



Office for the Arts at Harvard

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HOUSE MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

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What is a House Manager?

You are the host of the event. You are the producer's representative in all interactions with the audience. You are partner with the Stage Manager, who is responsible for all aspects of the actual performance, onstage, backstage and in the lighting booth, and with the Ticket Manager who is responsible for the allocation and sale of tickets. You have two primary responsibilities:

1. To ensure the comfort and safety of patrons.
2. To seat the audience so that the event can begin on time and continue in a timely manner.

Definitions

The House

The house is where the audience sits in the theater. You will say the "house is open" to indicate that the audience has been permitted inside the theater or the "house is closed" to indicate that performers and crew may still be in the theater.

Front of House

The front of house is the lobby and box office area or any area inside the building to which the public has access except the theater itself.

A General Admission House

Audience members do not have a specific seat assignment. Seats are taken on a first-come, first-served basis. A general admission house may be divided into sections. For example the orchestra (lower level of the House) may have one ticket price and the balcony another ticket price, but there are no assigned seats within sections. A producer may request that particular seats be reserved for VIPs in an otherwise General Admission House.

A Reserved House

Each seat has a corresponding ticket. A patron has "rights" to the specific seat for which she holds a ticket.

Half-Hour

Half-hour is the term used to alert cast and crew that the performance time is one half-hour away.

Know the Venue

As the host of the event, the first thing you need to do is become familiar with the physical space, known as the *venue*, in which the event will take place. You must also become familiar with the rules and expectations of those that own and/or manage the space. You should find out which individual can provide the detailed information you need. This is usually a technical director or production manager. In the Harvard undergraduate residential houses, it may be a drama tutor, music tutor, or superintendent. Following is a checklist of matters you will want to review with this individual.

In some cases, the venue management takes care of many house management tasks for you. Review these matters with the representative of the venue to avoid duplication or conflicting efforts.

CHECKLIST

To Review with the Venue Representative

- Emergency procedures particular to the venue. Note the location of egress paths, particularly those that are not immediately apparent to an audience.
- Location of public telephones and campus phones.
- Informational and emergency contact numbers.
- Location of light switches for Front of House, House, restrooms and common areas.
- Location of and any useful information about elevator(s).
- Food and drink policy.
- Path and procedures for wheelchair access to building, theater and restrooms.
- Location(s) for wheelchair seating.
- Suggested locations for usher placement.
- Suggested locations for signs deemed applicable to the venue and program. See [Make Signs](#) page 6.
- Acceptable means for placing/adhering signs. (Most venues will not allow tape.)
- Location of easily accessible seats in the theater for ushers, press, latecomers and VIPs.
- Instructions for disposing of trash and recyclables.
- Recommended placement of Police and/or Security detail(s). The College normally requires the presence of a police officer if cash is being exchanged.
- Availability, logistics and legalities of standing room space.
- Recommended intermission alerts: location and operation of chimes and/or lights to flash.
- If there is an "event performance" report for the venue, obtain a copy.

Know the Event

After becoming familiar with the venue, your next task is to become familiar with the event you are hosting. While roles and responsibilities differ from event to event, it is usually the Stage Manager who provides this information to the House Manager. Following is a checklist of matters to review with the Stage Manager. Ask the Stage Manager to keep you informed of any changes that affect the House or Front of House.

CHECKLIST

To Review with the Stage Manager

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Review Seating Issues | The Stage Manager should present all seating issues that affect the cast and director. Find out if any seats are being moved or removed for the performance. If so, make sure that the Ticket Manager has up-to-date information. If there is any doubt as to what the actual "seat count" (total available seats) will be, make sure the Ticket Manager has released only the number of tickets that reflect the lowest possible count. |
| Review Safety Issues | Find out if any of the doors, entrances and/or aisles in the theater is used by cast or crew during the performance. You and your ushers will want to make sure that these pathways are kept clear. |
| Discuss the number and length of Intermission(s) | This must be established in advance because it needs to be included in the program. Ultimately, this is not your decision to make but most producers will value your input. A ten-minute intermission that ends up running fifteen minutes is preferable to a fifteen-minute intermission that goes twenty-five minutes. On the other hand, sometimes an inadequate number of toilets or the Producer's interest in selling concessions or T-shirts requires a longer intermission. |
| Discuss performance-night announcements | Sometimes announcements need to be made regarding the need to keep aisles clear, prohibition of flash cameras and recording devices or any cast replacements or additions. Decide who will make these announcements and when. Typically this information is either put in the program as an insert and/or announced over the public address system by the Stage Manager. |

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION:

Weeks Prior to the Event

Now that you've become familiar with the venue and the nature of the event itself, you want to do as much work in advance as possible. This is important not only because you will have less time as the event draws near, but also because you may find those resources, both human and material, simply may not be available to you later on. Some of the things you should be doing several weeks prior to the event:

Confirm Police and/or Security arrangements

The Producer usually takes care of this but you have a direct interest in making sure it is done.

Recruit Ushers

This is not easy. Start early. Enlist more ushers than you need. Have the cast and crew provide you with names of potential ushers.

Establish Communication with the Ticket Manager

Lack of communication with the Ticket Manager is the quickest road to catastrophe. The following issues need to be addressed *before* a show goes on sale.

Familiarize yourself with a reserved house

You should be very familiar with the numbering scheme of the house and with the design of the ticket stock. You should, with a glance at a ticket, be able to direct a patron to an appropriate entrance, stairway or aisle.

Outline Usher Assignments

Determine how many ushers you will need and what each usher will be expected to do. At a minimum, you will need one usher at each entrance to take and tear tickets. Ideally you will need a second usher at each entrance to hand out programs and assist in answering patrons' questions.

For a Reserved House it is good to have additional ushers inside the House to assist patrons in locating their seats. It is not realistic to expect that every usher will be intimately familiar with the numbering scheme for the entire House. Strategize how large a section a single usher can be expected to handle. If you can provide ushers a layout or "cheat sheet" of just their section of the theater, they will be able to assist patrons more quickly.

Instruct ushers where to stand at intermission and what to do. For example, ushers may remind patrons that food and drink are not allowed in the theater, or where they can go to smoke. Tell ushers where to locate you in case of a problem.

All ushers should stay after the show to pick up litter in the House, Front of House and restrooms.

Write up short job descriptions for both a minimal number and an ideal number of ushers. As you enlist volunteers, simply assign jobs in order of importance. For example:

USHER # 1

- Tear tickets at audience right, orchestra level door.
- Sit in seat ____
- Open /close this door at beginning of each act.
- Assist any patrons who exit during show from this door.
- Stand at the same door at intermission.
- Assist with clean up.

Prepare Your Script for Performance Night Meeting with Ushers It may seem like overkill to plan this level of detail in advance. It is not. On the night of a performance you will have very little time to give ushers their assignments, provide them with answers to frequently asked questions, and review emergency procedures. You may choose to prepare small reference cards with answers to most frequently asked questions. See [Ushers](#) page 12.

Get your supplies ready Have flashlights and a watch.
Have copies of the seating plan available for ushers.

Make usher badges Your ushers should be quickly identifiable as people who can help patrons.

Make Signs Laminated signs hung with string prove to be sturdy, useful and acceptable to the management of the venue. Here is a list of signs you may need:

PURCHASE TICKETS HERE
PICK-UP RESERVED TICKETS HERE
THIS PERFORMANCE SOLD OUT – WAITING LINE FOR CANCELLATIONS BEGINS HERE.
LATECOMER SEATING IS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PRODUCER.
NO LATECOMER SEATING.
PERSONS NEEDING ASSISTED LISTENING DEVICES SEE _____.
PERFORMERS AND CREW ONLY
PLEASE DO NOT ENTER. THE HOUSE WILL OPEN AT APPROXIMATELY _____
QUIET PLEASE. PERFORMANCE IN PROGRESS. DO NOT ENTER UNTIL AN USHER APPEARS.
THE RUNNING TIME OF THIS EVENING'S PERFORMANCE IS APPROXIMATELY ____.
THERE WILL BE _____ MINUTE INTERMISSION (S).
PHOTOGRAPHY AND RECORDING DEVICES PROHIBITED.
RESTROOMS ARE LOCATED _____.
SEAT RESERVED FOR _____.

CHECKLIST

To Review with the Ticket Manager

- Establish whether you will be managing a general-admission or reserved house.
- Make sure tickets are being held for ushers if they have been promised seats for the performance.
- Recommend that seats be held as "house seats" for "night of" seating problems and last minute VIPs.
- Reserve approximately 5% of your House for latecomer seating. Ideally, these seats should be in one location, easily accessible and not in front of other patrons. Balcony or rear orchestra seats often serve well for this purpose. Establish which seats (in the case of a reserved house) or how many seats (in the case of a general admission house) need to be pulled for this purpose.
- If it is a General Admission House, check with the Ticket Manager that the number of tickets printed is exactly the same as your actual seat count.
- Understand fully the Producer's complimentary ticket policy for cast and crew.
- Be familiar with the Producer's policy regarding saving VIP seats in a General Admission House. With a General Admission House, reserve *as few* seats as possible. Resist the temptation to save seats for family and friends of cast members. It alienates your audience when they enter the theater and find *Reserved* signs on the majority of the best seats.

CHECKS AND DOUBLE-CHECKS

The Week of the Event

Make reminder phone calls to ushers	Remind them that they must be at the theater at the established time (typically, one hour prior to show time). Let them know if you or the producer would like them to follow any particular dress code. Be sure to ask them to confirm that they have received messages. You don't want to be waiting for them the night of the event wondering if your message was received.
Check with Ticket Manager and Stage Manager regarding seating issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check to see if any changes have been made that affect how many and/or which seats are available. Check to see if any changes have been made that significantly affect audience sight lines.• Confirm tickets pulled for usher seating, VIP seating, and latecomer seating.• Confirm seating section for latecomers. Remind Ticket Manager to have starting cash on hand for performance night. Discuss lobby layout and signage needs.
Make announcements to cast, crew & staff	<p>Most of the people who come to see a student show have a connection to someone involved in the production. Therefore, your communications with cast and crew during the week of the event will go a long way toward a smooth-running show.</p> <p>Remind cast and crew to tell their friends to buy their tickets in advance; to arrive at the theater no later than twenty minutes before the advertised start time; and latecomer seating is not guaranteed.</p> <p>If you have a General Admission House, work with the Producer in eliminating or restricting reserved seats.</p> <p>These announcements are particularly crucial if there is any chance of your having a full house. E-mail announcements to cast and crew are effective because they can be easily forwarded. You may want to coordinate these announcements with the Ticket Manager's updates on ticket availability and the Stage Manager's announcements.</p>
Check on the status of programs	You'll want to know if the Producer needs your usher staff to fold programs or stuff inserts.
Establish Latecomer Seating	<p>Use one of the final rehearsals to establish (with the Stage Manager and Director) a place in the play or concert that is an appropriate time to admit latecomers into the theater. This should be late enough into the show that you can admit most of your latecomers at once but not so late that people who were only a minute late miss too much.</p> <p>Ten minutes after the start is a good rule of thumb for seating latecomers. You should choose a point in the show that will allow for minimal disruption to performers and to audience members. A pause between musical selections, scene changes, moments where you anticipate large laugh or applause, or loud scenes with lots of physical action are good possibilities. Soliloquies, tender scenes, any character's entrance or scenes with physical combat are not good choices because the performers and audience will be more easily distracted.</p> <p>While you want to get latecomers into the theater, your first priorities are the safety of the performers and crew and the comfort of those already in the theater. Depending on the nature of the event, this may mean delaying the "latecomer point" to a much later point in the evening.</p>
Review Audience Announcements	See Discuss Performance Night Announcements page 4.

MAKE IT YOURS

The Dress Rehearsal

Walk through your own “night of performance” procedure	<p>The Dress Rehearsal is key to the House Manager. It can also be a difficult time because the artists who have, up to this point, enjoyed a somewhat private process are feeling anxious and vulnerable at the thought of the imminent presence of an audience. You may sense resentment toward what some perceive to be your sudden appearance on the scene. Don't take this personally and know that your presence during the evenings prior to opening can be a sobering transitional element from rehearsal to performance.</p> <p>Set a “night of performance tone” that will alleviate your work on opening night. Ask cast and crew to treat the auditorium and common areas as if there were a full audience by putting all personal belongings in their dressing rooms.</p>
Note the running time of each segment of the performance	<p>You will want to know the content and the running time of the show so that you can answer questions from audience members. It is not uncommon for the running time of a show to alter as much as fifteen minutes during production/opening week.</p>
Take in the performance	<p>You may be asked questions regarding the appropriateness of the show for children or where the best sight lines are in the theater. Your responses to such questions will have more credibility if they begin with “when I watched the show...”</p>
Be alert to any factors that affect the patron’s experience	<p>If, during a dress rehearsal, you notice that a performer cannot be heard; that performers can be seen or heard from backstage; or that lights have been left on that you assume should be off, pass these notes on to the Stage Manager. <i>Never give notes directly to artists.</i> It is the Stage Manager’s responsibility, based upon her knowledge of the Director or Conductor’s intent, to decide which notes should be addressed and how to address them.</p> <p>If you find that the auditorium is too hot or too cold, that house lights are burned out, or that the restrooms are messy, consult with the Producer or Stage Manager to see how these matters might be resolved before you have an audience. Remember that your priorities may not be the Stage Manager or Director’s priorities, particularly during production week. Be politely persistent in advocating on behalf of audience comfort, even if not everything is resolved by opening night.</p>

HOUSEKEEPING

Performance Night

Get to the theater as early as possible (at least two hours before the event), especially on opening night. The following tasks should be accomplished before you are distracted and disrupted by performers and audience members.

- Pick up litter in theater, hallways and restrooms** Make sure cast and crew's personal belongings are in dressing rooms, not in the theater.
- Assist ticket manager in setting up ticket table (s)** Tables should not block fire egress pathways, but should be easily located by patrons entering the theater.
- Place or hang signs** See [Make Signs](#) page 6.
- Familiarize yourself with VIPs and their assigned seats** You should know if there are any special donors, members of the press, or other VIP's coming to the performance. Sometimes, particularly on press nights, a Producer will assign someone other than the House Manager the task of greeting and seating special guests.
- Put signs on Reserved Seats (for general admission house)** Tell people for whom you are reserving seats that they **MUST** be at the theater twenty minutes prior to show time. Label their seats clearly with large lettering so they can be easily spotted.

In a General Admission House, do not put a reserved seat sign on a seat for a person to whom you have not allocated a ticket. If you hold someone a seat, you must hold him or her a ticket. If you release their ticket, you must release their seat and vice-versa. The House Manager and Ticket Manager must be working together on this. For example, if the Ticket Manager releases tickets that were being held for a VIP, the House Manager needs to pull the reserved seat sign(s) for that VIP.

Seats may be held for the following people:

For ushers

See [Outline Usher Assignments](#) page 5. Reserve seats for ushers as close as possible to each entrance of the theater. Assign ushers in these seats the tasks of assisting patrons leaving the theater during the performance, making sure that aisles are kept clear, and making sure doors are closed and opened at the beginning/end of each act.

For VIPS

VIPs often choose not to sit in the seat you've reserved. They may want to sit with friends or in a less conspicuous location. Don't create a situation where you have lots of unfilled reserved seats and no way of distinguishing no-shows and latecomers from patrons who haven't used their reserved seats.

Reserve good seats but not the best seats. Regular patrons who buy tickets in advance and arrive early at the theater should find the best selection of seats available to them. For example, reserve seats in the second row, not the first. If possible reserve aisle seats for VIPs. They'll appreciate easy access to their seat, especially if they arrive late!

For Latecomers

See [Meeting with the Ticket Manager](#) page 6. Do not identify these seats as being held for "latecomers." If you do, patrons who have arrived on time may feel entitled to take those seats and leave it up to latecomers to find their way to the odd remaining seats. While there may be some moral justification for this attitude, it does not behoove you to subscribe to it. You are more likely to find latecomer seats available when you need them if you label them "reserved for staff."

Having a small audience does not alleviate the need to identify seating for latecomers that is quickly and safely accessible. In an under-filled General Admission House, latecomers can move to better seats at intermission. In a Reserved House, audience can move from latecomer seating to their "own" seats at intermission.

Take seats off-line

(General Admission House only) If you are anticipating a small audience, you should consult with the Producer, Stage Manager and Director regarding making entire rows or sections closed to seating. This will allow you to steer patrons away from the worst seats and to consolidate your audience to create a fuller feeling house for the cast.

Performance Night:

1½ HOURS TO GO

The following tasks should be accomplished approximately one and one half-hours prior to the start of the event.

Remind Stage Manager that House opens in one hour Remind the Stage Manager of the time remaining until Half-Hour. Sometimes the opening of the theater is delayed by performer warm-ups, sound and light checks. You should be nudging the Stage Manager to accomplish these tasks prior to Half-Hour. If performers and patrons use the same restrooms you should have the Stage Manager let the cast know when there are audience members in the building.

Establish rapport with Security Guard and Police Introduce yourself right away. Know their names. Let them know if you have any particular concerns. Convey a respect for their knowledge and authority as well as an awareness that you are their client.

Open the Box Office/ticket table This is typically the Ticket Manager's responsibility. The House Manager will want to assist in getting this operation set up and running in a timely manner. If the ticket table opens late, your job will be made much more difficult as the evening progresses. If the box office is not in operation one hour and fifteen minutes prior to the advertised start time, consider the event behind schedule. You and the Ticket Manager should do everything possible to get things back on track.

USHERS

At no later than one hour prior to the advertised start time, you should be meeting with all of your ushers.

Assign jobs

See [Outline Usher Assignments](#) page 5.

Provide badges, programs and flashlights

Only the ushers who will be helping to seat latecomers need flashlights.

Instruct ushers to appear accessible, friendly and pro-active

Ushers should not be sitting down, reading books or “hanging” with other ushers. Say, “May I help you?”

Provide Instructions Regarding Ticket Stubs

Identify a place or container to hold them during the “in”. Determine when and by whom they should be counted once the performance is underway.

Provide Ushers with answers to most Frequently Asked Questions

- Are food and drink allowed in the theater? (Usually not)
- When does the house open?
- What is the running time of the show?
- Is there and how long is the intermission?
- Where are the restrooms?
- Where is the elevator?
- Where is the payphone?
- Where is the drinking fountain?
- Where can I meet performers after the show?
- How can I get flowers to a performer?
- Where can I park?

Review Emergency Procedures

Review all emergency egress paths including those not immediately apparent to an audience. If a fire alarm sounds: Open all doors. To every extent possible, without compromising your own safety, assist patrons with an orderly evacuation. Do not question the validity of an alarm.

Any potentially life-threatening situation is sufficient cause for either the Stage Manager or House Manager to stop the show, bring up the house lights and make an announcement to the audience. The House Manager is responsible for the orderly evacuation of audience and Front of House staff. The Stage Manager is responsible for the orderly evacuation of the cast and production staff.

In any emergency, use direct but calm language. For example, say “There is a problem, we ask you to step outside for your safety,” not, “the building’s on fire, get out!”

If an audience member becomes ill and requires medical attention: Alert HUPD, clear a path for responders and direct audience away from the person or persons in danger.

Bring to the attention of the Stage Manager the presence of any potential danger such as smoke, smells or packages. Some of these items will turn out to be legitimate props or special effects.

Make sure the details of any such emergencies are passed on (even after HUPD has been called and even if the crisis passes) to a representative of the venue as well as Alan Symonds, Technical Director and Advisor in the Office for the Arts.

Performance Night: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

At one half-hour before the advertised start time, your focus is on getting the audience seated and the show started in a timely manner. Here is a suggested checklist for the House Manager's most crucial time.

One half -hour prior to advertised start time

Consult with Stage Manager on opening the House

If for any reason you are unable to open the house at half-hour, consider the evening behind schedule and work with the Stage Manager to get things back on track.

At half-hour it is typically the Stage Manager's responsibility to let the cast know the "house is open" so performers do not walk out onto the stage. Ask the Stage Manager to make this announcement.

Instruct ushers to open doors. Make an announcement to waiting audiences on the entry level to the building that "the house is open." Encourage people to take their seats as early as possible to avoid traffic jams and time delays later.

15 minutes before advertised start time

- **Touch Base with ushers**
- **Touch base with Ticket Manager**
- **Touch base with the Stage Manager**

Work with the Stage Manager in getting the show started as close to show time as possible. Do not wait until after show time to start working on getting the show started. If you do everything possible to start right on time, you will probably start five to ten minutes late. This is permissible. Any delay past 10 minutes is unacceptable and will alienate your audience. If you accept that you will start ten minutes late, you will start twenty minutes late.

Ten minutes prior to advertised start time

Urge Ticket Manager to release any available tickets

At this point, the ticket manager should not be holding any unpaid reservations if there is a waiting line for tickets. Do not resell sold tickets because you see unoccupied seats.

Latecomers who have purchased tickets are entitled to a seat. You have a right to keep them from taking their seat until a pause or intermission but you do not have a right to resell their seat.

Five minutes prior to advertised start-time

Project actual starting time

Establish with the Stage Manager an actual starting time based upon activity in the lobby and backstage. This time should be no later than ten minutes after the advertised start time and should not be altered unless there is an emergency backstage or in the house.

Every minute counts. Don't set an 8:10 start if you can possibly start at 8:07. Three minutes of 300 patrons' time represents fifteen wasted hours! It is your job to inform the ushers and Ticket Manager of the actual starting plan. It is the Stage Manager's job to inform cast and crew.

Advertised start-time to 5 minutes after

Assess activity in the house

If you sense that patrons with tickets for a general admission house are having a hard time finding seats you should remove reserved seat signs and allow those seats to be taken. You should also make the following announcement: "*Ladies and gentlemen, you can help us start the show by taking your seats and removing belongings from seats for which you do not have a ticket. Sitting in aisles is prohibited by law.*"

Coordinate the release of standing room space

If the venue permits standing room, encourage the Ticket Manager to release standing room tickets a few minutes before the advertised start time, not earlier. Otherwise, those who should be standing are more likely to take seats that should be occupied by latecomers who have purchased tickets. Make it clear to patrons purchasing standing room that they must stand.

Urge the Stage Manager to start the show!

Do one last check to make sure that aisles are clear and that doors to the theater are shut.

After the Show Starts: Latecomer Seating

Once the show has begun, most, but far from all, of the House Manager's job is done. As soon as the performance begins, give yourself a pat on the back, take a breath, and begin to gather and instruct latecomers. Patrons will almost always work cooperatively with you if they feel you are operating with a fair, pre-conceived plan. You have three jobs related to latecomers.

- First, make them feel better about being late. They are usually frustrated because they got lost or could not find parking or had to wait for the babysitter. Project an attitude of sympathy rather than reprimand. Take them off the defensive.
- Second, let them know what they are missing from the play or concert. Downplay the importance of what they are missing. Give them a program. Orient them to the layout of the theater.
- Third, describe to them where you are going to seat them. Let them know that you are waiting for a pre-established point in the action so as not to disturb other patrons. Let them know they can take their own (in the case of a reserved house) or better (in the case of general admission house) seats at intermission.

Escort latecomers into theater at the established time

See [Establish Timing of Latecomer Seating](#) page 7.

One larger distraction is better than many little distractions. Ideally, there should be no conversation or disruption of other patrons during the process of seating latecomers. It is good for those ushering latecomers to have flashlights. The flashlights should be dim. Point the light to the floor so that the patron can see steps and so as not to disturb patrons or performers.

Use discretion in admitting "late late-comers"

Patrons who arrive even later than the late seating time are likely to be particularly anxious. Use your discretion in determining whether or not there are easily accessible places for them to sit or stand until intermission.

During the Performance: MINDING THE STORE

During the performance, the House Manager gets to relax, but not sleep. Remember to:

Be available to assist patrons

Patrons should never leave the theater during the show to find no one available in the lobby. You and at least one usher should remain in the lobby to assist patrons who have an urgent need for the restrooms, telephones or drinking fountain. They may also need assistance getting back into the theater to see the rest of the show. In a worst case scenario, they may need assistance with a medical emergency.

Approach anyone who comes out of the theater during the show. Ask, *"May I help you?"*

Check restrooms

Make sure that all litter is picked up off floor. Check toilet paper and paper towel stock.

Keep an eye out for visitors

Unattended dressing rooms are a favorite feeding ground for thieves. If you have the slightest concern about someone in the building that you don't know, alert the security guard or police officer on duty.

Do a House Count & Performance Report

Do a house count of ticket stubs ripped at the door and report the totals to the Ticket Manager. Complete an Event/Performance Report including the house count.

Intermission: TEMPORARY INSANITY

Intermission is not a socializing time for the House Manager. You need to:

Pro-actively assist patrons

Direct people to restrooms and to outside area for smoking. Remind patrons of the length of intermission as they leave the theater.

Starting second half of program

As soon as the intermission begins you need to start working toward getting the next portion of the show started. You have to nudge your audience and the Stage Manager. Again, it is your job to keep the event moving!

Flashing lights and/or sounding chimes are typical means to alert the audience that intermission is over and the second half is about to begin.

Don't assume that people will find their way back by the time that you are ready to start the next section of your program. Don't wait for audiences to settle to begin. No matter how many announcements you make, no matter how many times you flash the house lights, some people will stand and chat until the show is actually starting.

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE

After the Performance

Your part of the “event” continues until the last audience member has left the building. Post-show House Manager responsibilities include:

Ushers Open the theater doors for patrons to exit the theater

Curtain calls and applause are part of the show. Ushers should open the doors to the lobby when the Stage Manager has given the cue to raise the house lights in the theater, not before.

Instruct patrons

Direct patrons to “unclogged exits.” Some patrons will want to know where they may meet performers. If weather permits, ask people to wait outside the building for performers and crew. Unless you have been told otherwise by the Stage Manager, do not permit anyone onto the stage, backstage or into the dressing rooms.

Pick up litter in theater, hallways and restrooms

Reuse programs that are not crumpled.

Collect usher materials

Collect flashlights, badges, seating charts, etc. from the ushers before they leave.

Say goodnight and thank you

Respond to everyone with whom you make eye contact. Be especially certain to thank ushers.

Ticket Manager Responsibilities that Affect the House Manager

Do not oversell the show. Do not resell seats.

The Ticket Manager must keep control of ticket stock. Selling tickets from too many venues and/or allowing too many tickets to be sold on consignment increases the possibility of losing track and either underselling or overselling your house.

The Ticket Manager should not sell more tickets than seats, even if seats are unoccupied at curtain time. A latecomer who has purchased a ticket for a reserved house has a right to assume that her seat remains available for late seating or intermission seating. A latecomer who has purchased a ticket to a General Admission House has a right to a seat, although not necessarily a good seat.

Avoid preferential treatment of patrons.

Do not start a waiting list for phone inquiries and/or friends who did not buy a ticket in time. If tickets are sold out, a waiting list should not be started for preferential treatment at the door. The Ticket Manager should tell people that they must come to the theater at their own risk and wait in line. Trying to balance the needs of the person who has been waiting in line for forty minutes against the person who shows up at five minutes before curtain and says their name is on a list will create patron resentment.

Establish an at-the-door waiting line for sold-out events

The Ticket Manager should establish a single-file waiting line if you have a sold-out show and walk-in inquiries. The line should be out of the way of patrons coming into the theater who have tickets, AND out of the way of the line of those coming to pick up held tickets.

The Ticket Manager can release any tickets that become available to those in a waiting LINE, as opposed to a wait list. Five minutes before show time it is best not to be hollering names out and looking for people. Just say, "Next!" People waiting in line may be admitted if:

- Complimentary tickets are unclaimed.
- Unpaid reservations are unclaimed.
- The Producer and House Manager decide to release "house" seats.
- Standing room is permitted.

Again, a seat can not be released for resale because someone who has purchased a ticket has not arrived.

The Ticket Manager needs to keep the waiting line informed, to the degree possible. For example, if the Ticket Manager knows that standing room will be available, the Ticket Manager can say "I can guarantee you that we'll have standing room for you and we may have a seat." If it is unlikely the number of people in line will be accommodated, the people at the end of the line should be told.

Watch for people who may be waiting in the wrong line. Someone who waits in the ticket pick up line only to find out they should be in a waiting line will become instantly anxious and understandably frustrated.

It is highly recommended to have roving House and Tickets Managers. If everyone is stuck at his or her task location (ticket selling or ushering), there is no one available to communicate and coordinate.

Don't overcrowd.

If possible, establish long in advance the number of people you can admit into the theater to

Establish standing room space and procedure

stand and do not give in to the temptation to overcrowd the theater. This jeopardizes the safety of everyone in the building; causes the show to start late; and may jeopardize your organization's access to the venue for future projects.

Be organized and professional in turning people away

While it is exciting to have a full house, it is never fun to turn people away. If it is not the last performance, you obviously want to encourage people to purchase tickets for one of the remaining shows. Unfortunately, it is often the final performance that overflows.

Although people being turned away will be disappointed, they will most likely not be angry with you if they have observed that you have been calm, systematic and fair. Do not give patrons the opportunity to feel that you have shown preferential treatment to friends of the cast and crew or that they suffered as a result of your disorganization.

If a patron refuses to leave the theater, or becomes verbally or physically abusive, you should enlist the assistance of the police or security guard on sight and/or call the Harvard Police.