



Directors' Handbook

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Based on Version 1.1. by Chris Carcione

The Director

The Director of a show is charged by the membership with the responsibility of seeing the show through to completion. The Director is responsible for selecting an artistic vision for the show; this vision should answer the questions of why Stage Troupe should be doing the show and which of the show's themes the audience should understand when they exit the theater. It is the paramount responsibility of the Director to convey this information to both the cast and crew of the show.

One important responsibility of the Director is to obtain scripts for the cast and key members of the crew; details on how to do this will be explained later in this handbook. The Director should maintain a good idea of the production's budget and make important decisions about the show's technical needs based on that information, along with the Producer, the Technical Director, and individual members of the technical crew.

A successful show requires that the Director actively seek out his production heads and discuss ideas with them, as well as the other members of the technical crew. Remember that your tech crew has ideas too, and mounting a show is a collaborative process. Directors should familiarize themselves with the theater policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

So You Think You Might Want to Direct?

So now you know what the Director does and you think you might want to take a crack at it. What next? Well if you don't have a play that you want to direct, you should probably try to find one, it's kind of an important part to the process. You could always ask your friends if any of them know of a show that they would like to see done by Troupe. Once you find a show you think you might want to direct, be sure about it; you're going to be spending a lot of your time on this show, seeing and hearing it probably more than you care to, so make sure you love it.

Once you have a show and you know you love it and you want to direct it for sure, you should fill out a pitch form (which can be found on the Stage Troupe website) and go to the General Meeting where pitches are made. This is your chance to try to convince the membership that Troupe should do this show; try to make them understand why you love the show and why they should. Be sure to talk about all of the interesting and challenging aspects of your show, not just for the actors, but for the technicians as well.

If your show gets selected, CONGRATULATIONS, you're going to be a Director for Stage Troupe! If not, sorry, but don't be discouraged, be sure to stay involved with Troupe and try again next season!

Some Guidelines for Directing a Successful Production

If you read nothing else in this handbook, it is imperative that you read at least these six guidelines to directing a Stage Troupe show. They are the most basic bullet points of the most important rules contained in this handbook.

1. When you visit someone else's house, play by their rules. We are guests in **every space** on campus. We are very privileged guests at the Student Theater at Agganis Arena and extremely privileged guests at The Space. Follow the rules for these spaces and be courteous to the administration and B&G if they come asking questions.
2. Major Theater Rules:
 - a. Maximum seating capacity is 101. There is no flexibility with this number. You may have an number of people on stage, but only 4 people in the booth (typically the Lighting Designer, the Sound Designer, and their assistants).
 - b. Paths to emergency exits must be kept clear at all times, exit signs must be plainly illuminated and fire alarms must be visible at all times.
 - c. There are no flames of any kind allowed in the theater. Ever.
 - d. You may not use any device that suspends particles in the air such as fog machines, saws, dry ice, etc.
 - e. Make sure the theater is kept clean, locked at the end of the day, and make sure you sign in and out in the log.
3. Keep the E-Board informed at all times about events and decisions, even if they seem unimportant or obvious. The E-Board does not like to hear about Stage Troupe from Eric, who in turn heard about Stage Troupe from his superiors. It is much better for information to travel up the chain of command than down.
4. Your actions set a precedent for your cast and the membership. Be professional, take care of your production and your cast members and strive to set a positive tone for your show and the group as a whole. Encourage your cast to attend General Meetings and Troupe functions, such as Special Projects.
5. Everyone on your production is, and must be, a team. Your primary goal is to work together with your cast and crew to create the best possible product to fulfill your artistic vision. While you are responsible for this vision, you work *with* your Producer and Technical Director to accomplish your goals – they do not work *for* you.

6. Your show is part of a group; it is not an individual entity. While your goal should always be to make the best show possible, your show should strive to make Troupe the best performing arts group it can be. You are working with a your show's unique team, the E-Board, and the other shows to make this Troupe's best season.

The First Week

The First General Meeting

At the first meeting of the season, dress sharp and show up ready to present your show to the membership. You will have **three minutes** to tell the membership about your show and convince them that they should audition and/or tech for you. This will be very similar to your pitch of the show before the voting last semester, but this time you're trying to convince the membership to be a part of the show, not just to let you do it. Begin by introducing yourself. You should then mention the cast breakdown, briefly explaining each of the roles. You should mention very briefly the technical needs of the show. Most of all, you should convey to the membership why Troupe is doing this show, expressing your artistic vision for the production; try to make them excited about being a part of the show. Try to mention any relevant information about your auditions that vary from the standard audition procedure. After three minutes, the membership will have the opportunity to ask questions.

Auditions

Ah, auditions. You are solely responsible for casting your show, though you may illicit help from anyone not auditioning for the season. Troupe's audition procedure allows any member who has paid dues to audition for any/all mainstage shows and Special Projects. Typically, auditioners will sign-in with the Treasurer, then sign up on the individual sheet of each of the shows they are auditioning for. An E-Board member will give them an individual audition sheet for each show. You should prepare a sheet with the cast breakdown on it so people are familiar with the types of characters you are looking for; you can also include any additional questions you want to ask. As you go through auditions, you will call out names from the list and give them a partner (or none or several) and have them practice a cold reading of your choosing. Though variances from this procedure are allowed, whatever process you choose, be sure to keep your audition requirements to a minimum to facilitate the audition process. Another option is to leave gender-specific monologues at the sign-in table that each auditioner can pick up as they sign in.

After three days of auditions, you will make a callback list of those actors you wish to see again. Nobody can be cast without being called back. Since all casting is done from a general pool and nobody can be in two mainstage shows in the same semester, make sure you callback more people than you need.

Auditions are usually Monday through Wednesday from 6pm – 10pm, with callbacks on Thursday from 6pm – 10pm. Auditions are long and can quite stressful if you don't go in armed with this advice:

- Prepare! Make sure you have plenty of copies of cold readings –especially a lot of scenes with 2 females (if possible), as you will likely have more women auditioning than men.
- Arrive at 5pm to set up your room so you can begin promptly at 6pm.
- Move quickly. You have a lot of people to audition, so don't spend too much time with only a few people. Make sure you get to everyone.
- Don't worry if everyone you audition doesn't read for the part you are considering them for at the first audition; that's what callbacks are for. The primary audition is a test of skill and in most cases, you will know right away if an actor is right for any part in your show regardless of what they read.

**Auditions will end promptly at 10pm each night.
No exceptions!**

The Casting Meeting

You might have heard dark tales from casting meetings, but the truth is, casting can and should be a quick and peaceful process if you remember these two things:

1. The goal of the casting meeting is to cast four great shows, not one stellar show. Certainly you want all of your first choices, but as your show is part of a group and not an individual entity, you must be willing to be flexible in your casting decision.
2. Don't marry yourself to any single actor. No actor has the potential to make or break your show. If you feel that is true, you don't know how to do your job properly. You will see over a hundred people during auditions; some will be awful, some will be extraordinary, but most will be just fine. Your job as a director is to hone your actors into believable characters. That skill should extend beyond a single actor.

A proven method to make casting easy for a director is to make a chart of each of your first, second, third, and fourth choices for each role in your show. You may not necessarily fill in four choices for each role, and that is fine, but be sure to have at least two, three if possible, for each role. As a helpful note, try not to put anyone on the chart that you would not willingly welcome in your cast. This will help you focus and prepare yourself to make crucial sacrifices before the meeting begins. In other words, make sure that you're 100% satisfied with your second-choice cast.

Following callbacks, all of the Directors, Assistant Directors, the Student Group Advisor, and a non-auditioning, unbiased E-Board member will assemble for the casting meeting. The E-Board member will serve as the mediator and will administer the meeting. Once the meeting begins, each Director will read his first

choice actor for each role. While the first Director is reading his first-choice cast, all other Directors will say “conflict” if a name appears on their first-choice lists. The other Directors will say “possible conflict” if a name appears on their second, third, or fourth-choice list. This process continues until all the Directors have read their first-choice lists.

The mediator will then begin a forum of discussion where each conflict will be addressed one by one until all conflicts have been resolved. Once all conflicts have been resolved, each Director will read his final list again, to ensure that nobody appears on more than one list.

Regarding conflict resolution:

The majority of the conflict resolution strategy relies not on the mediator, but on the good will and amiability of the Directors. For example, if Director A wants to cast an actor in a smaller role, while Director B wants the same actor for a lead role, common sense and etiquette dictate that Director A relinquish the actor to Director B. Major conflicts arise when an actor is in contention for multiple roles of the same size and a discussion must be started to resolve the conflict. If the conflict is not resolved between the Directors, the mediator will make the decision. The mediator may ask whatever questions he feels will prepare him to make a responsible casting decision. The mediator’s decision is final. It is the opinion of Stage Troupe that casting decisions made by the mediator adversely affects the spirit of theatrical production and must be practiced only in the rarest of circumstances.

**** NOTE:** All discussion that takes place in the casting room stays in the casting room. Information that leaves the casting meeting can **ONLY** hurt feelings – nothing more. For that paramount reason, it is **strictly forbidden** to discuss the meeting after it has ended.

The Tech Meeting

Usually on the Friday of audition week, the Technical Advisor will call a technician’s meeting at the Space. You are required to attend to discuss, in greater detail, your artistic vision for the show, noting the technical demands of your show. It is here that you mention if you need a four-story rotating set or if you need sixteen matching dresses. The TA will make every effort to assign the proper technicians to each show based on your presentation of the show’s technical needs.

Now Your Show Is Off and Running!

First and foremost, you should make copies of your show's script for your actors, Stage Manager(s), TD(s), and other techies. Technically, making photocopies of a script that you buy at a bookstore or borrow from a library is illegal. However, what Stage Troupe doesn't know, won't hurt it. In other words, if you make copies of the script on your own, who would know? Once the scripts are handed out, have a read-through of the script with the actors. It is encouraged that you invite your technical staff to the read-through as well so that they may become familiar with you, the cast, and the show. You should also arrange a time with your TD to have a tech meeting so you can meet your tech staff and start exchanging ideas.

It is your responsibility to schedule rehearsals with your actors and Stage Managers. You must inform the Vice President of your rehearsal schedule so that he may reserve University spaces for your rehearsals. You will be assigned rooms on campus for the times and days you specify. There are many different ways to rehearse a show, none of which will be outlined here. You'll have to pick up a how-to directing book for that; just remember that your responsibility is to your cast and to Stage Troupe to have a well-rehearsed show on opening night.

As previously stated, your show and your cast members are a part of Stage Troupe. Stage Troupe is the oldest and largest performing arts group at the University. It follows over a half-century's worth of tradition of producing wonderful theater for the BU community, and of being a fun group where everyone can participate in theater, learn, and enhance their college experience. It is the hope of every E-Board that you instill in your cast and crew the feeling that they are a part of the Troupe family. It is imperative that you encourage your cast to come to General Meetings; they are the means by which we keep the group running and it is important for the membership to show their support of the group as a whole. Encourage them to attend all Stage Troupe functions such as Combats!, Special Projects, and other events. Internally, encourage your actors to bond with their castmates by organizing events with your cast such as movie nights, parties, trips to theater in Boston, sitting together at other Troupe shows in the season, etc. Finally, try your best to include the technical staff in all bonding activities. Often they are involved with several productions at once, but it's important to create a feeling of togetherness within your show, among all of the shows in the season, and within Stage Troupe.

Production Heads

Every Stage Troupe show will have three defined production heads: the Director, the Technical Director, and the Producer. The three of you are responsible for the areas designated to you in the below definitions and are responsible for working together to serve the best interest of the production until it's complete.

The E-Board: The E-Board is your best friend. While not an official production head by any means, the E-Board functions as an advisory board and a resource for your production. Its aim is to ensure that four productions go up with as little headache as possible. If anything goes wrong, or if you have any problems or questions, be they artistic, personal, or procedural, the E-Board is there to offer guidance. For example, if there is some costume or prop that your productions staff can't find, tell the E-Board and they'll work on it. If you run into a conflict among actors, they'll offer advice or step in if necessary to resolve the conflict.

Director: You will formulate an artistic concept to present to the production staff and you are responsible for all areas of production and keeping communication open between the staff. The Director is responsible for casting the show and for solving cast problems. The Director is responsible for scheduling and holding rehearsals and preparing the actors for the performance.

Technical Director: Your TD will oversee all the technical aspects of your show in accordance with the artistic concept presented by the Director. The TD will be responsible for assembling the crew for build sessions and seeing that all the show's technical aspects are completed in a timely fashion. The TD will also ensure that the proper paperwork gets to the Producer regarding technical expenses from the show.

Producer: Your Producer is responsible for all of the financial aspects of the show and will be given a budget to work with by the E-Board Treasurer. The Producer is also responsible for creating marketing materials for the show, including tickets, posters, flyers, and programs. The producing team is also responsible for house management during performances, unless that job is delegated to another member of the technical staff.

The most important thing to remember is that all three of these production heads are on the same hierarchical level. You are all working together – as a team – to make the show a success; it is important to remember not to step on the toes of your TD or Producer. Each production head has a distinct job and you must trust that your co-production heads will fulfill their duties, just as they will trust that you will fulfill yours as Director.

The being said, if there happens to be a dispute among production heads, the Director has the final say in the outcome. If the dispute involves principally the Director or if the Director's final decision doesn't result in an amicable outcome, the dispute will be presented to the E-Board for review. The E-Board will decide the best outcome of the conflict; the E-Board's decision is final.

A Word on Communication

With the E-Board

If you have any questions or problems, contact the E-Board. If anything goes wrong, even if it seems slight, contact the E-Board. Weekly meetings of the E-Board are held every Sunday at 6:00pm. You, your Producer, and your Technical Director are required to attend every meeting through the duration of your show's run. At these meetings you may bring up any problems you are having or anything else that you need help with. Remember, the E-Board's decision is final.

With your fellow production heads:

Communicate! It is the only way to guarantee success. Your Producer and Technical Director should constantly be informed about any changes, problems, or other miscellaneous issues that arise during the production. Make sure you exchange contact information right away and keep the lines of communication open.

Important University Policies

University Closings

If BU closes, Stage Troupe closes. This includes performances, special projects, on-campus rehearsals, meetings – everything. The E-Board will try to accommodate and reschedule any cancelled events, but if the university closes, so do we.

Injuries

In the event of an injury that requires medical attention beyond a Band-Aid, the injury must be reported to the University. If an injury does occur, follow these steps:

1. Calm the injured person down to prevent further injury.
2. Call the BUPD at 617-353-2121 and report the injury. They will call the ambulance and take care of all the paperwork so you don't have to.
3. Notify the E-Board immediately.
4. Go back to your life.

Injuries are a serious matter and must be reported to the University, even if they don't seem very serious. There may be long-term side effects of injuries and the injured party may want a record of treatment. The University is insured for injuries that happen during normal activities and no harm will come to Troupe if an injury occurred during normal activities.

Fire Alarms

If a fire alarm goes off, your only responsibility is to evacuate yourself. You have no obligation to put yourself at risk trying to be a hero. Comply with the instructions of anyone from arena staff or the fire department.

Nudity

No. Eric's rule of thumb is: If you can walk down the street wearing it, then you can wear it onstage. Often, the suggestion of nudity is more powerful onstage than actual nudity in many cases. After all, theater is often an art of manipulation; use your keen theatrical skills to create the illusion of nudity, if it is necessary, and your audience will believe that your actors are naked.

Fire Code

Your technical Director will be well-informed about all of the fire code rules. There are many, they are often confusing, and they are set in stone. You do not need to know them, but understand that if your TD or any member of the E-Board says

something is in violation of fire code, it must be fixed. They can all help you come up with creative alternatives to remediate the violation, but when it comes to fire code rules, there is no flexibility. The Fire Marshall is free to inspect the theater at any time to make sure it is up to fire code. If he finds that it is not, he has the right to close your show, and that would be a big disappointment to your cast, crew, and the rest of Stage Troupe. It is in the best interest of all involved that you adhere to these rules as best you can.

The Student Theater

Theater Opening/Closing Procedure

1. When you arrive at the theater, make sure you or someone on your staff has signed-in in the log located in the Producer's booth. This serves two purposes: It helps us keep a record of who is coming and going from the theater in the event of any damages, unlocked doors, etc. and it also helps Troupe prove to the University that we are using the theater often, so that we can keep it in our charge.
2. Unlock all of the backstage doors so the cast and crew have easy access to the areas they need. The main right door's crash bar can be opened, but in order to unlock the left main door, you must unlock the keyhole located inside the Producer's booth. The light will go from red to green if the door is unlocked.
3. Make sure that you and your cast stay within the boundaries of our theater space. Don't wander through any doors in the arena that aren't in Stage Troupe's domain. You will get in trouble with arena staff in about four seconds.
4. Make sure nobody eats or drinks in the theater house – it is prohibited in order to keep the house as clean as possible.
5. We are responsible for general maintenance of the theater. Upon leaving for the night, make sure that all trash is picked up and that the green room is in tidy, working order.
6. Lock all of the doors, turn out all of the lights, and sign-out in the log.
7. Double-check to make sure that the front doors are locked.

The student theater complex consists of a lobby and ticketing area , two public restrooms, a show and storage space (designated for Stage Troupe use only), a 101-seat proscenium theater and booth, backstage waiting area (green room), unisex backstage bathroom, and two small dressing rooms. Although the hallway continues into the arena space, the door at the end of the workshop and the door in the green room are considered to mark off the limits of our theater space.

Remember that the theater is a shared space. Arena staff have the right to come through the green room and corridor to access other parts of the arena. It is ok to ask them to be quiet if a performance is in progress, but it is not permitted to deny them access through the theater space. You may also hang signs on the doors to inform arena staff that a show is in progress. They will respect Troupe if we respect them. It is important that we keep relations with arena staff as amicable as possible – we're playing in their house.

Key Policy

Two weeks before opening, you will receive a half-set of keys. You will receive a full-set during the week of your show. The keys function as follows:

BBT-03: Men's Dressing Room, Backstage Bathroom
BBT-05: Women's Dressing Room, Backstage Bathroom
BBT-07: Theater House, both front and back doors
BBT-09: Theater exterior and corridor doors

Conditions of Key Exchanges

You are responsible for your keys. Do not lose them, or give them away to people. If you must give your keys to someone else, all key exchanges must be done in person and keys must never pass from member to member. They must always return to you before going to another third party. Lost keys result in several thousand dollars worth of lock changing.

Responsibility of the Key Holder

Any lock opened by the key-holder is the responsibility of the key-holder to relock. If you open the theater doors, it is your responsibility to see that they are locked again. If the doors are left unlocked, the key-holder who opened them is responsible for any resulting damage or theft.

With keys come a certain amount of power, authority, and most of all responsibility. In plain English, don't lose or abuse your keys.

It's Showtime!

As a Director, your duties end after dress rehearsal is over. It is now time for you to mingle with the audience and enjoy your work. During performances, your Stage Manager is in charge of the technical staff and the actors, and your Producer is in charge of the house. Performances are hectic times, so even though you will be nervous and anxious, stay out of their way – they've got a lot to do.

Your only responsibility is to make the pre-show announcement. It can be done live or it can be recorded; it can be funny, creative, concise, musical, whatever...but it must include the following information:

- No eating, drinking, or smoking is permitted in the theater
- No flash photography
- Point out the fire exits
- Ask patrons to turn off cell phones, beepers, or any other electronic devices that may disturb the performance
- If a strobe light is going to be used in the show, the audience must be forewarned

Now sit back and enjoy your show!

The 2009-2010 Executive Board

President	Carolyn Byrne
Vice President	Kelsey Lidsky
VP of Special Projects	Ian Cohen
Secretary	Mike Gomez
Treasurer	Kate Bischoff
Technical Advisor	Josh Friedensohn
Student Group Advisor	Eric Jacobsen

Student Theater at Agganis Arena

Stage Troupe is in residence at the Boston University Student Theater at Agganis Arena. The 101-seat facility is equipped for a variety of events from full-scale shows to smaller productions.

Boston University Student Theater at Agganis Arena

925 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215

The Space

Unique to Stage Troupe, The Space functions as our primary building space and houses our costume shop, prop inventory, and furniture room.

The Space

949B Commonwealth Avenue / Akimbo Road
Boston, MA 02215

For more information, contact us via:

E-mail: stage@bu.edu

Website: <http://people.bu.edu/stage>

Phone: 617-353-7389

Or check us out on Twitter or Facebook

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stage
troupe