

Figure 11. Page I-2-10a from the Wicked Blocking Script.

Ohio State’s production of Aida had more than a dozen different stage layouts, each taped out in two rehearsal studios, one for dance and one for blocking, in a variety of tape colors. Each color of tape indicated a different scene. Figure 12 shows the ground plan for the museum, which is used in the Act I Prologue and Act II Epilogue. This

![Diagram of museum ground plan]

Figure 12. Museum ground plan for Aida, Act I Prologue and Act II Epilogue.

ground plan was taped out in both rehearsal rooms with grey tape. The dotted lines indicate three lights suspended from above. The lights were a more integral element in
the catacombs, Act I, scene 4, so they were taped out in a different color. Figure 13 shows the ground plan for Act I, scene 5 which was taped out with yellow tape. In looking at the two ground plans you can see how one piece of scenery in the museum, lower left corner of fig. 12, sits in the same place as one piece of scenery in the baths, lower left corner of fig. 13. By using different colors of tape for each scene the actors know what scenic elements will be in the scene and can ignore all of the other tape. Some scenic elements such as the legs, which are a vertical curtain that provides masking indicated by the thin horizontal lines going up both sides of the ground plan, were taped out in a more prominent color so that the actors would be aware of their presence and could easily be assigned a path for their entrances and exits. Each portal, the space between two legs, is assigned a number with the portal nearest the edge of the stage having the lowest number. Much like with the dance numbers on the stage for Wicked, this numbering scheme allows the director to quickly tell an actor to enter through stage left one and exit through stage right two which could then be notated in the blocking script as “enters SL1” and “exits SR2.”

Figure 13. Baths ground plan for Aida, Act I, scene 5.
The blocking script for *Wicked* is now electronically maintained as a Word document. This makes sense for a long running production with two national tours and several international productions. With a shorter production run and no plans to mount additional productions of *Aida* it did not make sense to make an electronic copy of the blocking script. Instead the blocking script is done in pencil so that changes can be made as needed in rehearsal. There is a small set of frequently used initials that are common throughout the theatre world, such as an ‘X’ to indicate a cross from one location on stage to another location, or ‘DS’ for down stage’ and ‘SL’ for stage left, to give us a simplified blocking notation, for example ‘A x DSL’ where ‘A’ is used to indicate the character Aida. However what if Aida were to kneel or sit on some object when she arrives down stage left? One could use a down arrow, for example ‘A x DSL ↓’, but that does not indicate the difference between kneeling and sitting. There are also a variety of methods for taking blocking notation, for example some stage managers trace the path of the actor on the ground plan while others only indicate their starting point and stopping point. Other stage managers may have a complex system of shorthand, for example Doris Schneider in her text *The Art and Craft of Stage Management* has an entire chapter dedicated to the “Schneider Notation System,” which provides a complex yet in-depth methodology for blocking like no other (fig. 14). Therefore it is important for the stage manager maintaining the blocking script to create a key so that anyone else looking at the blocking script can understand the meaning behind the symbols. In addition to the symbols used to notate sitting, kneeling, crossing and the initials used to indicate down stage, up stage, stage left and stage right, this key should also include the initials or symbols that will be used to indicate the characters on-stage. A good rule of thumb is to
use the character names and not the actor names, particularly in commercial theatre
where a long running show will replace the actors playing specific characters. Ensemble

Figure 14. Symbols from the Schneider Notation System (Schneider 140).

members can be given nicknames based on specialties or specific actions or
characteristics that are common to that character. As mentioned in chapter 1, the prompt
book, which includes the blocking script, never leaves the theatre. If something happens
to you as the stage manager someone else needs to be able to decipher your blocking
script, so make sure your blocking script always has an up to date key.

During pre-production rehearsals it was the responsibility of the stage
management team to start the rehearsals on-time, call for breaks as outlined in the
company rules, manage the transition from the rehearsal of one scene to another scene,
dance number or musical number, make sure that the rehearsal ended on time and to
maintain discipline during the rehearsals. Discipline (AEA-4, AEA-7) can sometimes be
a challenge for student stage managers, as the majority of the cast is made up of peers. In
my experience I have found that appropriate respect displayed in front of the cast

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between the faculty director and the student stage manager will quickly lead a cast to respect the role of the stage manager. The most common discipline issue for student actors is attendance. Fortunately at Ohio State the student actors register for practicum credit. This allows the student actors to be graded on attendance, attitude and ability. By maintaining accurate attendance records in the daily rehearsal and performance reports the stage manager provides valuable information to the faculty director at the conclusion of the production which can be used in calculating a student actor’s grade. Unfortunately docking a student’s grade for poor attendance does not make-up for lost rehearsal time due to the student’s tardiness or absence. At times the director will become frustrated with the stage manager because an actor is not at their call. While the director knows that this is not necessarily the fault of the stage manager, as long as the stage manager put the requested actor on the schedule for that rehearsal, the frustrated director has nowhere else to direct their frustration. The stage manager can quickly quiet the director by calling the actor to find out where they are and get an estimated time of arrival. The stage manager can also identify the actors who are present and choose something else to work on as they wait for the tardy actor or the stage manager can offer a member of the stage management team to read for the missing actor. This experience does not differ between academic, freelance and commercial atmospheres. What does differ in academic theatre, as evidenced in the cast of *Aida*, is that acting is not the only responsibility of the student actor. Aside from classes and homework, most of the actors in *Aida* participated in other extramural activities, such as the glee club, an improvisation comedy troupe, sports teams, etc. These other activities provided a lot of conflicts that also had to be worked into the schedule.
Aside from attendance there are other disciplinary problems that can be more difficult for the student stage manager to handle. These include disagreements between actors, failure to memorize lines, failure to wear a costume as it was designed, failure to remember blocking, etc. While each of these problems should be addressed on a case by case basis, it is usually helpful to start by approaching the actor in a private setting and asking how you can help them with the problem, being sure to state the specific problem and not just a generalization. For example, if an actor does not have their lines memorized, the stage manager can approach the actor and ask if it would be helpful to the actor to have an assistant stage manager run lines during the breaks.

As we neared the start of tech week, which is defined at Ohio State as nine rehearsals over ten consecutive days, my focus shifted from blocking notation to finalizing run sheets, or tracking sheets, and coordinating the technical elements of the production. The task of creating the props tracking sheets was delegated to an assistant stage manager. She worked with the rest of the stage management team and the actors to ensure that all of the props were accounted for and that each prop was tracked through the entire show. This tracking includes where the prop is stored between shows, where the prop is preset at the beginning of the show, who moves the prop and where it gets moved to, and how the prop moved back to storage after the show. Other tracking sheets are used to track scenery, wireless microphones, and costumes, some of which are generated by the appropriate department in collaboration with the stage management. For example, the costume designer has the clearest understanding of what costumes will be worn in each scene and will generate the first draft of the costume tracking sheet. The costume designer then meets with the stage manager who has a better understanding of how much
time the actor will have during costume changes and how much scenery is moving around backstage in order to identify where the costume change should happen.

One of the last major meetings with the designers, the director and the stage manager is called a paper tech. During paper tech the production team goes through the script page by page to identify everything that needs to happen. This includes scenery shifts on the deck, flown scenery shifts, sound effects, lighting changes, special effects, videos and projections, etc. As each element is identified it is given a cue that the stage manager adds to the prompt script. Designers will often come to the paper tech with a cue orchestration, or list of cues that includes the cue name and what the cue does, that they will give to the stage manager, however this cue orchestration is usually changed during the paper tech. During the technical rehearsal process each designer continues to update their cue orchestration and provides changes to the stage manager who then updates the prompt script. The stage manager should set a deadline for updated cue orchestrations prior to each rehearsal so that the stage manager has enough time to update the prompt script before the technical rehearsal begins.

Following my summer experience with *Wicked*, and given my experience working with orchestras in the past, I determined very early in the planning stages of *Aida* that a cue light would be needed in order to cue the band for certain numbers. I initially made this request in August and then repeated the request in October and again prior to and during tech week. On the day of the band’s first rehearsal I still did not have the requested cue light set-up and I was trying to think of a quick solution. I remembered that my mom had a remote control light switch that can control a lamp up to 60 feet away. The concept is simple, a small receiver is plugged in to a power source and then
the lamp’s power cord is plugged into the receiver. When the remote control switch is flipped the receiver allows power to flow from the power source to the lamp. Flip the switch again and the receiver cuts off power to the lamp. Luckily this gadget was available at several local stores and I was able to implement it prior to the start of the music rehearsal. When I wanted the band to get ready to play I would switch on the light and the conductor was instructed to start the music when the light was turned off. If we were running a number and needed to stop to work on a technical element or to retry a costume change I would simply turn on and off the light several times and the conductor would stop the band. This solution worked well from the tech table, but at the next rehearsal I moved to the calling location backstage and discovered that the remote was unable to communicate with the receiver. I kindly relayed my frustration to the lighting designer following the rehearsal and he worked with the Lighting Studio Manager to get a cue light connected for the next rehearsal. Unfortunately the cue light was not high on the priority list for the load-in at the Southern Theatre and the cue light was not functioning for the first of only two rehearsals in that space. During the first rehearsal the band was late for several cues due to the missing cue light. In commercial theatre, such as Wicked, the cue light system is the responsibility of the electricians. While working on The Secret Garden, the electricians at the Shubert Theatre were prepared for the use of cue lights due to their limited intercom resources and the electricians were able to adapt their existing system to provide additional cue lights needed for actor entrances. The Southern Theatre is not equipped with a cue light system but the stagehands were able to borrow a portable system from the local opera company.
During the technical rehearsals the stage manager takes charge of all elements of the production, the technical run crews begin attending rehearsals and all personnel report to the stage manager. Just as was the case during pre-production rehearsals, the stage manager is responsible for getting everything started on time and to keep the rehearsal moving while taking breaks as needed. At Ohio State the stage manager is centrally located in the house during technical rehearsals. This promotes effective communication between the production team and the stage manager. Assistant stage managers are located backstage to work with the actors and to provide a point of communication to the stage manager in the house. During the technical rehearsals the stage manager will call a sequence of cues periodically checking with the director and designers to ensure that what is happening on-stage is what was intended and is fulfilling the director’s artistic vision. The director or members of the production team will ask the stage manager to hold if they find something is not working or do not like how something looks. During a hold, the stage manager must communicate with the actors so that they know what is going on and where they are needed. Sometimes an actor needs to repeat a sequence of moves so that the lighting designer can identify the best sources of light to improve the visibility of the actor. At other times the actors may not be needed, for example if the director wants to hear a sound effect. The stage manager will also need to tell the actors and the assistants backstage where to start from when the production team is ready to resume. During technical rehearsals the stage manager is responsible for monitoring a lot of activity while maintaining a positive work environment. Technical rehearsals are often the most stressful time for the stage manager as everyone needs something for the stage manager, cue placement is constantly changing, and cues are being added and deleted at
the last minute, sometimes during the calling of the rehearsal, making it difficult for the stage manager to get into a pattern. Halfway through tech week costumes are added, which can often bring more chaos and will most certainly add new challenges that did not exist during the first half of tech week. The best thing for the stage manager to do is remain calm and collected, keeping in mind that eventually the show will open!

Opening night does finally arrive and once the excitement dies down the stage manager should find themselves in a comfortable pattern with the rest of the run crew and the actors. Often times the director will only attend an occasional performance during the run leaving it to the stage manager to maintain their artistic intentions. More often than not in academic theatre, though, it is more difficult for the director to completely turn over the production to the stage manager. Faculty directors find it particularly difficult to funnel notes through the stage manager as they will often see the student cast members in their classes or walking down the hallway the next day. This constant and sometimes looming presence has a direct impact on the stage manager’s ability to learn how to maintain the artistic integrity of the production. For example, the director may have discovered a new moment in the show and will ask the actor to try something different at the next performance. If the director does not give the same note to the stage manager the stage manager might give a conflicting note to the actor following the performance. On the other hand, in training a stage manager in academic theatre it can be very beneficial for the director to continue attending performances if they take the time to talk with the stage manager following the performance and identify key elements for the stage manager to watch.
In returning to the Actors’ Equity list of responsibilities for the stage manager this chapter has not yet addressed the activities from which an AEA stage manager is prohibited from performing. These activities include “making of payrolls or any distribution of salaries” (AEA-6), “shifting scenery, running lights or operating the Box Office” (AEA-8), “handling contracts, having riders signed or initialed, or any other function which normally comes under the duties of the General Manager or Company Manager” (AEA-10), “participating in the ordering of food for the company” (AEA-11) and “signing the closing notice of the company or the individual notice of any Actor’s termination” (AEA-12). At Ohio State, the department’s administrative staff handles many of the functions that would be assigned to the General Manager or the Company Manager, such as administering payroll and having contracts signed. The department’s chair/producer would work with the director to remove an actor from a production and the producer identifies the opening and closing date of each production. Assistant stage managers can often be found shifting scenery, running some deck-based technical element such as automation, or helping to usher, a function of the box office, but rarely does the stage manager perform any of these duties. These restrictions help to protect the stage manager from having to perform numerous duties simultaneously, which would interfere with their primary responsibility as the “executive instrument on the technical running of each performance” (AEA-4). In most academic settings there are not union stagehands working on the production and the assistant stage managers have limited responsibilities during the show, therefore it is acceptable for the assistant stage manager to perform a limited number of these responsibilities, and in fact makes more sense given
their knowledge of the production having been in attendance since the first pre-production rehearsal.

There is one responsibility from this list that will occasionally creep onto the academic stage manager’s to do list, and that is related to ordering food for the company. When the performance schedule includes a day with two shows where ample time is not provided between the end of one performance and the call time for the next performance it is customary for the university to provide a meal. Out of five productions this season, Ohio State has actually provided meals on three occasions – between Saturday performances for *Aida*, between school matinees for *Othello* and before a public performance of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In all three of these instances the stage manager was responsible for collecting the dietary restrictions of cast members. A member of the department’s administrative staff, however, ordered the food itself. The stage managers did not participate in the ordering of the food, but the stage managers did participate in the selection of the food.

Based on this eight-week experience with *Aida*, I have identified these additional key principles and essential methodology of an effective stage manager. Although a repeat from chapter 2, first and foremost a stage manager needs to have a group of individuals on whom you rely. For *Aida* I had to be able to rely on the three assistant stage managers to run the simultaneous rehearsals. I relied on them to keep each rehearsal on track, record the blocking and choreography, and to pay close attention so that they could provide me with specific information from rehearsals that I could relay to the production team. Additionally, as their leader I needed to be able to identify their
strengths so that I could delegate appropriately and to identify their weaknesses so that I could help them to improve.

Secondly, it is important to **communicate information using a variety of methods**. For example, the Virtual Callboard provided a website where anyone associated with the production could login to read rehearsal reports, check the rehearsal schedule, find contact information, and share files. As the stage manager, I could see a timestamp for each individual’s last login. The Virtual Callboard also distributed information by email so that users could store the information in a convenient location or print important documents. Notes in the rehearsal reports were followed with an in-person check-in with the production staff, letting the staff know that I was approachable and not just available by email. The Virtual Callboard aided in providing rehearsal schedules in a variety of formats allowing the user to view the schedule by day, week and month. Effective communication is also necessary during the rehearsal or performance and a variety of systems may be necessary to communicate the execution of cues, so stage managers should be familiar with giving verbal cues over headset as well as executing cues through a cue light system.

Last but not least, a stage manager should **develop a system of practices and templates**. Keep practices and forms that work and improve on the ones that do not work. For example, if you find a method of recording blocking notation that is efficient and records all of the necessary information, continue to use it over and over. You can improve your blocking notation the more you use it, but there is no need to start from scratch or change to a new notation system if what you have works. Similarly, save the run sheets you develop for each production. You will most likely be able to re-use the
format on a future production, and even if you have to make minor modifications to make it work for your next production at least you did not have to start from scratch.
Chapter 5: Key Principles and Essential Methodology

Now that we have had the opportunity to examine the responsibilities and practices of a commercial stage manager, a freelance stage manager and an academic stage manager it is time to review and define the key principles and essential methodology of a stage manager. The purpose of this list is not to define the duties of a stage manager as that information has already been described in the previous chapters. Rather the purpose of this list is to identify how those duties can be achieved consistently and efficiently. Much like AEA’s Definition of Duties of a Stage Manager (appendix A), the following list is not a menu of choices from which you can pick and choose. Collectively these key principles serve as the foundation for the essential methodology of a stage manager.

Based primarily on my commercial, freelance and academic experiences, I have identified eight key principles (appendix F), the first of which is research. I have frequently agreed to be the stage manager, often as a last minute substitute, for a project that ends up causing me great stress because I failed to do adequate research before accepting the position. Research the project that you have been offered – find out how long the project has been in development, who the keys players are, and what resources are available to you as the stage manager. Some of this information may be easy to find, such as a list of the key players, but most of it will not be readily available. The stage manager is an integral part of the production, so if offered a position you should not be
afraid to ask questions that will help you make an informed decision. As I mentioned, I am often asked to substitute for a stage manager that has fallen ill or has a family emergency. These opportunities to substitute most likely arise from extensive networking throughout the central Ohio community, most of which has initiated from my work at Ohio State, a strong reputation, and my willingness to say yes. Most recently I was asked to take over as stage manager for a remount of BalletMet’s production of Cinderella. I was told that there would be three technical rehearsals, the first of which was the next day, and then I was given the list of performance dates and times. While I have regularly stage managed for a local youth ballet, this was my first opportunity to stage manage for a professional ballet. Thinking through the processes that I was accustomed to with theatre productions, I believed that there would be ample time before the first performance to review the calling script, learn the show and work through any technical challenges that the show was having. That evening, after accepting the offer, the production manager dropped off the calling script, cue orchestrations and a DVD of a previous mounting of the same production. I also learned that there were three different casts and that the purpose of each tech was not to work through the show and the cues, but to give each of the three casts an opportunity to run the show on the stage. After the production manager left I flipped through the calling script only to realize that there were no cues in the script, so I spent four hours reviewing the DVD and compiling the information from the cue orchestrations into the calling script. I went into the first technical rehearsal with the appearance of a confident stage manager, but deep inside I was freaking out. Fortunately the crew was very helpful and together we made it through
the first technical rehearsal without any major hiccups. The subsequent technical rehearsals were much less stressful and I was able to fine-tune the placement of the cues.

My experience several years earlier on *The Secret Garden* should have trained me to ask more questions. I signed a contract that hired me to serve as the stage manager for that production. Unfortunately the contract did not define the role of the stage manager, which was, to some extent, exploited during the project as evidenced in chapter 3. Following my experience with *The Secret Garden* I did identify several questions that should be asked for similar productions, namely a production with intentions of touring or that have identified unique yet challenging elements. For example, what resources are available to me as the stage manager in terms of personnel, transportation and lodging while not in Columbus, interpreters, etc.

The second key principle I have identified is adequate **preparation**. Some of the preparation work is a continuation of your research, such as identifying the key players. Depending on the situation, some of this work can happen once you are on payroll, which is typically one week prior to the first rehearsal in commercial settings, and some of it needs to happen prior to that first day of paid work. After having identified the key players it is important to be “script-smart, having read over the script several times becoming very familiar with the characters, plot, and storyline” (Fazio 120). After an initial read of the script the stage manager should read through the script several more times and begin creating drafts of a scene breakdown and a tracking chart for characters, props and special effects. The stage manager should also take the time to get to know the

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9 The “first day of paid work” in the academic theatre setting should be considered as the first meeting, whether it is with the director or designers, after having been assigned as the stage manager.
theatre’s staff, including the office personnel and department heads, and to become familiar with the rehearsal space and the performance space if possible. If the project has unique elements like *The Secret Garden*, such as deaf actors, find out what local resources are available to help you and to help the cast, for example interpreters and TTY (teletypewriter) or videophone services.

Developing a checklist that you use on every project you undertake will also be very helpful. The more projects you work on the longer your list may grow, keeping in mind that while not every item on your list will be applicable to every situation, having a list will at least keep you prepared for the known elements so that you have more time to focus on the unknown elements. Your preparation checklist could include: script read through; blocking script preparation; draft calendars; production meeting calendar and deadlines; draft contact sheets; scene/character tracking chart, or as I call it, the Who What When chart; reviewing and understanding the ground plans; draft information packets; rehearsal room preparation – taping the floor, collecting rehearsal furniture and rehearsal props, identifying the location of the nearest restrooms, learning about the temperature controls, understanding the access restrictions, setting up the callboard, and developing or learning emergency procedures; preparing and updating paperwork templates; and meeting with the director to understand their expectations of you as the stage manager. Be sure to gain some understanding of how the company for which you have been hired operates, this again will hopefully come up to some extent in your research, but make sure that you understand who is responsible for payroll, how ticketing works, and what relationships the cast may already have with the company or the director.
The third key principle I have identified is **teamwork**. This principle is closely tied to the first two principles. As you are researching the project that you have been offered you will want to find out the details of your stage management team, if any, and you will want to be sure to have met with them at least once as you are preparing for the first rehearsal. Developing a strong stage management team can be one of the more challenging aspects of being a stage manager. Your first challenge is whether or not the producer will grant you the resources to have one or more assistants. If you are freelancing and the financial resources do not exist for the producer to hire an assistant, find out if you can have a student intern to serve as your assistant. While the student intern may not be the most knowledgeable colleague you have ever worked with, it is highly likely that they will be very motivated and will strive to successfully accomplish any task that they are given. There is, of course, the occasional bad apple, but generally speaking, some help is better than no help.

If the resources do exist for a stage management team, and you are not replacing a stage manager on a production, you will want to find out how the balance of the stage management team will be selected. As a freelance stage manager I have often joined a production to call the show and the rehearsal stage manager stays on as a decking stage manager during the run. While I have been very fortunate to benefit from their existing knowledge of the production, this does provide an opportunity for conflict between the existing stage manager and the new stage manager. Likewise, if you are hired to do a show and the balance of the stage management team is selected without your input there could be some personality conflicts on the team. There is also the possibility that you will be given the opportunity to select the other members of the stage management team.
The primary purpose of the stage management team is to support each other in the expansive role that is the definition of stage manager. The two stage management teams for *Wicked* that I had the opportunity to observe did not dwell on their titles. On both teams the Production Stage Manager was the leader, kept the team organized, shared in the responsibilities and handled the majority of the conflict resolution. The other team members each shared and rotated the responsibilities of decking, calling, rehearsals and daily operations. Sometimes you are unable to have a team of stage managers, but even having a trustworthy and efficient company manager or support staff can make the job of the stage manager less stressful and more enjoyable.

The fourth key principle is **leadership**. Regardless of how the individuals that make up your stage management team are selected, as the stage manager you are the leader of the team. As a leader you must be able to identify their strengths and delegate assignments appropriately. As with any leadership position you should not pick favorites, instead you need to identify each individual’s weaknesses and help them to improve as they develop as a stage manager. As a leader you must trust your instincts and never be afraid to assert yourself. Keep in mind that, even if you hand pick each member of the stage management team, there will be times when you will be needed to resolve conflict amongst your team just as you will need to do with the cast and the crew. The best practice as a stage manager is to facilitate discussion among those in conflict. By helping to start the needed discussion and knowing when to give input we can help to find the best working resolution for each of these conflicts that serves the best interest of the production.
Every leader has their own style as to how they organize the work that needs to be completed and how to maintain control. Likewise, a good leader allows others to do things their own way – a leader should not take the “it’s my way or the highway” approach. The best way to lead is by example and as a leader I like to start with a cool head. Unless someone is about to be injured there is very little benefit to yelling. Everyone looks to the stage manager to set the tone of the production, when things get stressful, keep a cool, calm, positive problem-solving attitude; this will help everybody involved remain calm and encourages creativity through a positive work environment. As a leader it is your responsibility to be a problem solver and a collaborator. As a problem solver you must try to be proactive and address obvious problems before they happen whenever possible. When a problem cannot be solved proactively, react in a timely manner. While it is important to trust your gut instinct, too quick of a reaction in the wrong situation can often make a problem worse. When safety is not at jeopardy, make sure to take the time to gather all of the information and to address the problem as quickly and reasonably as possible.

A good leader also commands respect, not only for themselves, but also for those with whom they are working. Respect the crew, the actors, the management, the directing staff and, most importantly, your stage management team. Provide appropriate praise in public in order to maintain a high morale and corrective action or discussion in private. In addition to showing respect through recognition, the small things like using everyone’s time wisely and efficiently help to show that you respect and value the work that they are doing. The best way to show respect is to avoid the phrase “that’s not my job” and to always be ready to pitch in.
The fifth key principle I have identified is **communication**. A stage manager should establish clear methods of regular, detailed yet effective communication. As you approach a new project work with company management, which may be one individual or a group of individuals who may or may not be referred to as company management, to create a contact sheet and several distribution lists for dispatching information. Discuss with company management how they are accustomed to receiving information and who typically receives that information. For example, on *Wicked* the performance reports were distributed to area heads, the production team, company management, and the producers whereas at Ohio State rehearsal and performance reports are distributed to everyone involved a production, including the cast and crew. Three fairly standard communication tools are rehearsal/performance reports, meeting minutes which summarize the topics discussed a meeting, and in-person check-ins. Include enough detail that the reader does not need to respond back to you with a series of questions before being able to provide an answer but be cautious as to writing so much information that nobody will have time to read your daily reports. A stage manager should be familiar with general theatre terminology and with show specific terminology, or nicknames for set pieces and special effects, for quick and easy reference. When communicating with designers, and more specifically with props personnel, it is beneficial to list at least three adjectives to describe a new element that has not been previously discussed in great detail. Last, but not least, keep in mind that as the stage manager your responsibility is not to tell someone how to fix something that is broken, rather you want to identify what is broken, how it broke, whether or not it was being used properly when it broke and follow through to make sure that it gets fixed. If you are using email to distribute information you will
occasionally find that somebody is not responsive to emails. While you can try to work with the person to be more responsive to emails, it is most likely a better use of your time to identify the method of communication that works best for that individual, whether it be phone calls, text messages, or finding the individual and talking in-person. I find that even individuals who respond well to email communication appreciate when a stage manager takes the time to do a daily in-person check-in, therefore I encourage stage managers to make in-person check-ins a part of their daily schedule whenever possible.

The sixth key principle I have identified is technology integration. A couple of years ago I read Bert Gruver and Frank Hamilton’s *The Stage Manager's Handbook*, published in 1972, which recommended that a stage manager rent a mimeograph machine for easier access to making copies. Forty years later I’m being encouraged to print less and send as much electronically as possible as we strive to become a paperless society. Technology on-stage and off-stage continues to evolve and we as stage managers need to keep up with those changes. When I first started to stage manage rehearsal and performance reports were posted on the callboard and designers had to go to the callboard to read their notes on a daily basis. Today we distribute those reports by email keeping designers and department heads in the loop almost instantaneously. Often times I can send a text message to a designer and have an answer to a director’s question almost immediately without having to leave the room so as not to interrupt the rehearsal. Through the use of the Virtual Callboard on *Aida* we were able to share design renderings with designers in Columbus, Oregon, New York and London while video conferencing to talk through the designs. During pre-production rehearsals for *Aida* I entered the rehearsal schedule into the Virtual Callboard and each actor had a list of their specific
rehearsal calls when they logged in, which greatly reduced confusion and the number of phone calls I received from actors about when they were called.

We must keep in mind, though, that not all technology gets out dated or goes out of style like the mimeograph. Cue lights, for example, were first popular before the integration of headset systems into the theatre. While advancements in headset systems, including wireless headset systems, have perhaps reduced the popularity of cue lights, they are still used and in fact are sometimes more practical or efficient when used in conjunction with the headset system. Additionally, many sound operators prefer the use of cue lights as a communication tool for executing cues so that they have both ears available for listening to a live audio mix. A stage manager should keep up-to-date with the current technological practices, learn about new technology and then work with the theatre’s technical staff to identify what technology can be used and whether or not that technology will make the production run more efficiently.

The seventh key principle I have identified is **efficient processes**. In your own work, identify what is working efficiently and what could be improved, but think through a process before trying to fix something that is not broken. As you stage manage more productions continue to develop your system of practices and templates. Keep practices and forms that work and improve on the ones that do not work. As mentioned in chapter 4, if you find a method of recording blocking notation that is efficient and records all of the necessary information, continue to use it over and over. You can improve your blocking notation the more you use it, but there is no need to start from scratch or change to a new notation system if what you have works. Similarly, save the run sheets you develop for each production. You will most likely be able to re-use the format on a future
production, and even if you have to make minor modifications to make it work for your next production at least you did not have to start from scratch.

This system not only saves you time as you prepare for a production, it can also put your mind at ease so that it can focus on other challenges. For example, the binders in which I keep my blocking and calling scripts are always laid out the same way. The first tab always contains the various production calendars, the second tab always contains the various contact lists, the third tab always contains the script, the next four tabs are always costumes, lighting, scenery/props, and sound, and the last tab is always the reports. My electronic storage is laid out similarly, and if I don’t have regular access to my electronic files for a particular production I will add extra tabs after sound and before reports. I am not sure why I originally laid them out that way, but any of my prompt books that I pick will be in that order and I can quickly locate whatever it is that I need.

The final key principle I have identified is self-awareness. The first seven principles are, more or less, about being organized, paperwork, distributing information, and telling people what to do and when it should be done. This final principle is to take inventory of the implementation of the first seven principles, their effectiveness, and how an individual is developing as a stage manager. We cannot rely solely on whether or not the final production was a huge success or a major flop. Rather we need to review the entire process – what worked, what did not work, what could have been done better or more efficiently, what situations could have been avoided, etc. What is more important, though, is to examine how my attitude and demeanor impacted the production and how it impacted my life. Yes, stage management is an occupation and it will have its ups and downs like any other job, but I am a firm believer that one should enjoy their job. So for
me this is not an assessment of the effectiveness of a props tracking chart. Instead this is about what aspects of this job did I enjoy and what could I have done to make this job more enjoyable while still being an effective stage manager. Live theatre is a product with a very short shelf life – neither you nor the audience can take it with you when the show is over, so the only thing left is the memories. My goal is to make each show the best memory yet.

Can a stage manager still succeed without first employing this list of key principles and essential methodology? That depends on how you define succeed. The saying goes that the show must go on, so an inefficient stage manager will most likely not prevent a show from opening. If, however, you define success by employment opportunities than I believe that it is highly unlikely that an inefficient stage manager will find continuous work if they do not follow a similar list of key principles to create their own essential methodology. This is also not a guarantee that by following this list of key principles and developing the essential methodology that every experience will be stress free and without challenges. These principles will help there to be less stress and more time to focus on new challenges, and occasionally they may even make a production that is sure to be a challenge that much more enjoyable. In fact, these key principles and essential methodology will be applied to what is guaranteed to be a challenging production (*The Camouflage Project*, chapter 6) and the results of that application will be shared in chapter 7.
Chapter 6: *The Camouflage Project*

Having explored commercial, freelance and academic stage management it was determined that the best field test of the key principles and essential methodology of a stage manager, as identified in chapter 5 and appendix F, would be The Ohio State University’s 2011 production of *The Camouflage Project*. A newly devised multi-media work with cross-disciplinary and international ties in an exploration of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in World War II France conceived by Professors Mary Tarantino and Lesley Ferris, *The Camouflage Project* “offers a fresh meaning to the expression ‘theatre of war’” (Ferris) through performance, exhibition and an international symposium. Nine M.F.A. actors guided by co-directors Professor Ferris and Associate Professor Jeanine Thompson devised the foundation of the performance script during a winter quarter 2011 course on devising and continued to serve as an integral part of the devising process when pre-production rehearsals started at the beginning of spring quarter 2011. In addition to the nine M.F.A. actors, students, staff and faculty in the Department of Theatre collaborated with the Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design (ACCAD) to develop “a multi-media work combining digital animations and video projections with experimental use of 3D printing, 3D scanning and projection mapping” (Ferris).

During winter quarter 2011, I was responsible for calling, organizing and running both weekly production meetings and weekly design meetings; maintaining a production
calendar in collaboration with the Technical Director; reminding production team members of deadlines; and working with designers to develop a production that could be toured internationally. During spring quarter 2011, the quarter during which the production was mounted, I was responsible for calling of all rehearsals (AEA-1); assembling and maintaining the prompt book, including the ongoing maintenance of the devised playing text, stage business, technical needs, and daily records (AEA-2); working with the directors and department heads (AEA-3); maintaining discipline of the rehearsal/performance and calling each performance (AEA-4); maintaining the artistic integrity of the production upon opening (AEA-5); maintaining attendance records (AEA-6); and maintaining discipline through use of the company rules (AEA-7). These responsibilities were in alignment with AEA’s *Definition of Duties of a Stage Manager* (appendix A). The balance of this chapter is the plan developed during winter quarter 2011 for implementing the key principles and essential methodology during the pre-production rehearsals, technical rehearsals and performances of *The Camouflage Project*. The ability to, and effectiveness of implementing those key principles will be documented through the rehearsal process and summarized in chapter 7.

**Research** was the first key principle to be implemented. As *The Camouflage Project* was being produced in a known environment this should be an easy task. Having worked with a majority of the production team members in the past, including ACCAD, I was comfortable with identifying the key players, knowing what resources were available to me, where to turn if I had questions and how the process would work. Not being able to attend the devising classes, however, I knew that I would need additional preparation time to familiarize myself with the characters and the script that was developed during
winter quarter. Fortunately a wealth of information was available on the project’s website and I had access to the same resources that had been pulled for the devising class.

The next principle to apply was allowing myself time for adequate preparation. Given the production calendar used by Ohio State, and that meetings for this project began more than a year before the production was scheduled to open, some aspects of preparation for pre-production rehearsals were quite simple. Other aspects were not going to be so simple. Using the sample checklist identified in chapter 5, I developed the following table (table 2) of self-imposed deadlines for the first rehearsal on March 28.

Table 2. Rehearsal Preparation Deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/01/11</td>
<td>Contact sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/11/11</td>
<td>Meeting with director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/11/11</td>
<td>Calendars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/21/11</td>
<td>Script read-through (not available until March 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/21/11</td>
<td>Blocking script preparation and Scene/Character tracking chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/23/11</td>
<td>Update templates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/27/11</td>
<td>Information packets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/27/11</td>
<td>Rehearsal room preparation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The third principle was to put in place a stage management **team** that I could depend upon. This can often be challenging, particularly as I wanted to provide as many learning opportunities as possible to undergraduate students while also realizing that there would be limited resources if this production did go on an international tour. I eventually settled on two assistant stage managers, one of whom would be graduating and most likely unable to tour with us should the opportunity arise. The other challenge was balancing the number of people in the rehearsal room. *The Camouflage Project* had already garnered a lot of attention from the student body and several students had worked their way onto the project during autumn and winter quarter. My fear for the pre-production rehearsals was a blurred division of responsibilities from graduate students trying to be overly helpful. I reminded myself that academic theatre is a learning environment and that if rehearsals turned out to be a room full of individuals trying to perform the role of the director that we could easily sort it out when it happened.

The fourth principle was **leadership**. After selecting the two assistant stage managers I planned to identify their strengths in order to assign them to specific tasks in which they would excel and identify some challenges that I could help them to overcome. In addition to being able to rely upon my two assistant stage managers, I also felt that the production team was strong and reliable. I planned on working closely with the technical director as everyone else’s work depended on him being able to meet the deadlines that he and I established during winter quarter. Given the difficulty some of the designers had in meeting deadlines during winter quarter I knew that he was crunched for time, so I wanted to make sure that I could help out as needed and keep people out of his way so that he could finish his work.
The fifth principle was to plan out the methods of communication. It was important to make sure that all 25 of the creative team members and the 12 actors were receiving the information that they needed to meet their deadlines and to reduce the number of surprises when we transitioned from the pre-production rehearsals to technical and dress rehearsals. I knew that this would be particularly challenging with a script that was still in development. The first step to keep open the communication between the creative team members was to maintain weekly production meetings and designer meetings. In Ohio State’s current production model, production meetings during the quarter of the production are reduced to once every other week, and design meetings are only held the quarter prior to the production. During the winter quarter we found that these meetings were the best way to make artistic decisions and to achieve the deadlines established by the technical director and me. I will admit, though, that it can be very challenging to spend five hours in meetings per week on top of 25 hours of rehearsals and another six hours of rehearsal preparation and miscellaneous work that happens outside the rehearsal room. Even in the academic setting stage management can be like a full-time job.

In addition to the weekly meetings, I decided to once again use the Virtual Callboard to maintain contact information, rehearsal schedules and rehearsal/performance reports. This system provided two major benefits, the first being that selected users would have access to all of the show information from anywhere in the world. The second major benefit is the individualized rehearsal schedules that appear on each actor’s homepage after logging in. Having all of the information accessible via the web also allows other members of the production team to access information they need without having to wait
for me to provide it to them. For example, when the Box Office needed a list of all the individuals associated with the project to prepare the complimentary tickets for distribution, the Box Office Manager was able to go onto the system and download a file that had the information that she needed.

While I would have two meetings each week with the designers, I also felt that it was important to maintain daily check-ins with each department. Daily check-ins would allow me to answer the easier or spur of the moment questions that come up between meetings so that the production meeting and design meeting would have the most time for the tougher questions that required more discussion. Daily check-ins also shows the designers, department heads and technicians that I am approachable and that I have a vested interest in their work.

The next principle to address was to determine what technology would best benefit this production. I had already decided to use the Virtual Callboard for communication and with a script that was still in development I knew that it would be important to have a laptop in rehearsal. Very early in the development process for *The Camouflage Project* I envisioned providing each actor with an iPad so that script updates could be made electronically and everyone would always be working off the right version of the script. Unfortunately that idea would not have been very cost effective and I quickly abandoned the idea of iPads for a practice of using colored paper for various revisions to the script. During the script revision process, in order to save paper, only the pages with revisions will be printed and distributed. These revisions will be printed on colored paper to ensure that everyone is using the correct version of the script. I also debated the need for cue lights, particularly because the calling desk was going to be
located immediately behind the last row of audience members. I decided that this might be a plausible option, but that the flipping of switches could end up being more distracting than the hushed whisper of me calling the show, so I put that idea on the backburner, pending further discussion with the designers. The production itself called for a great deal of integrated technology, including nine projectors for the performance, three media servers, and a lot of custom animation.

The next principle, which is to have efficient processes, has been developed over time as an actively working stage manager. As I planned for the pre-production rehearsals of The Camouflage Project I reviewed the work that I did on Aida to determine what processes could be improved. I knew that I would need to pay very close attention to the directors and the devising team as they made script changes. I decided that I would need to make it very clear that I was maintaining the script, so whenever there were changes to the script the devising team would need to confirm the changes with me so that I could communicate those changes to the rest of the production team. As I thought through the processes I also tried to think of a way to improve my blocking notation, which I believe to be my weakest attribute as a stage manager. I would love to find or develop a piece of software that allows blocking to be notated electronically, preventing the need to erase or replace pages at a time when something is changed by the director – or from having to copy all of the character’s locations over from one page to the next. I decided to do more research in this area to see if I could find a solution.

Last, but not least, I need to review my own self-awareness observations, which I have collected for more than a decade in order to continue improving my well-rounded development as a stage manager. I do not take the approach where every individual has to
earn my respect; rather I respect everyone as an individual and try to treat him or her with the utmost professionalism. I very rarely raise my voice and when I do it is with good reason and never directed at an individual, unless you happen to be flying a piece of scenery that is about to strike something. I try to remain calm and collected, even when I’m frustrated or nervous on the inside, because I know that emotions and reactions can be contagious. I know that I must be the voice of reason and that I am ultimately responsible. If I make a mistake, I will apologize with sincerity and then will move on, as there is no time to dwell on what has been done. If you make a mistake, while I appreciate the apology, I will tell you that it is no big deal and that mistakes happen so that you too do not dwell. I know that I am not always right, but I usually radiate confidence that leads those around me to follow. There is no room for me to be full of myself, and I appreciate when others tell me that I have done well or that they are impressed by something that I have done. My job is not to be in the spotlight; my job is to make sure that the spotlight is on the right actor at the right time, in the right place and in the right color.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

*The Camouflage Project* opened on May 12, 2011 and ran for 17 performances. During the rehearsal process I documented my ability to, and the effectiveness of implementing the eight key principles that I identified in chapter 5 and appendix F as being the foundation for the essential methodology of a stage manager. *The Camouflage Project* consisted of a performance, an exhibit and an international symposium.

The co-directors and a group of approximately 15 MA, PhD and MFA students developed the bulk of the performance script during winter quarter. The production team for the performance aspect of *The Camouflage Project* included Associate Professor Dan Gray, Producer and Scenic Designer; Associate Professor Kristine Kearney, Costume Designer; Professor Mary Tarantino, Lighting Designer; undergraduate Lowri Sion, Sound Designer; Assistant Professor Janet Parrott, Video Designer; undergraduate JR Gualtieri, Video Designer; Animation Specialist Vita Berezina-Blackburn, 3D Animation and Supervision; Graphics Research Specialist Matthew Lewis, Digital Fabrication; MFA student Jeremy Baker, 3D Projection Mapping and Animation Production; MFA student Nikki Lemon, 3D Projection Mapping and Animation Production; MFA student Thomas Heban, Motion Capture Production and Animation Production; MFA student Cheng Zhang, Special Effects; MFA student Zachary Maynard, 3D Modeling; MFA student Jane Drozd, Shading; lecturer Chris Zinkon, Technical Director; Instructional Aids
Associate Jim Knapp, Production Coordinator and Projection System Engineer; PhD student Chelsea Phillips, Dramaturg; undergraduate Kevin Rhodus, Sound Systems Engineer; undergraduate Emily Mills, Music Director; MFA student Alison Vasquez, Vocal Coach; undergraduate Amber Paul, Assistant Costume Designer; MA student Francesca Spedalieri, Assistant Director; MA student Elizabeth Harelik, Assistant Dramaturg; PhD student Amany Seleem, Assistant Video Editor; undergraduate Jaclyn Benedict, Assistant Stage Manager; undergraduate Sarah Hurwitz, Assistant Stage Manager; undergraduate Dayna Schlefstein, Assistant to the Lighting Designer; MFA student Phil Garrett, Performance Development and Documentation; undergraduate Alan Weisenberger, Performance Documentation; undergraduate Evan Derr, Production Electrician; MFA student Alex Kyle-DiPietropaolo, programmer; undergraduate Eve Nordyke, Transcriptions; lecturer Dave Fisher, Videographer, and myself as Production Stage Manager. The exhibit was organized by Associate Professor Beth Kattelman, Curator; MA student Elizabeth Harelik, Assistant Curator; and Professor Mary Tarantino, concept and implementation, along with support from members of the performance production team. The acting ensemble consisted of 9 MFA actors, fulfilling a degree requirement of participating in a devised work, one PhD student and two undergraduate students. Pre-production rehearsals, technical/dress rehearsals and performances were held at the Drake Performance and Event Center on the campus of Ohio State.

The first key principle to be implemented was research. As mentioned in chapter 6, The Camouflage Project was produced in a known environment. In addition to already having a great deal of familiarity with the Department of Theatre, my work in 2003 as an undergraduate on Sleep Deprivation Chamber, Ohio State Theatre’s last major
collaboration with the Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design (ACCAD), provided a strong foundation for this collaboration with ACCAD. Knowing the key players and available resources made it easy to find the answers and solutions to what could have been difficult questions and problems. Having worked with ACCAD before I was also able to identify, early in the process, their production needs, including time in the space, time to work with the projectors and playback systems, and a need for early deadlines. Using information from the previous collaboration, I was able to work with the Technical Director to draft a calendar indicating deadlines and completion dates. This calendar was then presented to the production team and further adapted to fit the particular needs of *The Camouflage Project*. Having reviewed the calendar from 2003, I was able to identify many deadlines that would not traditionally appear on our production calendar. Having these extra deadlines on the calendar helped to promote discussion of the various needs from both groups of collaborators and aided in a fairly smooth rehearsal process. For example, there were many conversations to identify who was responsible for each aspect of the projected elements, from animation to playback system. Unfortunately even with these extra discussions many of the projected media, both animation and video, were not finalized until the final dress rehearsal, which also served as a preview performance. Daily updates to the media by the designers provided several challenges for the media playback programmers. The primary challenge was the transfer of the new media file from the designer to the media server. Once transferred, the media had to be imported and rendered by the playback system. Once rendered, the media had to be inserted into the playback timeline and other effects that were based off of the media,
such as sound effects and cueing sequences, had to be adjusted to accommodate for changes in content or length.

Having not been able to attend the devising\textsuperscript{10} class during winter quarter 2011, I did feel that I was not as connected to the script as the acting ensemble and the directors. Even though I spent time reviewing the basic research materials I could tell that many members of the acting ensemble had developed a bond with their characters and had great passion for telling much more of the story than time permitted. I continue to struggle with how involved a stage manager should be during the early stages of the devising process. A stage manager is definitely a member of the collaborative process, but I am not sure at what point the stage manager should join the devising process.

Attending regular design and production meetings during winter quarter kept me apprised of the progress being made in the devising class, so I was able to fulfill my duties as a stage manager. During the first few weeks of rehearsals, however, I did feel like a latecomer to the project. This reminded me of my experience with the script issues on \textit{The Secret Garden}, to which my response was to make sure that you become involved with the process as early as possible. Outside of academic theatre, I foresee very few circumstances in which a freelance stage manager could be involved so early in the devising process, mainly for financial reasons of the producing organization. Commercial theatres using Equity actors, however, would be required to have a stage manager present when actors are participating in the development of the devised work.

\textsuperscript{10} Devising is the collaborative process of creating a new work, such as a play, without a pre-existing script.
The second principle to apply was **preparation.** *The Camouflage Project* was first conceived in 2009 and began pre-production phases in early 2010. In preparing for the pre-production rehearsals I developed a set of deadlines leading up to the first rehearsal on March 28, 2011. Much of the preparation work was easy to complete by my self-imposed deadlines, such as creating contact sheets, meeting with the co-directors, updating templates, creating the information packets and preparing the rehearsal room. As anticipated, the two most challenging preparation tasks were the blocking script preparation, scene/character tracking chart and calendars.

As previously mentioned in this chapter, I was able to use the production calendar for *Sleep Deprivation Chamber* as a starting point for *The Camouflage Project* production calendar. While the calendar was reviewed in great detail at several design and production meetings, it was evident throughout the pre-production process that some members of the production team were not fully paying attention to those discussions or simply did not understand what was trying to be accomplished with the deadlines. Perhaps the goals established in setting the deadlines were lost in translation of art forms between Theatre and ACCAD. For example, one of the major elements of research for ACCAD that this project was to provide was the opportunity to use 3D mapping.

In Chris Zikon’s class on Technical Direction (Theatre 624), he taught that building a show relies on three resources – personnel, time and budget. Having a sufficient supply of two of these resources can make up for an insufficient supply of the third resource. On *The Camouflage Project* there was an insufficient supply of all three resources when it came to the needs of ACCAD to fully accomplish their research agenda with 3D mapping. The primary focus of the 3D mapping was to be a large back wall,
approximately 18 feet wide and a minimum of 2 feet deep, to be crafted out of an unknown material and available by the beginning of March in order to allow enough time for mapping and the generation of animations. The scenic designer and the ACCAD team went through numerous revisions to the back wall, well into the month of February, and far beyond the initial deadline of mid-January for a final design. The designer and ACCAD team, however, failed to listen to the repeated concerns of the technical director that the designs needed to be complete so that the wall could be sent out for quotation as the department lacked the time and personnel to build it in-house, and most likely the budget to have it built as designed. When the quotation finally came back the back wall was estimated at a cost of $26,000, which was only $1,000 less than the total budget for scenic elements, $24,000 of which had already been earmarked for other scenic elements. The team finally decided on a steel framed wall covered in spandex that would allow for large Styrofoam objects, referred to as “outies,” to be pushed through during the appropriate scenes. The back wall and the outies were completed on April 19, nearly two months after the deadline needed for ACCAD to complete their work in time for tech rehearsals. The limitations of the spandex on the newly design back wall prevented the outies from being pushed through the wall to the extent that was desired by ACCAD and in many ways failed to respond to their research needs, however several other objects provided great sources for ACCAD’s 3D work and perhaps better research opportunities for their students involved in the production.

As with any devised work, the script, and therefore the scene/character tracking chart which is based on the script, is a work in progress. The script was not finalized until April 25, which was the 23rd rehearsal out of 26 pre-production rehearsals, not including
the nine technical/dress rehearsals. The nature of the devising process during winter quarter had created a script that was visually difficult to read and had the remnants of the formatting styles for each of the 15 different contributors. This is another reason why it would have been useful to attend the devising class during winter quarter as I could have identified a style guide and maintained a master copy of the script from day one. On the day of the first rehearsal I received an edited copy of the script, which I then formatted and prepared for distribution to the cast and production team.

More information on tracking script changes will be discussed later in this chapter, but it is important to note the importance of maintaining the script for a devised work. According to the Actors’ Equity Association’s *Definition of Duties of a Stage Manager*, it is the responsibility of the stage manager to “assemble and maintain the Prompt Book which is defined as the accurate playing text…” (AEA-2). Not only should the stage manager maintain the accurate playing text, during the devising process it is important to maintain all previous versions of the script. Oftentimes elements of the script which were once cut will need to be referenced as further changes are made. This was particularly important on *The Camouflage Project* where the play text was based on historical information. After approving a cut, the directors or dramaturgs would often need to pull some of the historical information from the cut text and move it to another section of the play to maintain the historical timeline and accuracy. Although maintaining an ever-evolving script can be cumbersome, the stage manager must take ownership in the task and ensure that all members of the production team are working from the correct version of the script.
As part of the third principle, I identified a stage management team that proved to be a great success. During the first three weeks of rehearsals there were some occasions when the rehearsal would be split up into several rooms. Having three people on the stage management team we were easily able to cover each of the rehearsals and then report back to each other at the end of the evening to combine our notes. After the third week one of the assistants took a leave of absence for the next three weeks, two weeks of rehearsal and one week of tech, to work on the local union crew for a touring production that was at the Ohio Theatre. The timing was actually spot-on and gave the opportunity for the remaining assistant stage manager to step up to the plate and revealed her great attention to detail and ability to deal with several assignments simultaneously. Being able to trust one another, we worked great as a team and were able to keep everything running smoothly during the rehearsal process.

The fourth principle was leadership. During the pre-production rehearsals I worked with the stage management team to identify some challenges that I could help them to overcome. One of the assistants has a strong background in theatre but lacked the confidence to be a great stage manager. By showing that I had confidence her, I helped her to gain confidence in herself so that she can quickly make a decision and then tell people what to do without sounding timid. This self-confidence allowed the acting ensemble to give her greater respect and faith in her work.

I mentioned in chapter 6, when discussing teamwork, my concern for a blurred division of responsibilities from graduate students trying to be overly helpful. The directors were able to handle most of these challenges, but when the final script was released, which cut approximately 20 minutes out of the play; there were some issues that
I felt needed to be addressed. The actors had spent a lot of time research and developing their characters and the scenes. Unfortunately, some of the excess information had to be cut and some of the text had to be reorganized and moved from one scene to another. Some of the actors took these changes personally and challenged the process, either by request to restore many of the changes or by criticizing the work that had been done. As the stage manager I felt that it was my responsibility as a leader to restore order within the ensemble and raise the overall morale of the devising team. As one of the directors had already had a somewhat successful heart-to-heart with the ensemble about professionalism a few weeks prior, I opted to reach out to the actors by email (appendix G) and explain what point we had reached in the devising process and what their role was from this point forward. I congratulated them on their work thus far, explained that their input was still valued and provided suggestions on how to share their ideas and feelings constructively and how to generate positive energy for the benefit of the production. Of the 12 ensemble members, ten thanked me for the much-needed reminder and promised to be more focused and positive. From what I could tell, that attitude continued throughout the technical and dress rehearsals.

It is important to remember that we are all human. A stage manager is like the human body’s central nervous system. The stage manager integrates the information it receives from, and coordinates the activity of, all elements of a production. Like the human body’s nervous system, the basic function of the stage manager is communicate information from one point to the next point. Stage Managers can take it a step farther by observing and reacting to the production’s environment. The difference between a good stage manager and a great stage manager is that a great stage manager can not only sense
when something is not right but also has the foresight to be proactive and address the issue. In order to successfully master this role, without becoming the mother confessor, a stage manager must have a grasp of the big picture and know when something is going to damage the process. Sometimes this is maintaining the cast morale by recognizing birthdays or major accomplishments, but sometimes this means identifying a specific problem and addressing that problem.

**Communication** is the fifth principle, although it is possibly the most essential job of the stage manager. As mentioned in chapter 6, I maintained both the weekly design meetings and the weekly production meetings. This time was quite valuable in taking information to and from rehearsals and for clarifying information that had been included in rehearsal reports. Minutes were distributed electronically after each meeting and I would follow-up on necessary items in person throughout the week. I made daily contact with the production personnel and maintained regular communication with the ACCAD team members.

The use of the Virtual Callboard provided many benefits, particularly in terms of file sharing for individuals without access to the department’s network, but I did find that the MFA acting students did not login regularly. I also set up a Google Calendar to keep track of the space usage. While the Virtual Callboard has several calendar features, Google Calendar is much more powerful, flexible and user friendly. The greatest benefit to Google Calendar is the ability to synchronize the calendar to numerous electronic devices or view the calendar in a mobile format. At any given time a user with a data plan on their electronic device was able to pull up the calendar for the theatre to determine when the space would be available.
I did discover that despite providing information in a variety of methods, such as verbally at production meetings, electronically through the Virtual Callboard, the Google Calendar and by email, that some individuals were not paying attention to the information that was provided. For example, during one designer run through there were two production team members who planned to work in the theatre at the same time as the run was scheduled in the space. They seemed surprised when I reminded them that we would be using the space for rehearsal and referred to an outdated email that said we would most likely not be rehearsing the space at the given time. I confirmed that all sources of information had been updated, including the Virtual Callboard, the Google Calendar a set of meeting minutes and an email that had been distributed earlier that same day. Knowing that some people rely too much on email as a source of instant notification, I confirmed that the change in location had been shared at the design meeting earlier in the day in which at least one of the two production team members had present. Alas that would not be my last failed attempt at communication as more often than not production team members either did not read or failed to respond to specific questions in the daily rehearsal reports. Most usually the latter, though, as they would often say something to the extent of “oh yes, I remember reading that in the rehearsal report.”

Throughout the rehearsal process I worked with the technical director to determine what technology I could use to best benefit the production. As mentioned in chapter 6, very early in the development process for *The Camouflage Project*, I envisioned providing each actor with an iPad so that script updates could be made electronically and everyone would always be working off the right version of the script. Unfortunately that idea would not have been very cost effective, a price tag of $7,500 at a
minimum, so I quickly abandoned the idea of iPads. Script revisions were distributed electronically so that actors could mark up their printed script and so that the dramaturgs and assistant director could make edits to the current version.

When major edits were made to only a few pages of the script I would print copies of those pages on colored paper so that we could quickly confirm that everyone was using the right version of those pages. Once enough of the script had changed, a full script would be printed and distributed to the acting ensemble and production team. Every script page had several pieces of reference information (appendix H) in the header and footer. The header contained the play title and the scene number while the footer contained the section number, revision date, revision number and the page number. Each scene of the play was separated by a section break in Microsoft Word. This made it easier to print just the scene with major changes. Sometimes the number of pages in a scene would change, making it necessary to add letters after the page number, for example page 17B, 17C, and 17D, in order to prevent duplicate page numbers with the existing script. Using the section breaks it was easy to modify page numbers within one section without changing the page numbers in other sections.

In addition to the reference information in the header and footer, the left margin of the script contained line numbers used for line notes (figure 15). Line notes are given to an actor by the stage management team when the actor forgets a line or does not recite the line in the script as written. The stage manager quickly jots down the page number, line number and a code for the type of issue, such as “O” for word order, “P” for paraphrased, “S” for skipped and “L” for line called. This information is then given to the actor at the end of rehearsal so that the actor can pay particular attention to these sections.
when reviewing the script between rehearsals. Including the line numbers on the script distributed to the actors avoids confusion as to how the lines are counted and where the mistake occurred.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>CSOP</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>critical situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/10</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A mistake in rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/10</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>But he genuine looking god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>I refused to speak...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I'm sure I was very interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>or I'd make up people...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Need a real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/24</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>we were all having fun...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/24</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I remember a Sergeant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/24</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Don't want to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/24</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>The only thing climbing, where she's not where, a heroine at all...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/29</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15. Line notes for *The Camouflage Project* rehearsal on April 9, 2011.

I discovered the true advantage to using styles in Microsoft Word while formatting the script. Setting specific styles I was able to quickly copy text changes emailed to me by the numerous members of the devising team, paste them into the script,
highlight the new text and select the appropriate style from the style menu in order to maintain consistency throughout the entire document. As the page numbers for each scene would change from one revision to the next I also added a table of contents. Last, but not least, I used Microsoft Word’s “Track Changes” feature which allowed me to revert individual lines back to a previous versions if the new line did not work in rehearsal as intended. Using these built-in features I was able to quickly update and distribute script changes and completely new copies of the script.

The major challenge with this constantly changing script came to light during the technical and dress rehearsals. The stage manager and designers spend a lot of time during technical and dress rehearsals organizing the sequence, timing and placement of cues. The insertion of new lines or moving lines around in the script can impact the cueing sequences, particularly when there is an animation or video involved in the sequence as this type of media is often fixed in length and cannot adjust as easily to changes in the scene timing. Close attention must also be given when transferring cues from old script pages to new script pages so as not to miss any information.

As mentioned in chapter 6, I also debated the need for cue lights and initially put that idea on the backburner pending further discussion with the designers. After discussion with the technical director and producer, it was decided that it would be in the best interest of the department to invest in a small portable cue light system. We selected the GAM Go-Lite system. This system uses six-pin commercial grade telephone line, similar to but not the same as four-pin household telephone line, and provides the stage manager and each operator with four lights – white, red, blue and green. While I had hoped to use these lights in a fashion similar to that of Wicked on Broadway, we decided
that our student technicians would be more responsive to following one specific cue light color, so four of the technicians were assigned a specific color and the other colors were taped over so as not to confuse the operator. For example, the sound operator was assigned to the red cue light and was unable to see when the white, blue and green lights were lit. I continued to verbally call every cue, but the system allowed me to practice with more than one cue light and we were able to train most of the operators so that if something should happen and I need to solve a problem in the middle of a cue sequence the light would indicate the “GO” command even if the verbal command was absent. During the final dress rehearsal/preview performance the cue light system was put to good use as I had to address a problem with an injured actor and continue calling the show. The cue light system allowed me to execute several cues while addressing the first aid needs and determining the best course of action for covering the actor’s responsibilities in the next several scenes.

Last, but not least, I worked with the production coordinator to have a monitor set-up that allowed me to see the cueing system for each console. Using a quad-screen security monitor I was able to see the cueing system for the two video playback systems, the sound system and either the lighting system or the automation system. Given that the lighting console was to my immediate right, my preference was to watch the automation system. There were some technical difficulties during the technical and dress rehearsals, as each of these control systems already had a secondary system connected for the appropriate programmers and designers and we had a shortage of adapters and converters. However, the systems that I could see assisted in making a more efficient use
of our technical and dress rehearsal time. During the run of the production this monitor also helped me make sure that the operators were in the right place at the right time.

In preparation for rehearsals, I reviewed my established methods to identify **efficient processes.** The one process that I wanted to improve upon was blocking notation. I had, for some time, been trying to find an electronic approach to recording the blocking notation. I foresaw several benefits to electronic blocking notation, including reduced paper waste or frantic erasing when a director completely changes the blocking for several pages, a more efficient way of copying the blocking from one page to the next, a better way to track both people and props, and an easy way to share blocking with various designers. During *The Camouflage Project* I experimented with one possible solution to my quest for electronically recording the blocking notation. Using the full version of Adobe Acrobat, which is loaded with many more features than the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, I discovered a method that has potential for continued use (appendix I).

This idea worked quite well for the first week of blocking rehearsals. The lighting designer appreciated my ability to provide a copy of the script with the blocking notation included (figure 16), allowing her to focus more on the action and less on recording the blocking. Unfortunately, after the first week of blocking rehearsals, the script grew from 83 pages to 93 pages. While it was easy enough to insert copies of my spare single page ground plan into the document, the page numbers for the original 83 pages of blocking no longer corresponded to the appropriate page of the script. I had to review each page of blocking and split some notation between pages. The final version of the script ended up being 80 pages, so I then had to go back and merge some of the blocking notation. In the
future I would most likely only use this procedure on a published script and not on a devised work that can grow or shrink daily.

Figure 16. Page from blocking script for *The Camouflage Project*.

The last principle is to review my own **self-awareness** observations. During *The Camouflage Project* I maintained a levelheaded positive attitude with just the right amount of humor. I did have more trouble than usual maintaining discipline within the rehearsal process and felt that I was constantly battling attendance and attitude issues with the acting ensemble. This was a unique challenge, due to the nature of the project and the group of individuals involved. One of the factors that led to this challenge was
working with an entire ensemble of graduate student actors who teach twenty hours per
week, take twenty-five hours of classes and still need to take care of personal
commitments before coming to rehearsal. The other major factor was that most of the
acting ensemble had already spent six months working on the project, so each actor was
deeply committed to the one or more characters they researched and developed. I think a
lot of this was solved in my email to the company previously mentioned in this chapter,
but there were several times during the technical and dress rehearsals that the acting
ensemble became obnoxiously loud. When I am working with undergraduate stage
managers I am often the one keeping the cast under control while the undergraduate stage
manager is working through some technical elements with the director or designers, so
perhaps I simply needed a person there to assist me with that element. I believe my
problem solving skills are continuing to improve, as well as my ability to listen to several
people at the same time, for example a designer on headset, a director standing next to
me, and the action happening on the stage, although I sometimes wonder if I should hold
the action on the stage more often. I like to make sure that we achieve as much as
possible during technical and dress rehearsals, and that includes making sure the actors
have time to work their lines. It is frustrating when I’m solving a problem and let the
action on-stage continue and then receive a note because a cue was late. Most often the
issue has already passed by but the designer wants to deal with it immediately. I need to
take more responsibility in controlling the situation and, when appropriate, ignoring the
designer so that we do not miss a cue. In my opinion, The Camouflage Project was not
that difficult to call. Yes, a lot of work went into the programming of the cues by the
designers and programmers as well as the placement of each of those cues with me and
the designers, but once the show opened and we had a few opportunities to run the show consistently through without stopping there were not any difficult sequences. If I needed to pick one thing to approve upon it would be observing the cued sequences while they are happening. Some sequences, while not terribly difficult to call, still require me to pay more attention to the script than to what is happening on-stage. When I recall my time with the *Wicked* stage managers I remember being impressed by the small things that they would notice. Of course, they had all been working on the production for no less than two years. The 17 performances of *The Camouflage Project* is my longest run, so perhaps it takes a little bit longer to gain that level of comfort and familiarity with the show to make those observations.

Throughout this document we have examined the role of the stage manager using the AEA Definition of the Duties of a Stage Manager and my list of Key Principles and Essential Methodology of a Stage Manager. In conclusion, the following is how I define the role of the stage manager: A stage manager is a creator and an artist, who, through flexibility, self-motivation and a well-organized work environment, communicates and integrates information collected from members of a production in order to develop, maintain and execute the artistic intentions of the director and producer. A stage manager remains dedicated and compassionate to the production, assuming active responsibility for the form and discipline of each rehearsal and performance, all the while promoting harmony, a high standard of respect and a positive attitude between management and artists.
Bibliography


Appendix A: Definition of the Duties of a Stage Manager
Definition of the Duties of a Stage Manager

- A Stage Manager under Actors’ Equity Contract is, or shall be obligated to perform at least the following duties for the Production to which s/he is engaged, and by performing them is hereby defined as the Stage Manager:

- Shall be responsible for the calling of all rehearsals, whether before or after opening.
- Shall assemble and maintain the Prompt Book which is defined as the accurate playing text and stage business, together with such cue sheets, plots, daily records, etc., as are necessary for the actual technical and artistic operation of the production.
- Shall work with the Director and the heads of all other departments, during rehearsal and after opening, schedule rehearsal and outside calls in accordance with Equity regulations.
- Assume active responsibility for the form and discipline of rehearsal and performance, and be the executive instrument on the technical running of each performance.
- Maintain the artistic intentions of the Director and the Producer after opening, to the best of his/her ability, including calling correctional rehearsals of the company when necessary and preparation of the Understudies, Replacements, Extras and Supers, when and if the Director and/or Producer declines this prerogative. Therefore, if an Actor finds him/herself unable to satisfactorily work out an artistic difference of opinion with the Stage Manager regarding the intentions of the Director and Producer, the Actor has the option of seeking clarification from the Director or Producer.
- Keep such records as are necessary to advise the Producer on matters of attendance, time health benefits or other matters relating to the rights of Equity members. The Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Managers are prohibited from the making of payrolls or any distribution of salaries.
- Maintain discipline as provided in the Equity Constitution, By-Laws and Rules where required, appealable in every case to Equity.
- Stage Manager duties do not include shifting scenery, running lights or operating the Box Office, etc.
- The Council shall have the power from time to time to define the meaning of the words “Stage manager” and may alter, change or modify the meaning of Stage Manager as hereinabove defined.
- The Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Managers are prohibited from handling contracts, having riders signed or initialed, or any other function which normally comes under the duties of the General Manager or Company Manager.
- The Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Managers are prohibited from participating in the ordering of food for the company.
- The Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Managers are prohibited from signing the closing notice of the company or the individual notice of any Actor’s termination.
Appendix B: Ohio State Theatre Company Rules
“Actor Guidelines”

as adapted from The Actors Equity Handbook

The Ohio State University Department of Theatre, 1849 Cannon Drive, Columbus, OH 43210
The company of AIDA
to be performed November 18-21, 2010
in the Southern Theatre

WELCOME to the cast of AIDA. A copy of the company rules will be posted on the call board for this theatre. You will be notified of all updates. All other information about this production, such as rehearsal schedules, performances, costume fittings, photo and publicity sessions, will be posted there as well. Check the call board daily. A full company contact sheet will be distributed by the end of this week.

1. The stage manager for this production is ERICH MAYER. He/she can be reached by phone at 614-292-5744 or by e-mail at mayer.93@osu.edu. The Assistant Stage Managers for this show are ANGELA CUTFELL, CHRISTINE SKOBRAC, and SARAH HORNITZ. In the extreme case that you are unable to reach either the stage manager or an ASM, please leave a message at the Department of Theatre Office, reachable at 614 — 292 — 5021.

2. The first rehearsal for this production will be SEPTEMBER 29, 2010 in room 107. Normally rehearsals will take place in rooms 107, 83 AND THE HARBOUR ROOM. If and when we rehearse in room 107 at the Drake Performance and Event Center, you will be required to wear clean, soft soled shoes. Typical rehearsal times will be Monday through Friday from 6:30PM — 10:30PM. On Sundays, rehearsal will typically be from 12:00-5:00. If you do not have a rehearsal schedule, please see your stage manager.

3. Always bring your script, a pencil, and paper to rehearsals.

4. The movement for this production is such that you will need to wear comfortable types of clothing. Please bring this clothing to rehearsals. For some of you, rehearsal clothing will be provided. Stage management will take care of providing you with rehearsal clothing.

5. Come to rehearsal warmed up (vocally and physically) and ready to begin at your scheduled time.

6. The technical and dress rehearsals were provided as well as actor call times on the rehearsal schedule. We may discover that intricate costumes or makeup necessitates moving your call earlier. Be prepared for this to happen.

7. The performance schedule for this production is THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18 AT 8PM, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19 AT 11AM, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19 AT 8PM, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20 AT 3PM, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20 AT 8PM, AND SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21 AT 3PM. A pre-show talk and an afterword discussion may be scheduled during the performance run. The stage manager will alert you as to these dates later in the rehearsal process.

8. From this day forward, do not change your hair color or hair style until you have spoken with the costume designer.
9. No food is allowed in the rehearsal space or in the theatre. If you require liquids, make sure they are in closed containers. In addition, it is your responsibility to remove drink containers and personal items at the end of each rehearsal.

10. No smoking is allowed in or near the performance or rehearsal areas of the Drake Performance and Event Center.

11. Do not be late for rehearsal. Lateness disrupts the evening’s rehearsal and ultimately the overall quality of the show. If rehearsal begins at 6:30 PM, you must be ready to BEGIN at 6:30 PM. We have, in the past, enforced a policy of fines for lateness. If you have an emergency, call the stage manager FIRST. ASM’s should only be called if you cannot reach me. Please don’t be late for rehearsal.

12. Costume fittings will begin immediately. You will be scheduled by the stage manager for appointments in the costume studio and it is imperative that you keep these appointments and arrive promptly. If you cannot keep your fitting appointment, please contact the stage manager as soon as possible. I will take care of rescheduling. However, if you are running late the day of your costume fitting, contact the costume studio IMMEDIATELY at 614-292-0883.

13. There is a complimentary ticket policy for this show. All cast, crew, orchestra members, and designers will receive two (2) complimentary tickets for this production run. I will collect your complimentary ticket requests—a form will be provided in the near future. Tickets are on-sale now!

14. Restrooms are located on the ground floor down the hall to your right and on the first floor adjacent to Bowen Theatre. Public Phones are located on the first floor adjacent to the Theatre Department Office, room 1089 Drake Union.

15. Safety! If you walk across campus to and from rehearsals, be careful and protect yourself. Travel in groups and/or use the OSU Escort Service, 614-292-3322. If you drive, you are strongly advised to get a WC-sticker, which will enable you to park in the lot directly across from Drake Union after 5:00 p.m. To purchase a sticker, go to 160 Bevis Hall, 1089 Carmack Rd. The office is open 7:30 AM – 7:30 PM, Monday through Friday. If you are not an OSU student, see me during a break and I’ll provide information about a temporary sticker.

16. Please take a moment to fill out the schedule sheet. Be as specific to your schedule, including class name and length of time it meets, your work schedule, and any other conflicts. This sheet is to assist us with program information, scheduling of costume fittings, individual coaching sessions, and additional rehearsals if needed. I will need a confirmed schedule sheet by FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1. Any conflict dates over the course of the rehearsal period must be included now.

17. A note of courtesy: my role is the stage manager for this production. That means when I or a designated assistant call places, or breaks, or have any kind of announcement, there are only two responses that are acceptable. They are either "Thank you" or "I have a problem". This is required of EVERYONE. This is the only way we can know you have heard us. We do not treat this as a joke; this is the best way to ensure that our time is not wasted.

18. Next order of business is the election of the deputy. The deputy is an elected member of the company of Actors in production who serves as a liaison between OSU/Producer and the company in relation to all working conditions governing your work as an actor. The deputy may be called upon to advise OSU/Producer of rule infractions or complaints. It is the duty of the deputy to pursue the course that will best insure that the provisions of the actor’s rights be upheld according to the rules. No member may change or modify any rule without written authorization from OSU/producer. The deputy is dependent upon to promote harmony in the company and to inspire respect and confidence in the production. It is not always an easy job; but it is a position that brings the satisfaction of insuring the dignity of the actor. The deputy is elected by a majority of the cast members. The elections are run by the stage manager. Nominations are proposed and then a vote by hand is taken.
Appendix C: Performance Report
### DAILY PERFORMANCE REPORT

#### DAY
Tuesday  

#### DATE
June 15, 2010  

#### INTERMISSION
0:15:00  

#### ACT I
- **9:00:00**
- **1:25:34**
- **2:24:54**

#### ACT II
- **8:45:34**
- **9:44:54**
- **0:59:20**

#### TOTAL ELAPSED TIME
2:30:51

#### CALLING SM
Jason Daunter  

#### DECKING SM:
- Christy Ney
- Jen Marik

#### PERFORMANCE NOTES
Mandy back and strong. Great show all around.

#### CONDUCTING
Dominick Amendum

#### MIXING
Jack Babin (Pankin Noting)

#### CLIMATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act I</th>
<th>Act II</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BKSTO</strong></td>
<td><strong>FOH</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Temp</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hum</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>68.9 °F</td>
<td>50 %</td>
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#### Out(Role(s))
T. Parker  

#### In
B. Munn  

#### REASON
Sick

### 1st & Final Perps / Notices

### Accidents / Injuries / Illness

### Technical Notes

**Misc:**
- Paul and Patrick attending and noting.
- Eric Meyer joins as the stage management intern.

**Calls**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30pm</td>
<td><strong>REH ROOM:</strong></td>
<td>Mandy Gonzalez w/Dom &amp; MB</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:15pm</td>
<td><strong>ONSTAGE:</strong></td>
<td>Mandy Gonzalez &amp; Katie Rose Clarke w/KLO Fight Call</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:15-9:30pm</td>
<td><strong>REH ROOM:</strong></td>
<td>Kathy Fitzgerald w/MB</td>
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Appendix D: Actor Tracking for Aida
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT 1</th>
<th>PRINCIPALS</th>
<th>MALE ENSEMBLE</th>
<th>MALE ENS.</th>
<th>FEMALE ENS.</th>
<th>M &amp; EES.</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Overture</td>
<td>A A</td>
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<td>1a Every Story is a Love Story</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>1b My Own Little Intimate</td>
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<td>2 Fortune Favors the Brave</td>
<td>B B</td>
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<td>3a Fortune Favor's Playout</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>3b Radames' Quarters</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 The Pharaoh is Another Land</td>
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<tr>
<td>4c The Pharaoh's Private Banquet Room</td>
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<td>5a I've Got a Harem</td>
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<td>5b Dance Scene</td>
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<td>5c Karim's Dance</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>6a A Wonderful Life</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>7a Radames' Letter</td>
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<td>7b What Is My Song</td>
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<td>7c Karim's Letter</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>27a Radames' Letter</td>
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A Acting
D Dancing
E Exits at Beginning of song/scene
S Singing
(A) Offstage or in the Shadows
(S) Song continues through transition
I Onstage before transition into next scene

Rev 9/20/2010

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Appendix E: Props Tracking for Aida
Appendix F: Key Principles and Essential Methodology of a Stage Manager

A stage manager is a creator and an artist, who, through flexibility, self-motivation and a well-organized work environment, communicates and integrates information collected from members of a production in order to develop, maintain and execute the artistic intentions of the director and producer. A stage manager remains dedicated and compassionate to the production, assuming active responsibility for the form and discipline of each rehearsal and performance, all the while promoting harmony, a high standard of respect and a positive attitude between management and artists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Principle</th>
<th>Checklist Items</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Producing Organization and Contractual Obligations</td>
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<td>Key Players and Management Structure</td>
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<td>Generic Rehearsal Schedule</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Technical/Dress Rehearsal Schedule</td>
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<td>Assistant Stage Managers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Anticipated Challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Script read through and blocking script preparation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draft calendars and deadlines</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scene/character tracking chart</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Draft information packets and contact sheets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rehearsal room preparation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Preparing and updating paperwork templates</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting with Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Meet regularly with stage management team</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meet regularly with key players</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Selection of Assistant Stage Managers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Identify strengths and areas for improvement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Keep an eye on the big picture, monitor morale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Methods of communication</td>
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<td>Contact lists and distribution lists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology Integration</td>
<td>Available resources</td>
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<td>Special needs and feasible solutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficient Processes</td>
<td>What worked on the last production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What did not work on the last production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>What worked in the past</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What has not worked in the past</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Where am I as a human being</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Looking forward, what needs modified</td>
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</table>
Appendix G: The Camouflage Project Observations Email

Date: Apr 27 2011 12:26 am
Show: The Camouflage Project
From: Eric Mayer
To: Acting Company
Subject: Observations and Reminders

Actors,

First off, I want to thank you for all of the hard work as well as the blood, sweat and tears that you have put into The Camouflage Project. Creating a devised work with so many participants (12 actors + 2 directors + a grand assortment of collaborators) is not an easy task to accomplish, but I think that this production is shaping into a beautiful product that definitely has a life beyond Ohio State. We regularly receive emails from intrigued individuals who have found information about our production online and have similar research interests - or are simply glad that we are telling this story and volunteer to assist in whatever way possible.

We are at the point, though, where the going gets tough. Not only is tech week around the corner, we are also in the fifth week of spring quarter, which also means we are just a few weeks away from the summer - and that we have all spent more hours in this building over the last eight months than should be legally permitted. Trust me, as a fellow student, I understand. In fact, last Friday I was near the end of my rope after having spent 12 consecutive days at the Drake for a total of nearly 175 hours. I am by no means asking for your sympathy - I just want you to know that I am right there beside you, sometimes frightfully cranky and barely able to maintain my internal monologue or keep a good poker face when someone approaches me with a request, comment or suggestion.

However, we need to remember that when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Okay, I don't actually understand that saying, but at the midnight hour I can’t help but be a little cheesy (or would that be cheesy). In all seriousness, though, in an attempt to avoid using our valuable rehearsal time by having a heart to heart with you, where no poker face is good enough to hide your internal monologue, I need to remind you of the following professional courtesies and company rules:
- Be on time, company rule #11 states “Do not be late for rehearsal. Lateness disrupts the evening’s rehearsal and ultimately the overall quality of the show. If rehearsal begins at 6:30pm, you must be ready to BEGIN at 6:30pm.”

- As stated in the Responsibilities of the Actor, “notify the Stage Manager as soon as possible and certainly before a call, if you are ill or unable to reach the theatre on time.”

- Be courteous to all members of the production team. At Tuesday’s Production Meeting it was brought up that some actors felt that the designers were being disrespectful at our various runs and for the design team to remember that the actors can see their faces and reactions. The designers were horrified to hear that the actors felt that these reactions were directed at the actors - more often than not they are from designers who are thinking, “oh cr@p, I didn’t light that area.” Remember that it is a two way street - negative attitudes bring everyone down (so no b!tching about the show).

- This is a devised work, it’s going to change. We have taken the work of 20 plus collaborators and weaved it into a beautiful piece of art. At this point in the collaborative process it is time for the directors to be making decisions for the whole production - frankly we don’t have time to try things 12 different ways - we did that last quarter and the first four and a half weeks of this quarter.

- That isn’t to say that you were once creator/actors and now we only want you to be actors. Your input is still most definitely valued. We just need to make sure that we are directing our input through the proper channels in a positive manner. I am absolutely certain that Lesley will find the time to talk to you about it before or after rehearsal if something has been changed and it is bugging you. Ultimately Lesley is the script master - we all make suggestions and then Lesley, taking into account the big picture, makes the decision as to what will make the most sense both here and now - and for any future production that might be mounted. The whole “co-conceived by” title gives her that right. I don’t always agree with changes that are made, and I talk to Lesley about them. Sometimes my suggestions are used, and other times they are not - I’m happy when they are (and they work) and when they aren’t, I move on. I understand that your heart and soul are in some of the characters that you are portraying, but there’s a limited period of time available in the big picture - I encourage you to find other (positive) ways of exploring these characters...perhaps in a solo performance ;)

- Speaking of being positive - as I mentioned before, negative attitudes really bring people around you down. Please try to refrain from complaining about anything related to the play while you are in the building. Instead, have a constructive conversation with the directors, dramaturgs, or another collaborator - together we can find manageable solutions.
• If all else fails, and you don’t agree with how things are being run, don’t forget that you can always go to your Deputy in cases of disagreement or concern. The Deputy will then go to the proper authority to resolve the situation.

• Last, but not least - be professional - especially when we are running. It is very distracting to have laughter from behind the back wall, people sitting on the cubes on the sides and people not behaving like the professional actors that most of you were before coming to Ohio State. That was the one thing I really enjoyed about my internship last summer - how professional everyone was and how they all treated each other with respect. I keep looking really hard for that kind of respect in this department and I have trouble finding it sometimes. I am hopeful that you can help me see that it does exist here.

So that was really long - and I'll give you a cookie if you let me know that you read all of this!

Respectfully,

Eric
Appendix H: Sample page from The Camouflage Project
SCENE 14C: BICYCLE COMEDIC MONOLOGUE

(Reminiscent of Music Hall routine with solo performer backed by two assistants. During the course of this the assistants assemble two of the bicycle wheels.)

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE
And now for tonight's benefit performance for the war effort.

(Music and percussive sounds as performers enter the stage.)

TORY
Have you thought how you are going to get to work if transport becomes more difficult? I bet you haven't thought of a bicycle.

Of course you will find it difficult to buy a bicycle in wartime, but if you follow my instructions you will be able to make one for yourself.

First of all you will want some wire for the wheels. Any sort of strong wire will do, but I advise you not to get touching the telegraph wire or you will get into trouble.

Next you will want a bell and a lamp, but I advise you to get these ready-made.

Now remove some wheels off an old pram, or it will save you trouble if you remove some wheels off an old bike; and why not remove the handles off it at the same time? You will be silly if you don’t.

Now perhaps some of you young ladies have a boyfriend. Don’t be too shy to ask him to come round some night and help you to adjust your mudguard. And perhaps he will
Appendix I: Blocking Notation Process using Adobe Acrobat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Save scaled technical drawings of ground plans and scenic elements as Portable Document Format (PDF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Crop images in graphic editing software, such as Adobe Photoshop, so that you have one file for each ground plan and scenic element and save as TIFF. (If not using Adobe Photoshop, first open the PDF in Adobe Acrobat and save each PDF as a JPG or TIFF to be opened in your graphic editing software for cropping.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Use the text tool in your graphic editing software to create a scaled version of the initials you will be using to track actors, saving each as a TIFF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Import the ground plan TIFF as the background of a Master Page for a Microsoft Publisher document and add a placeholder for page numbers. Close the Master Page and insert the same number of pages as found in your script. Save document as a PDF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In Adobe Acrobat, open the custom stamp palette and import each of the scenic element and actor TIFFs as a new stamp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Open the ground plan PDF saved from Microsoft Publisher and stamp scenery or actor locations on each page. Use the editing tools to draw arrows and write notes corresponding to the movement of each actor. Use CTRL-A followed by CTRL-C to select and copy all objects on the current page. On the next page press CTRL-V to paste the objects from the previous page.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Printing – Option 1**

| 7    | To print the combined script and blocking notation, save a copy of the script as a PDF. |
| 8    | Open the ground plan in Adobe Acrobat and extract all pages as separate files. |
| 9    | Open the script in Adobe Acrobat and insert appropriate blocking pages. |

**Printing – Option 2**

| 7    | Save a copy of the script as a PDF. |
| 8    | Use the Automator tool on a Mac to “shuffle” the two PDF files together |

**Printing – Option 3**

| 7    | Print both documents separately |
| 8    | Manually collate the two printouts |