

NOTES FOR THE GUIDANCE OF PRODUCERS AND STAGE MANAGERS

(These notes should be read in conjunction with the document “Woking Drama Festival – The Rhoda McGaw Theatre”, which sets out the facilities provided, including the basic lighting rig, the sound equipment and a stage plan showing the standard lighting areas.)

PRODUCER’S MEETINGS

About half an hour is assigned to each group individually to discuss details and resolve doubts and problems. Your Stage Manager and Sound/Lighting people are welcome to come as well as your Producer. The meeting is for us to find out what you want, and for you to find out if you can have it. Please raise anything you want at your meeting; we’d much rather be bothered with details than surprised with problems later. If you want any more help, information, or advice before your meeting please feel free to ring the Festival Stage Director, Lyn Mison, on Woking (01483) 725045.

Some of the things to be discussed at your producer’s meetings are: -

LIGHTING

Your Producer’s meeting is your only chance to discuss this so please come prepared. We don’t need a script, but you should bring, and leave with us an (outline) cue synopsis, which might look something like this: -

CUE NO.	ACTION	TIME	EFFECT
Preset			Stage lights on
0			House lights fade
1	Tabs open	10 sec	FOH ON (Areas A-E)
2	Wall lights	Snap	Special ON
3	Actor exits	5 sec	Fade to blackout etc.

The lighting rig for the festival is described in “The Rhoda McGaw Theatre” and lit areas shown on the stage diagram accompanying it. We can usually meet your needs, though sometimes some compromises may be necessary. You must tell us, at this meeting, your requirements for colours, practicals and any special effects or lights not included in the standard rig. We have to set up lighting to meet the needs of all the groups competing, so you will only get those specials, practicals and special effects that have been requested and agreed at your Producer’s meeting.

SCENERY AND PROPS

We do not limit the amount of scenery you have. Anything that you can set in 10 minutes and strike in 5 can be used, but we need to know roughly what there will be to check delivery, storage, safety and access. Please draw your set roughly on the plan of stage and lighting areas. All scenery must be adequately supported and safe and fire proofed where necessary. If we consider it is not, we’ll advise you how to make it safe. We will also examine and test, at your stage time, any electrical wiring for wall lamps, etc. and it must be made safe by the time of the performance or it won’t be allowed on stage. Fire regulations are very strict, and you must warn us in advance of any naked lights, smoking on stage and pyrotechnics. We also need to know about firearms, real or imitation. We have to get clearance for these things, and failure to do so can endanger the theatre licence so we reserve the right to close the curtains and disqualify you if you haven’t told us in advance.

SOUND

It is your responsibility to provide the CD’s or mini disks containing your sound and to operate the equipment on the night, but we will help with setup and show your operator how to use our equipment. Please tell us your requirements at the meeting. If you want to use your own equipment please mention it, and if you have any unusual requirements, we may suggest further contact between your sound expert and ours to resolve them.

YOUR STAGE TIME

ALLOCATED TIME

You are allocated 35 minutes, on a day before your performance (the date and time will have been agreed at your producer’s meeting) when the stage and facilities are yours. You may deliver and prepare scenery in advance of your time. These sessions are run to a very tight timetable, and if you are not there you will lose the time. Promptly on time you will be told the stage is yours and you must leave the stage promptly at the end of your time. The 35 minutes is your technical rehearsal, and there are two things that **MUST** be done during it if you are to avoid disaster:

- Set up the lighting cues, and get them stored in the computer
- Check and record your sound levels so that they can be repeated accurately on the night.

Both of these must be done during your stage time, and we provide headsets (independent for lighting and sound) between the auditorium and the control box to help you do so. The time is yours to do as you wish, but we advise you to plan what you want to do and organise your team in advance. The cast can check entrances and voice levels – your Stage Manager can practice setting/striking and the 101 other things that Stage Managers do – your prompt can check where to sit – and all this can be done in parallel with the lighting and sound. You shouldn't expect to be able to rehearse the cast, but you may have time to do the opening and closing sequences with them.

LIGHTING

During your stage time it is essential that we get all your cues set up, tested and entered into the computer lighting board. Specials will be in place at the start of your stage time, but they still have to be set and focused in the 35 minutes, (in our experience groups with 3 or more specials as well as a lot of cues may be hard-pressed to complete in the time available). The time needed for this, and for plotting the cues, makes it essential that we start to look at lighting at the beginning of your stage time. Don't leave it to the last ten minutes.

To set up each cue, your lighting person (preferably not the Producer who tends to be worrying about other things) sits in the auditorium with our Lighting Director, Nigel Longley, and tells him what areas, colour, brightness and fade times are required. These are adjusted until it is as you want and then stored in the computer. We then go on to the next cue. The whole sequence will be played back as a check (with the producer present too?) if there is time at the end. Once recorded, the settings are stored and cannot be altered at the time of performance.

DELIVERY

All scenery and props will have been brought in through the steel shutter and got ready in the scene-dock before being needed on stage. When stage time starts they will be taken on from the scene-dock through the stage right doors.

SOUND

Your sound operators should bring the CD/mini disks to the control box. We will be around to help, but not to operate on the night. He/she should get familiar with the controls and write down the switch positions and volume settings. There is a window that can be opened between the control room and the auditorium but you still need someone in the auditorium at stage time to judge the sound levels. They can talk to the sound operator by using the intercom headsets in the auditorium, which are independent of those used by the lighting people. If there are a lot of effects each one should be checked individually. As with lighting, don't leave this until the last 10 minutes. If you want to use your own equipment from the stage, you may still find it difficult to judge levels, so the same principles apply. (On the night the equipment must be set and removed within normal setting and striking times).

ON THE NIGHT

SETTING

Setting will start when you and we are ready, leaving a pause for breath before the curtain goes up. The 10 minutes starts when we say GO and warn you if you are in danger of over-running your setting time, and so losing marks, which has been known to happen, though very rarely.

STRIKING

Your 5 minutes striking time starts when we say so, NOT at the end of the play. Please wait for our signal before starting to strike so that we can make sure that doors are open, workers on, and cables out the way. No one has lost marks for exceeding 5 minutes. Yet.

THE PERFORMANCE

Your sound and lighting people can go the box, but please don't move any switches until we are there. We need someone to cue the lighting since we won't know where the cues come in the script. The intercom allows your Stage Manager to talk to the lighting box, sound operator and follow-spot (s) from the stage. When all is ready on stage, in the audience, and in the box, we can start.

RUNNING TIME

This is measured from the opening of the curtains to the final closing of them (suitably adapted if you want to play with open tabs) with a penalty of 2 marks per minute or part of a minute for running over 60 minutes or under 20. If you are going to overrun by more than 5 minutes we may close the curtains on you and disqualify you.

ADJUDICATION

All the plays on one night are adjudicated at the end of the evening, starting as soon as the stage is clear after the end of the last play.

DRESSING ROOMS

There are four dressing rooms, 3 in the corridor and one over the scene dock. A list showing which dressing room you should use will be on the notice board outside the scene dock. Members of your cast and backstage crew can watch, without charge, the other plays on their evening, subject to there being empty seats. If they wish to do so they should speak to the front-of-house staff who will tell them where to sit and avoid seats already sold.

AND FINALLY

Our object is to help you, and so produce a successful Festival, subject only to constraints imposed by the theatre, its safety rules, our finances and the need to be fair to everyone.