



INTRODUCTION AND GOALS

Using This Handbook

This document was created to provide guidance and uniformity in management of the Memorial Auditorium house for all performances. Any questions or clarifications that remain after reviewing this document should be directed to Brendon Martin (brendonm@stanford.edu) or Ross Williams (rpwilliams@stanford.edu).

Background

Ram's Head Theatrical Society produces three shows annually: Gaieties, Original Winter One Acts, and the Spring Musical. Every year, much attention is given to nearly every aspect of these shows, with one exception: management of the front of house. One of the most easily overlooked aspects of a production, house management requires just as much forethought and careful attention as any other element of a show. It is essential to ensuring the safety of the audience, cast, and crew.

HOUSE MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

Breakdown

HOUSE MANAGER (1 per night): The house manager is in charge of overseeing the house management and is *not* the producer. This entails supervising the ushers, fielding ticket and seating questions before and during the show, patrolling all doors and lobbies to prevent people from sneaking in (pre-show), keeping an eye out for belligerent audience members, and, most importantly, remaining *in the lobby* for the duration of the show. This last element is particularly important and should be emphasized to anyone who volunteers to house manage. The house manager is responsible for filling out the Ram's Head Box Office Report to be found at ramshead.stanford.edu. If you are unable to easily find House Managers for any of the performances, turn to the Ram's Head Board of Directors for volunteers.

USHERS: The ushers help with taking tickets, handing out programs, and directing audience members to their sections. Once the show begins, ushers may find a place to sit or stand in the house and watch the show. During the show, ushers should keep an eye out for any seriously problematic audience members, and should report them to the house manager if unable to quiet them or confiscate problematic materials.

- **Gaieties** (7-8 ushers): Ushers are usually pulled from Stanford Sierra Camp employees in exchange for application fliers. For Gaieties, when we block off sections of seats for group sales, ushers ensure that groups sit in their correct areas.
- **OWOA** (3-4 ushers): Two ushers take tickets at the entrance of Piggott; one or two others stand inside Piggott and monitor entrances from side doors, handicap entrance in particular.
- **Spring Show** (3-4 ushers): Ushers take tickets and help patrons to their seats.

BOX OFFICE (2-3 people): This team assists patrons in obtaining pre-purchased tickets or buying them at the door. One potential configuration is to have one person on door ticket sales;

another on will call tickets; and the third on credit card swiping/counting which types of tickets are sold (student, faculty/staff, general).

Soliciting for Staff: 2 – 3 weeks before Opening Night

One to two weeks before the show, the producer should send out a feeler email asking for students interested in *ushering* or assisting with the *box office*, offering them compensation of one free ticket. I used the following email template for my solicitation email:

INTERESTED IN USHERING or ASSISTING WITH BOX OFFICE FOR GAJETIES 2009?

Who: anyone who wants a free ticket to *Gaieties 2009: Apocalypse Cal!*

What: Ushers and Box Office assistants are required to show up an hour before the show, work pre-show taking tickets, assisting guests, and patrolling the lobby, and then get to enjoy the show...for FREE!

When: **Wednesday, 11/18, Thursday 11/19, and Friday 11/20**

Shows @ 8 pm (volunteers needed @ 7 pm, 6:45 pm for Friday) in MemAud.

Contact Producer Olivia Haas (ohaas@stanford.edu) with questions or to sign up.

Ideally, the producer should have a good friend or two (or three), who are a) involved in the theater community and/or b) reliable and trustworthy. These are the people who you should ask to *house manage*. Begin soliciting for House Managers two to three weeks before opening night.

GAJETIES NOTE: *Gaieties performances cater to different audience members: Wednesday is class unity night, sponsored by class government; Thursday is freshman night; Friday is Row, Greek, and Gaieties alum night. Of all the nights, Friday is by far the craziest, both in terms of belligerent audience and sheer numbers. Be sure to assemble your most trusted and confident team for Friday night.*

STANFORD TICKET OFFICE

Introduction

Tickets for all Ram's Head productions are sold through the Stanford Ticket Office, tickets.stanford.edu. Their office is located on the second floor of Tresidder Union next to Wells Fargo. They manage online sales, sell tickets directly to customers through their office, provide ticket stock for White Plaza and door sales, prepare Will Call envelopes, and provide credit card swipers for Gaieties/Spring Show White Plaza and door sales when appropriate.

The Executive Producer communicates directly with STO. The main contact is Kevin Hahn, hahnkg@stanford.edu. *It is recommended that only the producer and one plenipotentiary assistant producer deal with STO.*

NOTE: *Only the producer is authorized to pick up the credit card swiper. He or she will sign a waiver to handle it and will be instructed in its use by Kevin.*

White Plaza Ticket Sales

Tickets for every Ram's Head production are sold in White Plaza the week leading up to the performances (two weeks for Spring Show). Dates for White Plaza ticket sales must be

submitted to EP when ticket sales open. Cast should sign up to “table” at least one week in advance and typically run from 11am to 1pm daily.

White Plaza procedure is as follows:

1. Producer or assprod picks up cashbox and tickets from STO. *Count out the number of tickets and the money in the cashbox in front of the STO staff member.* Record information in the White Plaza Sales Report which can be found at <http://ramshead.stanford.edu/productionresources.html>.
2. While selling tickets, keep track of how many of each type you sell in the WP Sales Report.
3. Producer or assprod returns cashbox and tickets to STO. Again, count out the number of tickets and the money in the cashbox in front of the STO staff member. Again, record in WP Sales Report.

If you wish to use the credit card swiper, the producer must sign it out and in. Its use is simple. Any refunds or voids cannot be handled on site and must be recorded for Kevin to deal with.

Picking Up Tickets for Performances

For each performance, the producer must pick up tickets (Will Call and as yet unsold) for the show. If it is not opening night, he or she must also return unsold tickets and the cashbox from the night before *the next day*.

Ticket pick up procedure is as follows:

1. Producer picks up cashbox and tickets from STO.
 - a. Make sure that each name on Will Call manifest has a corresponding an envelope.
 - b. Count number of tickets not reserved for Will Call and amount of money in cashbox. Record in Box Office Report.
 - c. Confirm that online ticket sales have been closed.
2. If returning cashbox from previous night's performance: count number of tickets unsold and amount of money in cashbox. Record in Box Office Report.

If you wish to use the credit card swiper, for weekday performances the producer must sign it out the afternoon before a performance (Thursday) and turn it in the next morning (Friday). For the credit card swiper picked up on Friday afternoon, the producer does not return it until Monday morning and must look after it over the duration of the weekend.

PERFORMANCES

Pre-Production: Load-In

During load-in, the producer or an assistant producer should organize the necessary materials for front of house management. You will need the following:

- Three long folding tables
- Two to four folding chairs
- Two lamps on poles
- Several long extension cords

Ram's Head Theatrical Society House Management Handbook

- Lots of gaffers or duct tape
- Ticket sales/Will-Call signs
- At least 10 paper copies of the night's respective group seating chart
- Small boxes/baskets for ticket stubs
- Writing implements

These things can be obtained from Kenny (ask nicely!), except for the writing implements and tape, which Ram's Head should provide.

Ticket Sales Procedure

Selling tickets is a matter of maintaining the illusion of control.

Pre-show

Keep track of how many of each type of ticket you sell: student, faculty/staff, general in the Box Office Report.

Door Sales: Pretty straightforward. Give correct change. Checks should be made out to "Stanford Ticket Office."

Credit Card Swiper: Follow instructions provided by Kevin. You cannot issue refunds or voids on site, as Kevin must process them personally. If a refund is necessary, make the customer aware that it will be processed the next business day and take down all relevant information (Credit Card type, number, person's name, contact info if they choose).

Will Call: When a customer gives you his or her name, pull up the envelope. Open the envelope and count the number of tickets to ensure it is correct. Return it to the customer and cross his or her name off of the manifest.

NOTE: *It is at the discretion of the house manager to sell tickets to latecomers. For Gaieties and Spring Show, it is usually permissible. For OWOA, latecomers will not be seated until the first one act has finished.*

Once show begins

- Fill out Box Office Report
- Tear up unclaimed Will Call tickets (if they exist in high volume, I believe it is acceptable to resell them).
- Count cash box (three times) and number of unsold tickets.
- Put away table's accoutrements.

Performance Timeline

6 pm: Send a team of assistant producers or any available tech to the lobby to set up. The necessary set up is as follows:

- One table set up on either side of the top of the MemAud stairs outside, one for Will-Call and one for Ticket Sales. Each table should have at least one folding chair
- One pole light at each table
- Extension cords running from just inside the lobby doors to the pole lamps
NOTE: *the extension cords should be neatly taped where ground meets wall wherever possible to ensure no one will trip on the cords.*
- The “Ticket Sales” and “Will-Call” signs taped up in the appropriate locations, directing patrons to the respective tables
- The third folding table can be set up in the lobby between the two main house doors for additional program distribution. Programs can be arranged on this table at this time.

GAJETIES NOTE: As of Gaieties 2011, Ram’s Head hires SUDPS security guards for Gaieties performances to keep out unwanted substances and unruly audience members. Guards work in pairs from 6:30pm-10:30pm. We recommend the following numbers: 2 for Wednesday; 2 for Thursday; and 6 for Friday.

When the guards arrive at 6:30pm, the producer should greet them and introduce them to relevant people: Ross, house manager, ushers, etc. On Wednesday and Thursday, the two should monitor the entrance into MemAud and the auditorium during the show. Pre-show on Friday, two will be at the top of the MemAud steps checking bags; two will be at the entrance to MemAud; and two will be on the perimeter. During the show on Friday, four should be in the auditorium; two should be in the lobby.

Ushers may be used to check bags upon (especially since security guards cannot reach into bags), but this also carries liability (e.g. in 2011 someone lost a wallet and could have blamed it on ushers). Though security may confiscate alcohol, food, marijuana, etc, they cannot eject any audience member unilaterally. Should they or an usher bring a rowdy audience member to your attention, find Ross, and you and he will eject the audience member in question.

Security guards will check out with you at the end of the night. Contact deputy sheriff Eric Fenton (eric.fenton@stanford.edu) with questions.

6:45 pm: Once your House Manager has arrived, familiarize them with the group seating so that they are ready to direct groups in the right direction. Go over general rules with them regarding keeping an eye out for obvious alcoholic containers, show them all the possible entrances for them to patrol (including doors facing the Business School and all other doors to the outside of MemAud), and be sure to remind them that they have the authority to ask any audience members to get rid of drinks, smoking devices, and other problematic instruments.

- Gaieties: For the Wednesday and Thursday performances, ask that your House Manager arrive at 6:45pm. For the Friday show, ask that he or she arrive no later than 6:30pm.

7 pm: Once they have arrived, designate who will be in the following locations: 4 at the main door taking tickets, 2 at the main house (theater) doors with programs/seating charts, and 2 at the stairs (one at either staircase) with programs and seating charts. If you do not have 8 ushers for a

particular night, or if you have not sold balcony tickets, adjust accordingly. The most important jobs of the ushers are to direct groups to their sections and ensure no one without a ticket slips in.

- **Gaieties:** For the Wednesday and Thursday performances, ask that your ushers arrive at 7pm. For the Friday show, ask that they arrive no later than 6:45pm.

7:30pm: If your cast and crew are ready, you should be able to open the house at 7:30. Have the ushers at the door rip tickets etc.

8pm: You should aim to start the show at 8pm. Depending on the night, this may or may not happen.

During the show: Once the house lights are dimmed, the ushers can be released to find seats in the auditorium. It is imperative that there be at least two ushers seated upstairs (if you have sold balcony tickets for that night's performance) and that they are aware that they are still expected to keep an eye on the audience during the performance. The House Manager can take over at the box office to handle any ticket sales once the show has started. Once it is clear that no more late comers are arriving, the House Manager should pack up the cash box and store it in a secure location. The House Manager should then remain in the lobby for the duration of the show.

During intermission: If possible, send a crew team to the lobby to collapse the tables, store them behind the benches, store the chairs, pack up and store the light poles (in the light booth), and properly store all extension cords. The Ticket Sales and Will Call signs can also be removed at this time and stored in the Green Room. Obtain the cash box from the House Manager. Check to make sure that no audience members have been unnecessarily rude and disruptive. If they have, feel free to ask them to be more respectful of the other audience members.

Post-show: Before vacating the auditorium, send a crew member or assistant producer (or yourself) to do a sweep of the lobby and outside stairs for any remaining house management supplies. And don't forget: THANK YOUR SUPERVISOR!

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact numbers

Should you encounter any problems before, during, or after the show that cannot be solved by that night's supervisor, call the following numbers:

- **Facilities Emergency number:** (650) 723-2281 – *This number should be used for maintenance problems such as clogged toilets etc.*
- **Campus emergency number:** (650) 321-4433 – *This number should be used if security reinforcement is absolutely necessary (unlikely).*
- **Ross Williams:** (650) 740-3933 – *It is a good idea to program Ross' number into your (the producer's) phone in case any questions arise that cannot be answered by the provided supervisor.*