



DIRECTOR/S

Congratulations on your selection as director(s) to present a student production as part of Second Stage! This role takes on various levels of responsibility. Contained within this document are tips for success, as many of you are first-time directors.

The approval of your project is an important milestone that will allow you to express your creative voice. Contained within this document are also policies related to use of department equipment, spaces and more.

YOUR CREATIVITY:

Your creative choices should be most important as you work with many others to create your vision. That means that collaboration, compromise and consideration are at the forefront of all you do. You are helping a production that affects large numbers of collaborators from designers to actors, to crew and ultimately, the audience.

As the director, you are expected to read through this entire document, to gain a better understanding of the full picture of putting on a show. The SSP Board is always here as a resource. Do not hesitate to reach out for help.

CASTING:

CASTING: Casting for your production is important. These students will be looking to you for guidance related to the shared interpretation of the character. As you are both on similar educational paths make sure to create supportive and open peer to peer dialogue.

At auditions please make actors aware of a tentative rehearsal schedule so you all can be aware of the possible conflicts especially related to Department productions that take priority related to BFA Actor policies.

A generic audition form will be provided. You may alter the questions to help you cast your production successfully. It would be wise for you to be transparent about the material in your production at the auditions. It helps to display warnings, inform actors personally, or ask questions of comfort level regarding material that may contain graphic language, sexual content or situations, or other material that could cause some actors discomfort or inability to perform.

- Directors must hold auditions for all roles in their shows.
- Casting should be open to all registered MSU students
- A director of the Second Stage Production may not appear in their own production, in order to offer an optimal experience for all.

Some Tips for Success in Casting:

- Casting of students currently cast in Department of Theatre productions implies that you will have to rehearse at alternate rehearsal times. Make efforts to use students with fewer conflicts in order to make a smoother rehearsal process.
- Think beyond your friends when casting. Look for people who may surprise you.
- Your work with actors should allow them to explore within the realms of personal safety. The parameters they have may not match your vision. Every effort should be made in rehearsal and performance to allow actors to express their concerns while still doing their work to support yours.
- Work within the guidelines of the Second Stage information related to Actors. See the actor section for more information.

AUDIENCE:

An audience will be viewing your work, so careful consideration related to their experience may affect your vision. How does what you create impact their experience? The SSP Board may suggest changes to make sure that your work is experienced for optimal viewing.

Audiences will be offered warnings related to profanity, violence or other possible issues on all other publicity materials. It is your responsibility to inform the public relations faculty member of what those warnings need to be. Please notify them of these audience warnings as soon as you are aware of them. This should be as early as casting.

Some Tips for Success in Audience Experience:

- Consider the role of the audience as you plan the use of the theatrical space.
- Consider things like running time and content when working on new productions

DESIGN:

Design within the Second Stage production can be creative and conservative. The productions here thrive on ingenuity and your design team must follow the following policies that allow you use of the various resources in the space you were allowed to produce.

Some Tips for Success in Design:

- Carefully choose your designers in conjunction with the SSP Board to make sure that they have the appropriate training to use the equipment or resources you need.
- Selecting designers who are currently working on Department of Theatre productions implies that they may have conflicts with time, which can result in struggles with completing design elements in time, or implementing designs that may not be as strong due to too many commitments.
- Make sure your designers are aware of the script's needs before signing on by providing them with a copy early on.
- Allow your design collaboration to evolve, as the resources you need may not be available.
- Look at the designer's schedule to make sure they will have time to complete designers before the tech process begins.
- Work within the guidelines of the Second Stage information related to Designers. See the design section for more details.
- Be clear in your vision for the show. be detailed in what you envision but leave room for your designers to bring ideas to the table as well.
- Be flexible and aware of what your designers are able to accomplish within the time frame, budget, and resources available.

Production Meetings:

- Production meetings are an essential step in producing a designed show. In these meetings, designers and directors get to connect and ensure a cohesive show.
- Be engaged during the meeting! Give feedback, give updates, let your production team know that you are listening to them.

BUDGET:

A small stipend is provided by the Second Stage board to assist you and your designers in fulfilling your vision beyond the use of THR resources. Using the funds (to be decided per production by the Second Stage board) must follow protocol.

Purchases need to be made by the director, or other responsible party. A copy of every receipt turned into the Fiscal Officer needs to be sent to the Second Stage Productions Treasurer.

Any purchases needed beyond the allotted budget are the sole responsibility of the director

BOX OFFICE and PUBLICITY:

Second Stage will offer publicity including postings on the Department social media pages and the Second Stage social media pages, as well as Playbills. While we encourage unique marketing, all must follow university guidelines. The Second Stage Productions logo must appear on all marketing materials. All promotional materials must adhere to the guidelines of the licensing agreement for each individual show, and must also be submitted to the board for approval. Our Marketing Team will work with you to create promotional material that represents your vision and the SSP Brand.

Box office staff will be secured by the Second Stage board, and may include a member of the board. All must follow the policies related to handling cash within the department as set forth in the following guidelines. No audience members may enter a performance without paying the ticket price. These funds are collected to ensure future productions.

At the end of the production run, the funds must be given to the Fiscal Officer the following business day. Traditionally a Monday, as early as possible.

STRIKE INFO:

The space you use must be restored to its original (or better) situation. The director is responsible for facilitating and communicating with faculty about the restoration process. This means that the director must oversee the restoration process including the returning of borrowed design elements and is responsible for resultant issues related to the space including damage, paint, and all design elements. The strike must happen on the final performance, no later. All members of the cast, crew, and production team must assist.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION ISSUES:

The SSP Board is the first line of assistance related to any issues. If there are issues regarding the board, speak to the faculty advisor, Sarah Hendrickson. They are required to watch one rehearsal of the production, one technical rehearsal, and may also be brought in during moments of interpersonal disputes, issues related to design or other complications. This includes matters related to issues or infractions of sexual harassment, drug or alcohol policies or other issues covered in the undergraduate handbook.

The Second Stage committee and its Faculty Advisor may offer assistance and support should the decisions of the Faculty Mentor not be satisfactory to all involved within the production team. However, a faculty member must always be involved with any negotiations regarding student disputes, regardless of the student's role.

REHEARSAL SPACE

Rehearsal Space Policy:

Rehearsal space is limited so procedures and priorities must be implemented to ensure an equitable and balanced rehearsal schedule.

Be aware that special events or guest artists may displace normal rehearsal procedures.

Spaces may be scheduled through the Department Production Manager (Abbie Tykocki). Directors and/or Stage Managers are responsible for securing rehearsal spaces as soon as they have the dates secured by the Second Stage Board for their performances.

Second Stage rehearsals:

Second Stage rehearsals will likely be given priority in the Arena Theatre or Studio the week of performances (from Sunday to Sunday). Second Stage Rehearsals must relinquish any rehearsal room should a Main Stage or class that needs the space. Please be advised that Department procedures may change at the discretion of Department faculty.



ACTORS

Congratulations on getting cast in a Second Stage production! You have the chance to create unique work with your peers.

Some Tips For Success as a Second Stage Actor:

- Make sure you have clearly looked at your schedule. For BFA Acting students your responsibilities to department productions come first as part of your BFA policies. Absences, conflicts and missed rehearsals related to Second Stage cannot be accommodated.
- As actors, you are entitled to a detailed intimacy notice, character description, and rehearsal schedule at the audition.
- When working with newer directors, they are also learning and you can assist them by being patient and supportive throughout the process.
- Offer feedback when asked.
- Speak with directors and Stage managers if you feel that your time is not being used effectively in rehearsal.
- Ask for a clear outline of rehearsal and other expectations at the start of the process.

When working on new projects, conflicts may undoubtedly arise. Your first response should be to talk to your Director or Stage manager about the issue. Casts will also elect a Deputy to act as a communication to the production team should issues arise. Should you not get the resolution you seek, contact the Second Stage Board.



STAGE MANAGERS

Thank you so much for your willingness to Stage Manage a Second Stage production! You have the chance to create unique work with your peers.

“Stage managers are responsible and adaptable communicators who have the ability to handle and coordinate diverse groups of artistic personalities with tactful discipline and a sense of humor. They establish a creative environment by combining the ability to prioritize and anticipate and solve problems, with calm sensitivity and grace under pressure.

Their ability to do the above stems from organizational ability, acquired technical knowledge (sound, music, lights, design, and construction, typing, use of computers, and so on), familiarity with union requirements, and an inspirational personality that creates positive energy.”

—The Backstage Guide to Stage Management written by Thomas A. Kelly

Some Tips for Success in Stage Management and Crew:

- A production needs a highly organized and compassionate Stage Manager especially when all are beginners in the process. Try to assist in maintaining a respectful and positive atmosphere where collaboration can thrive.
- Work with the Director to create a rehearsal schedule that respects the time commitment for all involved.
- Find a crew that is free from conflicts, especially department shows.

Since it may be your first time stage managing, please feel free to reach out to one of the listed BFA Stage Management students for any help/answers to questions. They are a great resource and can help get you....

Although you won't have access to the resources of the department stage managers, this guide can help you with organization and protocol.

BFA Stage Management Student Contact Information (2023-2024)

Hope Still

Junior

Email: stillhop@msu.edu

Tia Spicer

Junior

Email: spicert1@msu.edu

Ally Doederlein

Sophomore

Email: doederl3@msu.edu



DESIGNERS

Congratulations on being selected as a designer in a Second Stage production! You have the chance to create unique work with your peers.

How to start your design process:

- Read the script! It is recommended to read multiple times, one for enjoyment, two for analysis and understanding, and twice more to notate any design needs in the script.
- While reading the script, it is essential to have your own vision and ideas to bring to the production meeting, though it is important to be flexible and work with the director's vision as well.
- Be prepared to express your ideas through renderings, samples, or mood boards to help clearly communicate your vision. Communication is an essential aspect of collaboration! Ensure that all materials needed are brought to meetings and due dates are met.
- Remember, putting a show together is a team effort, listen to others and participate in conversation during meetings.
- It is ok to reach out for help! There are resources available to you. If complications arise, you may speak to your SM, Director, or the current technical coordinator of the SSP Board.

Some Tips For Success as a Second Stage Designer:

- Make sure you have clearly looked at your schedule. For students in Department of Theatre Shows, your responsibilities to department productions are prioritized. Absences, conflicts and missed rehearsals related to Second Stage cannot be accommodated.
- When working with newer directors, they are also learning and you can assist them by being patient and supportive throughout the process.
- Offer feedback when asked.
- Speak with directors and Stage managers if you feel your time is not being used effectively.
- Ask for a clear outline of rehearsal and other expectations at the start of the process.
- Collaborate with your director(s) and fellow designers as early as possible. Providing renderings, sketches, models, and other visual aids, early on gives everyone a higher understanding of the production as a whole. This allows for better communication.

When working on new projects, conflicts may undoubtedly arise. Your first response should be to talk to your Director or Stage manager about the issue. Should you not get the resolution you seek, speak to the Second Stage Committee and Faculty Advisor of the committee to assist.

Listed below are policies and guidelines of each design area. All guidelines are subject to change at the discretion of the faculty members, board members, or faculty advisor at any time. If you have questions or concerns on any of these, please see the current technical coordinator, Melina Rodriguez (rodri937@msu.edu).

DESIGN POLICIES

This document outlines policies for each design area. These rules are not meant to inhibit your creativity, but to allow a safe, shared space and a healthy respect for the department's equipment. If you feel your production needs something that is not available, please speak with the technical coordinator first.

SCENIC/PROPS:

- Requests for scenic pieces and/or props must be made at least 2 weeks in advance of the production's technical rehearsal. To schedule a time to pull anything, they must contact the scene shop technical directing faculty.
- Only faculty, scene shop employees, or graduate students (with a valid driver's license) may use the scene shop vehicles for transportation. This request must be made in advance and is never assumed or guaranteed.
- Second Stage productions can use one van load of furniture, no more.
- Scenic paint from scene shop stock must not be used without prior approval; it will be approved on a case by case basis.
- Reimbursement for shop materials (such as paint used) will be handled by scene shop technical directors on a case by case basis. It is the designer's responsibility to create this conversation and include the Second Stage committee, the director, and the scene shop technical directors, so that it can be handled and accounted for on all ends.
- Independent construction projects are generally not allowed due to liability issues. However projects can be considered on a case by case basis depending on the student's skill level, the scene shops schedule and material availability.
- Any aesthetic or structural alterations of scenic pieces or properties need to be approved in advance (painting, distressing, upholstering, etc.)
- All pieces borrowed for Second Stage Productions must be checked out and the director or designer must have them signed back in at the TD office for inspection. Pieces must be returned on the next open business day following the closing of the production.

COSTUMES:

- Working on costumes for an SSP show is an incredible opportunity to design a show and teaches valuable skills on working within a tight budget.

Borrowing from the costume shop:

- Designers should rely on other means of obtaining costumes before requesting clothing from the costume shop.
- Any requests to borrow costumes must be made to Katherin Poon (poonkath@msu.edu) if not a costume shop employee, or directly to the costume shop supervisor if an employee. at least 24 hours in advance of the need or the request will not be granted. A pull time must be scheduled in advance. No one will be allowed to walk in and pull without an appointment. Employees are not exempt from this rule.
- No one will be allowed to pull costumes outside of the regular shop hours.
- Only shop employees are allowed to have shop or storage keys in their possession; non-employee borrowers will be accompanied to storage by an employee.
- All costumes must be signed out on the proper forms by a shop employee and signed back in by an employee. Specific dates must be given.
- All costumes will be properly laundered before return. This is determined by the employee in discussion with the costume shop supervisor when appropriate. The clothing must be restored to the same state it was checked out - no blood or distressing.
- All costumes must be restocked appropriately by the borrower.

Other means of obtaining costume pieces:

- It is important to be flexible with your vision and be creative with what you have on hand. Actor closets can be a great resource. Rely on their closets heavily for modern pieces, basics, and shoes. To ensure clear communication between you and the actors, vision boards, example slideshows, and asking about specific pieces can be helpful.
- Thrifting is also a great option! When purchasing clothes for actors, it is easy to have their measurements and sizes on hand. either set aside a time to take their measurements during rehearsal or outside of, or send out a Google Form to have themselves report their measurements.

LIGHTING:

- All lighting requests must be pre-approved by the lighting design faculty. They Reach out to the current technical coordinator to connect them.
- Designers are to use the current rep-plot, in either space they are assigned. This is not to be any refocusing of the rep plot of any kind.
- You may change gels, but they must be restored to their original state at strike. Gels are in Room 2 and the designer must be accompanied by the lighting design graduate student working in the electrics shop that semester.
- There is in ETC Express lighting console in both the Studio and Arena space, this is the only console available to you. You may not request an additional console or to change consoles.
- The designer may use up to four specials for gobo work or other needs. The extra instruments must be used from room 3 (taking any inventory from room 10 is not allowed). Again, the designer must be accompanied by the electrics shop graduate student for that semester.
- Both the Studio and the Arena have discs saved with the generic plot. You may not write over this disc. To save your show, please (either you or your lighting designer); request a floppy disc for saving from the lighting design faculty.

SOUND:

- Designers will need to use QLab to program sound cues. An Apple macbook is required to run this program. Contact Melina Rodriguez (rodri937@msu.edu) to borrow one through the DoT if needed.
- Designers should prioritize sourcing sounds from free websites (such as freesound.com) or recording them themselves. Recording equipment may be available in the sound lab in room 4. Contact Melina if interested in using the sound lab.
- Programs like Audacity (free!) can be used to edit and change any sounds that were sourced freely.
- All sound requests for speakers and microphones must go through the sound design faculty prior to use. Please contact Melina first tho <3
- Designers will not be able to mic the actors.

MEDIA:

- Second Stage does not currently use Media in their shows. If you are interested in being a media designer, please contact the board!