Welcome To

THE USER'S GUIDE TO NATHAN SEIFER AUDITORIUM

This document was written by James Feinberg in 1997 as his Senior Honors Thesis. It began as a proposal to buy some new lighting and sound equipment for Nathan Seifer, but it quickly became apparent that something more than just equipment was needed. There needed to be instructions for the people who would use the equipment so that neither they nor the equipment would get hurt. From came the idea for a "User's Guide," which evolved into what you see here.

The guide is divided into sections, one each for Lighting Designers, Sound Designers, Stage Managers, and Technical Directors. There is also a section for things that apply to more than one group, including opening up Nathan Seifer. At the end there is a list of where to buy the supplies you need, and a section describing the equipment changes that were made and improvements that can be done in the future. Finally, there are copies of the manuals for the sound board, the MiniDisc player, and the amplifier.

I hope that you will find this useful and that it saves you some time and aggravation in working in the less-than-ideal conditions that are Nathan Seifer.

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STAGE MANAGEMENT

Stage Managing in Nathan Seifer poses new challenges for even the most experienced Stage Manager. Your booth is cramped and, despite the fact that you have traveled through half of Ford Hall to get to it, it is open to the audience. You are also often missing the support staff that you'd find in a professional theater. However, you can generally find people on your production staff and sympathetic people who have come before you who will help out and share your pain.

The duties of the Stage Manager will vary from show to show, and especially from director to director. Some directors will like to do everything themselves, while some will want their Stage Manager to do almost everything. This guide cannot begin to address every issue that a Stage Manager will face. Instead, I hope it serves as a starting point for your experience. I highly recommend further reading on the subject, especially Ilene Mass' thesis from 1995; you should also talk to Ms. Barbara Harris in Spingold. Ms. Harris can provide a copy of Ilene's thesis and a tremendous wealth of other advice and information.

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS

You will want to have at least one Assistant Stage Manager, sometimes two on a larger show. Just as your relationship with the director will vary from show to show, so will your relationship and division of labor with your ASM. During rehearsals, the ASM will serve as your assistant, just as the name would suggest. He or she can help take blocking, or stay on book and take line notes, or anything else that will free you to concentrate on the larger picture. He or she will also stand in for any actors who may be absent. During tech rehearsals and performances, the ASM will be your eyes and ears backstage. He or she should stay on headset at all times, ready to act on your behalf should the need arrive. The ASM will also be responsible for props and furniture on and back stage and will directly supervise the run crew.

BEFORE REHEARSALS BEGIN

The first thing you should do is talk to your director and agree on what will be expected of you.

Once **audition** and callback dates have been set, you will need to contact the University Events Center (UEC) to book a space for auditions, and again for callbacks. If you want to audition in Nathan Seifer, you will need to check with the Undergraduate Theater Collective (UTC) as well, although this availability, along with your rehearsal and performance dates in Nathan Seifer, has probably already been determined at a UTC meeting.

You will need to create an **audition information sheet and sign-up sheet** and post them on the UTC callboard near the phones in Usdan upper lobby. Find out from the Director how long each person will have to audition, and what (if anything) they should have prepared.

You should also create an **audition form**. The audition form is a way for you to gather contact information from each actor, and for the director to gather information about

the actor's experience and talents. You can generally distribute and collect these forms at the auditions. Actors can complete them while waiting to audition.

After the show has been cast, either you or the director will post the final **cast list** on the UTC callboard.

Once the cast is set, you should create a **contact sheet** for the production. Include the cast, Stage Management staff, Director, Designers, and any other people involved with the production, such as a Musical Director or Technical Director. Include names, phone numbers, campus mailboxes, campus addresses, and even email addresses if you'd like. It is also a good idea to include numbers for Public Safety and restaurants that deliver. You should distribute this list to all members of the company at the first rehearsal.

At some point before the first rehearsal, you and the Director should create a **rehearsal calendar**, including dates and times. You can then go to the UEC and book rehearsal spaces for these times. Depending on your show, you may try to work in Nathan Seifer for the entire time. If other shows are in the space, you could work in places like Alumni Lounge, International Lounge, Shiffman 219, Pearlman Lounge, or Silver Auditorium in Sachar. You might try to book space in Spingold, either the rehearsal room or the Crawford studio, or in some of Slosberg's rehearsal rooms. In a pinch, you can even work in places like Ziv Commons.

Another thing you will want to do before the first rehearsal is make a **prompt script**. Basically, the prompt script is a copy of the original script photocopied and enlarged so that you have each page of the script on its own 8 1/2" x 11" sheet. It should be enlarged enough so that the text is easily readable but you should still have large margins and blank backs of pages to take blocking notes and write in light and sound cues during tech. You can put your prompt script in a large loose-leaf binder, along with rehearsal schedules, the contact sheet, and any other paperwork associated with the show.

DURING REHEARSALS

During rehearsals, your responsibilities increase even further. In many respects, you are the secretary for the production. It is the Stage Manager's job to ensure that the cast knows when they are called for rehearsal, that they are there on time, and that they are ready to work. You should post or distribute the rehearsal breakdown (more detailed than the original calendar) as far in advance as possible, and keep a copy of everything in your prompt script.

The Stage Manager is responsible for taking **blocking** notes during rehearsals. In brief, this means writing down the actions of the actors in your script. Include entrances and exits, props used, crossing the stage, sitting and standing, and interactions with other actors. The key is to take all of these notes in pencil, because they will change many times. Also, you will want to stay "on book" during rehearsals, so that you can help the actors when they forget their lines, and give **line notes** at the end of the night. Line notes are most helpful if you can tell the actor not only what he or she should have said but also what was said, as well as the page number of the erroneous line.

It's a good idea to take **breaks** periodically. It generally falls to the stage manager to stop rehearsal for breaks and to make sure that the rehearsal starts up again on time. Actors Equity ("The Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States") has in their contract a system of break periods that is reasonable and practical, and makes a good guide to follow. Equity calls for a break of five minutes after fifty-five of

rehearsal, or ten minutes after eighty. If you are in a run where it is not practical to stop, Equity requires at least a ten minute break at intermission. In a long rehearsal, there must be a meal break of at least an hour and a half after five hours. And finally, the cast should have at least 12 hours off between the end of one rehearsal and the start of the next.

Additionally, the Stage Manager is the liaison between the people who are at rehearsal every day -- the cast and the director -- and the people who are not -- the designers and the production staff. This relationship is a bit distorted in the undergraduate theater groups, where people often wear many hats, but the principles are still the same. It's up to you to make sure that people get the information they need, either in the form of periodic (as often as daily) **rehearsal reports**, or scheduling production meetings, or just making phone calls. You will also coordinate with the costume designer on getting **rehearsal costumes** and shoes and scheduling costume fittings, and with the scenic designer and director on getting **rehearsal props and furniture**.

Gathering items for the cast to work with in rehearsal is a group effort, involving the designers, director, and the cast, but the ultimate responsibility for this falls to the Stage Manager.

As the Stage Manager, you should be the first person to get to rehearsals, and the last person to leave. When you arrive, you will want to unlock whatever doors people will need to open, turn on the lights, clean up after the people who used the space earlier in the day, and get the space ready for your rehearsal. This may involve setting up a table for you and the director, setting out rehearsal props and furniture, and sweeping. If you are working in Nathan Seifer, you will want to read the section on Opening and Preparing Nathan Seifer, under General Information.

TECHNICAL REHEARSALS

Before you go into technical rehearsals (tech), a week or so before the show opens, you will want to assemble everything you will need. This includes things like getting the cues from the designers (see paper tech, below) and finding a crew. A good place to get a run crew is from the other members of the club that is producing your show. Chances are you have already found an Assistant Stage Manager or two that way -- people have come out of the woodwork at club meetings or gotten in touch with you through your producer. You will need to decide how many more people you will need backstage to help with scene changes, costume changes, and handling props. Up to now, you will have been doing most of this on your own in rehearsals, so you should have a pretty good idea of your needs.

One other thing that you should know about before you go into tech is **calling cues**. At paper tech (see below), you will get from the designers the placement of the cues. This refers to where in the script the designer wants the cue to take place. You will have to ask your designers if they are telling you when they want the cue to start, or finish, or something in between. Once you have written a cue into your script, you can go back and add warnings and standbys. A warning will tell the operator that there is a cue coming up, and they should double check their readiness. A standby will tell the operator that you are about to call the cue, and they should have their finger on the button (or whatever action is appropriate) so the cue can happen immediately when you say the word 'go'. You want to identify the cue with each call. Here is an example of how you would call light cue 39: "Warning, Light Cue 39". (pause, around 30 or 40 seconds, depending on how much advance warning your operator needs). "Standby, Light Cue 39". (just a few seconds pause here). "Light Cue 39, Go!" The operator should know that they don't do anything until they hear the word, "Go." Everyone on headset should know that only the Stage

Manager uses that word, and only when there's really a cue, and also that no one talks during a Standby or even a Warning unless there's a genuine emergency.

There are several variations on the technical rehearsal. Most shows involve all of these in some form or another. You will want to talk with your designers and plan things out, and then publish a schedule that everyone can follow. I will list the elements of tech in the schedule here, and then describe them in detail below. Paper tech can be at any convenient time for the parties involved. Traditionally, dry tech takes a full day, wet tech another full day, and then you can have as few as one or as many as four or five tech/dress rehearsals before you open. In Spingold, dry tech runs noon to midnight on Friday, wet tech is noon to midnight on Saturday, dress/tech starts at noon on Sunday, and the rest of the day Sunday (until midnight) is spent fixing problems or running the show. Monday night there is a final run-through, and Tuesday is preview with opening the next night. It will be up to you and the production staff to determine how much time your show will need in tech, but I recommend a schedule similar to Spingold's model. By the end of tech, you should have the show ready to go and running under performance conditions, so the only thing that is new on opening night is the audience.

Tech generally starts with a **paper tech**, when the Stage Manager sits down with the designers and writes the cues into the prompt script. This, of course, assumes that the designers have worked out their cues in advance, which is a reasonable assumption. But this can take place in a small meeting, and saves a lot of time during dry tech, when lots more people are around.

Once you have got the cues, you are ready for **dry tech**. Dry tech is also known as a Tech Without Actors, which is an accurate description. It's a chance for the lighting designer to see his or her cues on stage and show them to the director, and then make changes. It's rare that all the cues have been written before dry tech, so things generally slow down later in the day as the designer starts writing cues from scratch. It's also the time for the sound designer to hear the sound cues and set levels, and it's generally the first time that you get to see everything all together -- the set, the lights, and the sound. The Stage Manager generally starts sitting at the **tech table** in the house at dry tech, along with the designers who are present. There is no pre-built tech table in Nathan Seifer, so it's up to you and the design team to come up with one. You can do without one, and just use those little desks on the seats, but that won't work very well for a big loose-leaf binder. The easiest thing to do is just to take a sheet of plywood and lay it across the backs of the seats, so that you are sitting about 5 or 10 rows back. During dry tech, you will want to practice calling tough cue sequences. If you have set changes, this is the time to work out the details with your run crew.

At some point before you bring in the actors, you will need to make sure that you have got enough **running lights** (low wattage lights, often gelled blue) backstage, and enough **glo-tape** on your spike marks and on anything that an actor might walk into or trip over in a blackout (things like stairs, doorways, etc.). You will also need to prepare **props tables** in the hallways backstage. There should be a place marked for every prop on a table. This way, every prop will go in the same place every night, so actors will always know where to find them and ASM's can easily see if anything is missing. These are good things for your assistants to do while you are working with the designers during dry tech.

You will also want to prepare a **sign-in sheet** that you can post in a central location backstage. Each actor and crew member (and musician, if applicable) should sign in when he or she arrives for tech rehearsals and performances, and no one should leave after they have signed in without telling you. This way, you can quickly and easily see who is present

and who needs a reminder phone call. You can either make a big chart with everyone's names down the side and rehearsal and performance dates across the top, or make a new page for each day. Either way, you can also use the sign-in board as a place to leave notes for the entire cast each night. Some things you will want to post are the time of the next performance and any special calls they might have, like photo calls or a brush-up rehearsal.

Once you have the cues in your book, the sign-up sheets on the wall, and the running lights ready backstage, you are ready for **wet tech**, also known as Tech With Actors. At the beginning of the day, when you first bring in the actors, you will want to take some time and explain the plan to them all at once. Explain to them that this rehearsal is about the tech, not the acting. You may be asking them to start and stop at what seem like random times, and when you ask them to stop they should stay quietly in place until you tell them to go on or ask them to take a different position. You should give everyone plenty of time to walk around on the set, if appropriate, since it's often the first time that the actors have seen the entire set installed. Take the time to show the actors the real props, and make sure they know which real props are replacing which rehearsal props. Make it clear that, while you will be asking them to stop for the designers, they should feel free to ask you (or anyone else) to stop at any time if they don't feel safe. Things look very different under the lights, and it's easy for things to go wrong and people to get hurt if everyone doesn't know what's going on.

At some point, either during wet tech or at the next rehearsal, the director and designers will want to see the cast in full costume and makeup. Find out when that is and make sure everyone is aware of the schedule. Before this starts, you will need to make sure that the costume and makeup staff have everything in place and ready to go. Generally, they will set up in the Balcony, taking it over as a kind of hybrid dressing room and green room.

Things can get pretty confusing during wet tech, and it's up to the Stage Manager to keep everyone informed and to keep things running smoothly. If the lighting designer is taking too long on one particular cue, ask if he or she can take a note and move on. Very often a director will try to take advantage of downtime (while a designer is working) to get in some acting notes. That's fine, as long as when the designer is ready to move on, the director stops. The director should also be devoting his or her attention to the technical aspect the designer is working on, and not so much to the acting. It's your place to make sure that everyone is getting the attention they need and that everyone is on the same page. If you have stopped for more than a few seconds, yell out to everyone where you are in the script when you start up again. Also keep in mind that you are still required to take breaks during tech (both 5 minutes out of 60 or 10 out of 90 and every five hours for a meal).

During Wet Tech, the designers (lighting, scenic, sound, and sometimes costumes) should have a chance to see their work under something close to performance conditions. The set will look different under the lights, as will the costumes if they are available for wet tech, and all the designers will have to work together with the director to achieve the desired effects. Generally, you will go through the show in order, stopping as needed to fix things, and skipping over any long sections without cues. If you feel the need, you can go back and run things again to make sure everything is working right. In a complex show, this can easily take the full 12 hours allowed in a day, and even some of the next. But in Nathan Seifer, if things run smoothly, you can be home long before midnight.

Once you have all of the bugs worked out, you are ready for a **Dress/Tech** rehearsal. In a dress/tech, you try to run through the show completely. But since this is the first time you have actually run it with costumes, lights, sound, and scene changes, chances are good that something will go wrong. Everyone should be prepared to stop as needed.

This rehearsal, along with some extended time for the cast and crew to get ready and for a good notes session afterwards, will probably take the entire night.

Then, hopefully, you will have time in your schedule for one or more full **Dress Rehearsals**, culminating in a **Final Dress Rehearsal** before you open. When you are running a full dress rehearsal, you want to get as close to real performance conditions as possible. Give the cast half-hour, fifteen minute, ten minute, and five minute warnings before you call them to places for the top of the show. Make sure they have all of their costumes, props, and makeup before half-hour. Also make sure that the stage is set and all of the lights are working and everything is ready to go, so that you can hand the house over to the House Manager at half-hour. Then, while everyone is getting ready, take some time for yourself to look over your book, sit in the booth and stare at the stage, or whatever you need to do to get yourself mentally ready to call the show. Run without stopping, timing it on your stopwatch, take a regular-length intermission, run the curtain call, then let the director give notes after the show. The Stage Manager should be present at the notes sessions to get any notes that the director might have for the crew or the designers.

PERFORMANCES

By this time, you should know the show backwards and forwards. You have had a chance to run it several times without an audience, even under performance conditions, and maybe had an invited audience at your Final Dress. You have worked out all the technical problems, and struck the tech table. The time has come. Say farewell to the director and the designers, say hello to the house manager and the ushers. It's your show. It's up to the Stage Manager to ensure the artistic integrity of the show once it has opened. Take notes during the runs, and give them to the cast either after the show or at half-hour the next day. Don't go crazy, but if the actors suddenly decide to change the script, it's your job to steer them back in the right direction. It's also your job to watch for any technical problems, like lights not working or furniture falling apart. If you let the designers know, they should take care of it. If they don't, then you should handle it if you can. But the most important thing to remember is **have fun**!

Sample Audition Form

Name _____ Year _____

Phone _____ Alt. Phone _____

Mailing Address _____

Living Address _____

Email Address_____

height _____ weight_____ age _____

eye color _____ hair color _____

Emergency Contact:

Name _____ Phone _____

Please list any instruments you play _____

Please list any foreign languages you speak _____

What have you prepared for your audition?

Do you have any additional comments for the director?

Do you have ANY conflicts during the rehearsal period?

Sample Rehearsal Report

Rehearsal #   Date:
Location: Stage Manager:

Start:	Resume:	Resume:
Break:	Break:	End:
Resume:	Resume:	**Total Rehearsal Time:**
Break:	Break:	

Planned Activity:	**Actual Rehearsal**:

Late/Absent Personnel:

General Notes:

Props Notes:

Set Notes:

Costume Notes:

Lighting Notes:

Sound Notes:

Sample Performance Report

Performance #   Date:

Location: Stage Manager:

Curtain Time:

Act I start:	Intermission time:	Act II start:
Act I end:		Act II end:
Act I time:		Act II time:

General Notes:

Tech Notes:

APPENDIX B:
SUGGESTED READING

Backstage Handbook   (Third Edition) by Paul Carter. © 1994. Broadway Press:
          Shelter Island, NY. 800-869-6372

Theatrical Design and Production (Second Edition) by J. Michael Gillette.
          ©1992. Mayfield Publishing Company: Mountain View, California.

Stage Lighting Revealed: A Design and Execution Handbook. by Glen
          Cunningham. ©1993. Betterway Books: Cincinnati, Ohio. 800-289-0963

Sound and Music for the Theatre: The Art and Technique of Design by Deena
          Kaye and James LeBrecht. ©1992. Back Stage Books: New York, NY.

Sound Design in the Theatre by John L. Bracewell. ©1993. Prentice-Hall:
          Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Sound for the Stage: A Technical Handbook by Patrick M. Finelli. ©1989. Drama
          Book Publishers: NY, NY.

The Stage Management Handbook by Daniel A. Ionazzi. ©1992. Betterway
          Publications: White Hall, VA. 804-823-5561

Stagecraft: A Handbook for Organization, Construction, and Management by
          David Welker. ©1987. Allyn and Bacon, Inc. Newton, MA.