

Theatre Director's Manual - Musical and Otherwise

Written by Davey Kashuba

Introduction:

All the time people ask me, “What does a director do exactly?” The simple answer is the director must learn the material, tell the actors where to stand, what to say, and when to say it, and give long winded speeches and dinner parties. However, there is so much more to it than that! A director is not just the boss who moves pawns like a chess player. The director is the one to take every aspect of raw creative energy within the theatre, refine and channel it, and then shape it into a meaningful art form. The director unifies the heart and minds of all those involved and inspires them to give everything they have towards creating art.

Directing can at times be the most stressful and taxing job within a theatre. That said, it can easily be the most rewarding experience you will ever have. Some things you will only learn about directing from living it, but in this manual I hope to prepare you as much as possible for the upcoming whirlwind of magic and hardships that is headed your way. When approaching production time, buckle up, and remember - you always have resources to get the job done, the trick is to know how to find them.

Please note that this manual is not something that explores the art of directing but rather step-by-step advice to help you manage the process more effectively. At the end of the manual you can find a list of directing theory books that I would recommend, should you wish to know more about the actual techniques of directing.

Key Terms:

Cue: A predetermined moment in which a special effect is to take place. This can be music, sound, lighting, set change, or anything that requires technical planning to implement.

Blocking: The directions given to the actors designed to help them maneuver about the stage effectively.

Book: This is a typical way to refer to the script. When the actors are expected to be “off book,” it means they are no longer allowed to carry their scripts onto the stage with them. This can also be a term to keep in mind when selecting a musical - a “book musical” means it is one where the music is a part of the scripted story, whereas “non-book musicals” are ones where the songs have nothing to do with the story being presented.

Dry Tech: A run through of each cue in a show in which the Stage Manager and Director lock down the exact moments in which each technical cue should occur and who needs to accomplish the task.

Wet Tech: The same as a cue-to-cue. This is the time in which all actors perform only pieces of music and dialogue associated with a cue

Cold Read: A set of dialogue given to auditioners in which they have had no time to prepare or analyze the text. This is a good way to get an idea for an actors natural abilities rather than something they have prepared ahead of time.

Table Work: Table work is something you will want to pepper throughout the entirety of your rehearsal time. This is the time in which you sit down with your actors and discuss their character choices and what kind of things you want to explore within their character.

Conflicts: The list of dates and times in which an actor or crew member is unable to attend

rehearsal. Each and every member of a production is expected to create one.

Swatch: A square of fabric that indicates the color, pattern, and texture of a costume design.

Acting Areas: The sections of available space for the actors. Used in blocking to assist in lighting design so efficient and meaningful use of lighting is achieved in each scene.

Key & Fill: The Key is the warm color and the fill is the cool color used on an acting area.

Tech Week: Referred to by some as “Hell Week”. This is the week in which all of the technical components are added in. These components are things such as lighting, sound, costumes, set changes, props, and music.

Building your Team:

Before you choose a show that you would like to direct, the next step is to assemble a strong Production Crew who will act not only as your support network but your creative think tank as well. In this team you will need the following:

Music Director(Musical only): This person will be in charge of all musical aspects of the show. The primary responsibility of the music director is ensuring that the cast has the music memorized and polished come show-time. This usually means that the music director should either create recordings or CDs with each part on them to maximize time spent on dynamic changes and emotional depth in the music. Should there be live music in the production, the music director will also be in charge of assembling the pit orchestra and finding a conductor.

Choreographer(Musical Only): This person will be in charge of all movement during the music numbers. Typically in the professional world the director also serves as the choreographer, but this is not recommended unless the director has a proficient amount of dance training beforehand. The choreographer may also create instructional videos to either post on a shared space for the cast or burned to a CD. This will ensure that the cast can work on the general footwork individually and can spend more time on formations and expression.

Stage Manager (SM): This person will be in charge of handling most of the day-to-day work. Disseminating weekly schedules, handling schedule conflicts and attendance, keeping directors on track, arranging meetings, and much more will fall onto the stage manager's lap, so it is encouraged to have someone you trust or someone with high recommendations to fill this role. Once the show opens, this person also takes charge of the director's responsibilities such as giving notes, running the show, and overall maintenance. Additional tasks include transcribing all blocking notes, standing in for absent actors during rehearsal, and more. This is your right hand throughout the process, so be sure to pick someone capable.**

Assistant Stage Manager (ASM): Depending on the size of your cast, I would highly recommend bringing on another person to help your SM. This person will generally be on duty to help the SM with things such as line notes, contacting cast and crew for any reason, writing down director's staging, and more.

Set Designer: The set designer will help the director create and realize the overall structure of the set. A floor plan and sketches will be created by this person to present to the set foreman and crew when the production team is ready to load into the performance space.

Sound Designer: The sound designer will create and program any and all sound effects necessary for the production. The more clear and concise the director is with what sounds they would like to have in their show as well as the context of the scene, the easier of a time the sound designer will have in creating those effects. If the music for the show will be played digitally, then the sound designer must also communicate with the music director for any changes that must be made to songs/interludes/etc.

Costume Designer: The costume designer will create designs with the director on the costuming plans for each character. Creating meaningful costumes is important to assist the audience in their suspension of disbelief, so make sure that any details in the costume are appropriate for the character wearing it. The costume designer should create sketches of each costume as well as provide a swatch of each so the director can have a clear picture of what the final costumes are intended to look like. Once the designs are complete, this person will be in charge of creating or finding each and every costume piece by the time the show loads into the performance space.

Lighting Designer: The lighting designer will be in charge of any and all lighting needs including special effects via light source (i.e. fire, moonlight, water, etc.). This person will also need to meet with the director to discuss the specific lighting needs in certain moments of the show. Make sure to create a copy of all the blocking notes logged by your stage manager in order to provide to the lighting designer upon load in. If the lighting designer is not already familiar with the performance space they will be illuminating, make sure to also get them a lighting plot provided by the theatre.

Set Foreman: The set foreman will be in charge of ensuring the construction of the set happens efficiently. Creating a sturdy and safe set is important, as well as a visually interesting one. This person should attend each set design meeting and analyze each idea the designer and director may have for its practicality and viability. The Set Foreman is also in charge of assembling a construction team which can include actors.

PLEASE NOTE: Some of these jobs can be completed by the director or stage manager as well, but I would not advise doing so until you are more comfortable with directing. I say this simply because there are a plethora of other things that will need the attention of both you and your SM that may go unnoticed otherwise.

Communication:

No matter how confident you are in the people you have chosen to work with you, your team will only be as successful as you allow them to be. If they are disconnected with your goals and vision as the director, it may cause some difficulties in the production. Keeping constant, clear communication with each member of this group is of the utmost importance to keep the process flowing smoothly. I cannot stress this point enough! A breakdown in correspondence between directors could have hugely negative results in any of these aspects. So make sure you are always checking in with each other and discussing any potential roadblocks or difficulties.

Choosing the Show:

“Most remarkably, the overarching theme weaved through all the qualities which makes a difference between a mediocre and an unforgettable leader is passion.” (Marques. International Journal for Leadership Studies v.3, Issue 1)

An essential component to your success in directing is to make sure you care about the material. Theatre may be a community-driven process, but the material should connect with the director on a personal level. Numerous studies show that passion in a leader is the leading factor in a successful team, so choose a musical that you resonate with on some level first and foremost.

First, a director must also be aware of the staging demands for the show they are selecting. The size of the space may play a factor but I personally find that as long as the cast size doesn't overwhelm the facilities, smaller venues tend to encourage more creative use of the stage. However, I would also encourage a close look at set change demands as well. A slow or clumsy set change could have a negative impact on the flow of the production, so it is important that more intricate transitions are well planned.

Lights and Sound are other key factors to be aware of. Some productions can call for very specific lighting or sound needs as per contractual obligations, and some theatres may not be able to address those issues. So always check with the theatre manager if you have any questions about the demands of a certain show.

The director must also be aware of the costuming needs of the potential show. A modern era play that takes place in Manhattan will be much easier to costume than a Renaissance era aristocratic play. Make sure that if you are proposing a play with extravagant costumes that you can address how you plan on acquiring said needs.

Next, it is important to know a little about your community and who may come audition. That isn't to say that you won't see new faces at every audition, but realistically, unless you know that you have a bevy of professional singers on hand, I wouldn't suggest performing the *Magic Flute* or *The King and I*. Other things to keep an eye out for are the age range of

characters you need to fill, and the gender ratio in shows. Some shows such as *70 girls, 70*, have predominantly older women, while a show such as *The Outsiders* calls of teenaged actors. So make sure that your community has actors that can ostensibly fill every role.

Finally, make sure that you know what messages you want to share with your selection. When themes are unclear to the audience, it is much easier for them to lose interest. Make sure that you know what you want to say from the very beginning. As the old adage goes, “Begin with the end in mind.”

Research is Key:

Once you have chosen a show, it is important that you do your homework. Learn everything you possibly can about the piece. Make every choice a meaningful accentuation of the themes and ideas, and write all of these ideas down as you go!

During your research phase, try to develop a general idea of how you envision the set looking for each scene and how you expect the actors to maneuver through the scenes you create, which is also referred to as blocking. Be sure to write this all down, because these thoughts will inevitably turn into blocking notes or the specific moments in which the actors are to move and the specific place in which they are to end up. Nothing can be more confusing to an actor than a director who improvises stage directions. Doing so can easily lead to awkward movements or rough transitions for both the actors and the scenes in general.

When jotting down your blocking, create a shorthand that is easily discernible for both you and your stage manager because you will both be referring to your design notes frequently during the process. This pre-existing theatre shorthand is most commonly used in the performing arts industry and the easiest to understand. These terms include:

Downstage (DS): The acting area closest to the front of the stage.

Upstage (US): The acting area furthest from the audience.

Stage Left (SL): The left side of the stage from the actor's perspective facing the audience.

Stage Right (SR): The right side of the stage from the actor's perspective facing the audience.

Cross (X): The term to signify that a character is to move from their current location to another specific location at a specific moment in the script.

Important Dates:

Costume Parade: A staged showcase of each costume on the character for which it is intended.

Use this day to look for and work to correct any potential costuming issues that may only arise when the actors try on their outfits for the first time.

Off-Book Day: This is the day in which your actors know they are no longer permitted to bring their script on stage with them. Should they forget a line after this point, they may call for help from the SM or ASM, but they may not go get their script.

Off-Line Day: As you may have guessed, this is the day in which actors may no longer ask the SM or ASM for line assistance. From here on out, whomever is taking line notes should provide each actor with a list of pages in which they made mistakes on their lines.

Tech-Day: Typically a day-long event in which the backstage crew works to incorporate the sound, light, and set changes to the show for the first time. After each cue is determined and rehearsed, the actors arrive and they perform a cue-to-cue rehearsal.

Cue-to-Cue: The second half of Tech-Day in which the actors only perform the transitional lines of dialogue and song to facilitate a simulation of how the cues should work in an official performance.

Load-In: The day in which your cast and crew can officially begin moving to the designated performance space. If any set pieces or props were created before this day, now is the time to arrange to have them moved to the proper space. If not, now is the time to begin building the set with your Set Foreman as well as creating any props with your Props Master.

Production Meetings: Regular meetings should be held with your production team to ensure that everyone is on the same page. This is also an opportunity to use your team's collective abilities to problem-solve any anticipated difficulties coming up. These meetings typically don't have to last longer than an hour and should include any and all thoughts or concerns from every team member - not just the director.

Sitzprobe(Musical Only): Should your production require live musicians. Two or three days of rehearsal should be dedicated to sitting down your actors and musicians together and working through the music to find and correct any problem spots. Usually scheduled to be anywhere from a month to two weeks before opening night.

Creating the Schedule:

When it comes to scheduling rehearsal, a rough outline of how the cast can expect the whole process to go is a good start. This outline should begin with the days you held auditions and end with the closing performance. This overview schedule is important to provide your cast and crew a tangible layout of the commitment ahead of them. It also allows them one more

opportunity to bring any potential conflicting days in actors' personal schedules to your attention.

Below is an example of a month in the general rehearsal schedule I would provide my cast:

~ January 2016 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 HAPPY NEW YEAR!	2
3	4 Music Rehearsal 6 - 9 PM	5 Music Rehearsal 6 - 9 PM	6 Dance Polishing 6 - 8 PM	7 Music Rehearsal 6 - 9 PM	8 Dance Polishing 5 - 9:30 PM	9 Dance Polishing 9 AM - 3 PM
10	11 Acting Rehearsal 5 PM - 9 PM	12 Acting Rehearsal 4:30 PM - 9 PM	13 Dance Rehearsal 6 - 9 PM	14 Acting Rehearsal 6 PM - 9 PM	15 Acting Rehearsal 6 PM - 9 PM	16
17	18 Music Rehearsal 6 - 9 PM OFF MUSIC TODAY	19 Music Rehearsal 6 - 9 PM	20 Music Rehearsal 6 - 9 PM	21 Acting Rehearsal 6 PM - 9 PM	22 Music Rehearsal 6 - 9 PM	23
24	25 Acting Rehearsal 6 PM - 9 PM	26 Acting Rehearsal 6 PM - 9 PM	27 Acting Rehearsal 6 PM - 9 PM	28 Acting Rehearsal 6 PM - 9 PM	29 Dance Polishing 5 - 9:30 PM	30 Dance Polishing 9 AM - 3 PM
31	Notes:					

Staying somewhat vague on specifics in the overview allows your production team some room to make adjustments when necessary and give extra time and attention to things that may end up needing it once rehearsals have begun.

I find it best to disperse a weekly schedule that involves specific meeting times and location. At the end of the last rehearsal of the week, budget about a half an hour to sit down with your stage manager and fellow directors and discuss what needs to be covered the following week- being careful not to schedule any cast member who has a predetermined conflict. Upon reaching an agreed-upon schedule, have your stage manager type it up and disperse it to the cast via email. Below is an example of the weekly schedule format I ask my stage managers to use (Reduced size for formatting):

Monday:

Blocking Rehearsal w/ Director

Location: Brighton Academy (1121 NE 7th St, Grants Pass, OR 97526)

6:30-7:10pm - pg 1-4 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

7:10-7:40pm - pg 34-35 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

7:40-8:20pm - pg 26-30 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

8:20-9:00pm - pg 21-23 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

Tuesday:

Blocking Rehearsal w/ Director

Location: Brighton Academy (1121 NE 7th St, Grants Pass, OR 97526)

6:00-6:45pm - pg 41 - 44 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

6:45-7:30pm - pg 77 - 80 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

7:30-8:15pm - pg 14 - 17 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

Music Rehearsal w/ Music Director

Location: Highland Elementary

6:00-6:30pm - Song 1 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

6:30-7:00pm - Song 5 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

7:00-7:30pm - Song 6 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

7:30-8:00pm - Song 9 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

8:00-Until finished - Finale (ALL CALLED)

Wednesday:

NO REHEARSAL! Take the day off! Review your stuff!

Thursday:

Blocking Rehearsal w/ Director

Location: Brighton Academy (1121 NE 7th St, Grants Pass, OR 97526)

6:45 -7:30pm - pg 6 - 9 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

7:30-8:15pm - pg 36 - 41 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

8:15-9:00pm - pg 64 - 65 (Actors Called: INSERT NAMES)

Friday:
Blocking Rehearsal w/ Director
Location: Brighton Academy (1121 NE 7th St, Grants Pass, OR 97526)
6:00-7:00pm - Finale, ALL CALLED (pg 47 - 58)
7:00-9:00pm - SLOP THROUGH ACT I (ALL CALLED)

In the above example you may notice how meticulous I am with whom is called for what times. Trust me when I say that when it comes to making schedules the directors must keep one thing in mind before proceeding: the more you show your cast and crew that you appreciate and respect their time, the more they will be willing to give to you and the production. In the first several weeks of rehearsal, feel free to arrange calls for specific scenes to optimize everyone's time.

The caveat to this is, of course, when the director feels ready to begin scheduling full run-throughs. The cast must understand that while you will always do your best to value their contributions, they may have times where they are sitting around while you are running the show in chronological order. During that time, actors are free to do their own personal work or play games so long as they are quiet and maintaining awareness of their upcoming cues.

The Dreaded Auditions:

All of the logistics seem to be taken care of for the time being, so lets move on to setting up for auditions. In order to ensure that you get enough actors to audition, you must be sure to spread the word however you can. Communicate with the theatre manager (or other designated

contact) of the venue you are working through in order to create a facebook event, fliers, and anything else that you think might help increase awareness of the auditions. On this be sure to include audition and performance dates, as well as what they can expect to encounter during the nights of auditions. Be sure to also include information for an extra day of auditions known as callbacks. These are an additional audition night in which all satisfactory actors from the previous nights come back and show you more of their talent to help you make your casting decisions a little easier. You may not always need to use it, but more often than not, you'll be glad you have it.

In a standard musical audition, the actors will be asked to bring their own musical number to showcase vocal ability and are usually asked to do some basic dance steps with the choreographer as well.

As for auditioning acting skills (in either musical or nonmusical), there are two viable options that I have used: pre-rehearsed monologues or cold-reads. While the debate rages on for the most effective way to assess an actor's abilities, I myself am fond of the cold read audition when it comes to musicals. The actors already get the chance to show you what they can look like with rehearsal time in their song selection, but a cold read shows you what their acting instincts are on the fly, which can prove to be invaluable when considering casting a part that requires a sharp comedic timing or crisp physicality. Of course, it is ultimately up to what you and your team would like to see, so just make sure that you are allowing your auditioners to really try and prove themselves to you and that you and your team are receiving the information you need in order to cast your show to the best of your abilities.

In a professional setting, the actors would bring in a headshot and a theatre resume to give you an idea of their of experience and ability. In the community theatre setting, it is

generally more preferable to provide the aspiring actors with an audition form to fill out and hand to your stage manager upon taking the stage for their try-out. Below is an example of this audition form(reduced size for formatting):

<p>Audition Form Name: _____ DOB: _____ Date: _____ Vocal Range: _____ Audition Song Title: _____ Phone(s): _____ E-mail: _____ What role(s) are you trying out for? _____ Will you accept any role? (Circle) YES NO If no, which ones? _____ Are you willing to cut/color your hair/facial hair for this production? YES NO If you aren't chosen for an acting role, check the below position(s) you'd be interested in: Backstage Crew ____ Set Crew ____ Sound/Lights ____ Props ____ None ____ What is your previous experience? (Show title, role/position, school/company, and year) *If no theatre background, give any related experience you may have. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ Other special talents or training? Give details. _____ _____ Why do you feel you would make a good addition to the Urinetown cast and/or crew? _____ _____ _____ _____ Rehearsals will start INSERT DATE HERE and, with holidays off, will run until the performance days, which are INSERT DATE HERE. Will you be able to attend all performances, including tech and dress rehearsals, which are the two weeks (including weekends) before the show opens? Please also write down any conflicts you know of between start and end date. _____ _____ _____ Please write your full school/work/conflict schedule on the back of this paper. If you have anything else you want us to know, write it on the back as well.</p>
--

It Takes A Village...:

Casting your show will more than likely be the most difficult step in directing. If you have done all you can to get the word out about your auditions, then ideally you will have an abundance of talent to choose from. However, as some experts say, “Directing is 90% casting choices, and 10% everything else.” While I don’t wholeheartedly agree with that statement, I think there is some merit to the idea. After all, the right actor in the right role can make a big difference. This is why I recommend you employ the concept of what I like to call “Council Casting”.

Theatre arts is such a collaboration-driven pedagogy, it’s strength comes from folks of all different viewpoints and walks of life to combine their talents to create art. It is because of this notion that it feels strange that the director is the only one to make decisions on who fills the roles. Therefore, I developed a democratic system in which the Director, Music Director, Choreographer, Stage Manager, and Assistant Stage Manager also take notes and express their opinions on auditions.

Of course, ultimately the director will still have the final say, but keep in mind that these people sitting beside you also have to work with the cast for just as long. So if they don’t feel comfortable with one of your choices, please be sure to listen to their concerns and allow them to share the choices they would like.

The Lone Wolf:

Should you feel less than comfortable with a board-of-directors-esque casting format, the director is of course free to make casting decisions alone. Just be sure to account for any significant potential difficulties an individual may have in any role you consider them for. This

can include scheduling, behavior, and work ethic. If any decisions prove too difficult, it is acceptable to ask the advice of your stage manager as well.

Finding the Tech:

Around the time that your cast and crew are preparing themselves to move into the performance space, your production team should be working on assembling a team of backstage operators. The tech crew, as they are sometimes referred to, are responsible for performing any task to help keep the show moving smoothly. Being on the tech crew is a relatively thankless job, so be sure to always let your crew know how much you appreciate their hard work. The tech crew includes but is not limited to:

Light Board Operator: This is the person that will press the button to proceed through the light programming your Lighting Designer provided you with. Their job is to listen to the Stage Manager and wait for their signal to proceed to the next cue. Additional training includes the ability to appropriately adjust intensity or adjusting lighting instruments.

Sound Board Operator: This person will be trained by the Sound Designer to annotate each sound with a specific cue as determined by the Stage Manager. Each sound effect must be timed correctly. If music is also a part of your show and it is not live, then the sound board operator must be familiar with those cues as well. Additional training includes adjusting volume and balance levels of the sound for optimum results.

Set Change Crew: These people are in charge of handling the transition of any set pieces between scenes. It is important that this crew moves as efficiently and silently as possible. Actors who are not immediately needed in the following scene of the show may be able to take part in set changes as well.

Set Painting: This crew will be handling painting the set to the specifications of the Set Designer and Director. Any actor or tech person can take part in this, but if you ask your cast and crew to devote their free time helping you paint the set, be sure to buy them lunch or something.

Curtain Operation: In some situations, the show will begin once the curtain has been pulled open, and will either reach intermission or the end once it is closed. This job is for someone who can pay close attention to the moments that the audience should no longer be spectating. It can be very awkward for actors to have to wait on a slow curtain, or worse yet, one that closes before they are done with their scene.

Props Master: Once the show has begun running, there must be a tech person in charge of ensuring all props are present and accounted for before and after every performance. This job can often just be given to the person who had originally assembled the props in the first place, but it doesn't have to be.

Costume Master: The Costume Master's job is to ensure that any wardrobe malfunctions are handled appropriately. Any ripped seams must be resewn, and any irreparably damaged pieces must be replaced as soon as possible. Whomever is chosen for this role is encouraged to have at least basic sewing skills.

Make sure the people running tech are trustworthy and capable. Moreover, the techies do a lot of the manual labor for very little acknowledgement, so make sure to thank them often.

Cast List:

After you and your crew have made the final casting decisions, it is time to contact everyone who auditioned - and I mean everyone! It may not be easy to contact those who didn't make it in, but they will appreciate and respect that you were forthcoming.

Alternatively, the actors that you didn't cast can also serve as backstage help if they indicated they would like to. It will allow them to still take part in the fun, and it will save you and your Stage Manager a little time searching for stagehands later.

The Meet and Greet:

Now it is time to bring all of these people you have casted in your show and gathered as your production crew to meet each other and prepare for a quarter of their upcoming year with each other. In the Meet and Greet, the directors and stage manager share the schedule as well as any rules or expectations the actors need to follow.

This is the opportunity to really set the bar for how the cast will be interacting - so make it fun, serve food. If your show centres around a specific culture or talks about any food dishes, make those so your cast can start making real world connections to the material!

Play a couple of ice-breaker games before diving into the details of the process. Silly activities such as name games or tongue twisters can be particularly effective. Other things such as asking each person to share an innocuous fact about themselves, like what their favorite color or food is, can also work.

The most important part of the meet and greet is the readthrough of the script. Once everyone has had a chance to review guidelines and get comfortable with each other, pass out the scripts and begin a read through of the material. As the readthrough takes place be sure to stop and show each song as it comes up in the flow of the story. This will help begin thinking about the music they will need to begin practicing soon.

Practice Makes Perfect:

As you arrive at the beginning of your rehearsal schedule, it is important to stay flexible. Rehearsal structure is always going to be situational, and as such, it may need to shift frequently to adjust to any unforeseen obstacles. It will heavily depend on your production teams' schedules and your actors' conflicts, so weekly schedule tweaking will more than likely always be necessary. The most important thing is to make sure that the actors never feel like their time is being wasted. They are volunteering huge chunks of their lives to help you make the show succeed after all, so be respectful of that.

Ideally in the musical rehearsal process, as I said before, would begin with music and line work. Alternate days in which the music director gets to have the cast to run songs and days in which you have the cast to run the in between scenes and basic blocking. The exact structure isn't important, but by the end of the first month, the entire song book should have been rehearsed, and a majority of the basic scene structure should have taken place. The next chunk should be dedicated to dancing and refining the movement between songs to be more fluid and interesting. Be sure to create moments in the blocking that can easily lend itself to the choreography to enforce that idea of seamless transitions.

Non musicals are much easier in terms of scheduling rehearsals. All you must do is decide what order in which you will rehearse the scenes, and add in extra days for things such as character development, team building, and any specific needs for the show such as fight choreography.

During the final stretch of rehearsal will be when things tend to get intense. Spend what remaining time before load-in working on any rough spots in the music or dance, because there won't be much room for it afterwards. A solid goal to have is to be able to perform full run-

throughs of the show without any major hiccups by the time you move into your final performance space.

From here on out, just make sure to work on polishing everything up and getting it performance ready. You're almost there!

The Final Countdown:

Upon moving into the performance space, set up a final meeting with each of your designers to ensure that they are on their way to completion, and if not, what you can do to help them get there.

Have a costume parade as soon as possible after moving onto the stage. This isn't a final costume check though. There will no doubt be alterations and substitutions that will need to be made, so consider it more of a costume check-in.

At this point sound should also be completed. Any and all alterations should be communicated by the music director and choreographer as they arise to give the sound designer plenty of time to put the work in. The idea is that the sooner you have the final cuts of all sound effects and music, the sooner your cast can become comfortable with how they affect the show.

The lighting design won't be able to begin until you load in, and will more than likely require a sit-down walkthrough of each scene with the light designer so they can know what need to be illuminated and where. This is where a blocking layout by your SM and ASM is a must. Showing your lighting designer diagrams will be much easier than asking them to imagine it.

Most importantly of all, get the set foreman equipped begin constructing your set as soon as possible and be sure to check in daily to make sure you answer any questions or pick up any supplies your construction crew might need.

At this point, your actors should not need to use their scripts for any reason. So around load-in time is also when you can implement off-book rehearsal. Then after a week or so enact the off-line rehearsal. Your actors will need to use every second of this time to get their faces out of the script and into the emotional truths behind the show, so the sooner you are able to do so, the better.

Show Time:

You've finally done it. It has been a long and tough road, but you and your team have finally crossed the finish line. Make sure to take the opportunity to share things you appreciate about each and every one of your cast and crew at this point. They have no doubt given you a lot of hard work for this fast approaching moment of the first audience, and really letting them know what they specifically have contributed to your overall success is a must. I personally do this in the form of writing simple thank you notes in cards and giving each one to each individual as well as a flower. You are free to use this idea if you wish, but I encourage you to find your own way to give thanks to the folks that helped you succeed - it will mean a lot more!

Either way, come opening night, it is standard practice in community theatre to hand the reigns over to your stage manager at that point. From here on out, your SM handles the overall procedure and run of each performance, and you are free to enjoy the show. Come watch it once in awhile as well! Like a proud parent, your cast will always find ways to impress you, so let them. If at any point while watching a performance you see something you feel the urge to give a note about, please refer the note to your Stage Manager and allow them to take care of it. Likely,

if it is something that cause an unexpected hiccup in the show, the SM already caught it and made a note.

From here on out, simply make yourself available should your team need any help, and enjoy the successes!

Recommended Works:

As I mentioned in the beginning, I don't go over technique in this manual. Therefore, I would like to point you in the direction of texts that will provide you with that information. Rest assured, the books and authors I am recommending are ones that I have personally used to supplement my own ability.

The Empty Space by Peter Brook

Directing Actors by Judith Weston

Fundamentals of Play Directing by Alexander Dean and Lawrence Carra

Poetics by Aristotle

Brecht on Theatre by Bertolt Brecht

Additionally, I will include works that have been recommended to me by my peers below:

A Sense of Direction by William Ball

A Director Prepares by Anne Bogart

How to Read a Play: Script Analysis for Directors by Damon Kiely

Directors on Directing by Toby Cole and Helen Krich-Chinoy

** For more information on Stage Managing, please refer to Madeline DeCoursey's Stage Manager's handbook likewise written for the Josephine County Cultural Coalition**