

The Parish Players



PRODUCTION MANUAL

The Eclipse Grange Theater
Thetford, Vermont
2008

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How To Use This Manual

This manual is a practical guide for anyone who is directing or producing a Parish Players production. It's a guide to the what's and how's – the traditions and folkways – that we've developed over the years and that we think will be useful to you as you plan and produce your show. This is not a comprehensive textbook on theater production. Rather we have focused on the specific ways the Parish Players do shows in our home, the Eclipse Grange Theater in Thetford, Vermont. We've also included some helpful hints – things that other directors have found useful with their casts or with the art of directing.

We have tried to include information for all the types of shows that we do from a short one-act to a musical extravaganza. Consequently, your show may use only some of the resources and staff that we describe here. For many shows several staff functions can be done by a single person. If you have any questions about what's in this manual or about your production, ask your producer, your board liaison, or any experienced Parish Players member.

Part 1 of this manual describes the steps you will be going through in your production, from choosing the play right through cleaning up after strike. Almost every show goes through these steps. If you've never directed before – or if you've never directed a show at Parish Players – you should probably read this part from beginning to end.

Part 2 lists the production and house staff that you might need and explains their typical duties. It's an exhaustive list; it's a rare show that needs all of them. But some of them are needed for every show, or at least someone needs to be responsible for the duties. You should at least skim through this part yourself, and then get copies of the appropriate sections to give to your staff.

Part 3 offers practical information about the theater and its facilities. It tells you what equipment we have available and how to use the building. It contains important information for your designers and house manager.

Part 4 describes Parish Players online resources – website, mailing lists, and member database.

This manual will always be a work in progress. Things change: tastes, technology, techniques, and the wider cast of players and service providers. Please help us keep this manual as up-to-date as possible by giving us your suggestions and corrections. You can email them to us at pancho@parishplayers.org¹ or pass them along to the board through the board liaison for your show.

Most important, have a great show and don't forget to have fun!

¹ Pancho is the name of Elizabethan thespian whose woodcut image is our logo.

Part 1: Producing a Show - Step by Step

At a Glance

Here is a concise picture of the steps that you, the director or producer, will go through as you stage your show. We'll discuss each step in detail below.

1. Choose the play.
2. Work up a proposal and get the show approved and scheduled.
3. Line up your staff.
4. Get your scripts.
5. Hold your auditions.
6. Plan the rehearsal schedule and location.
7. Hold production meetings and rehearsals.
8. Hold technical and dress rehearsals.
9. Run performances.
10. Strike the show.

Choose the Play

Here are a number of things to consider in choosing a Parish Players show:

- What kind of audience do you want to interest? Can the region served by the Parish Players – the Upper Valley – provide that sort of audience? Can it provide it for the number of performances you have in mind?
- Are you considering a play that your audience might have seen recently somewhere in the area, or one that's very similar?
- Does the play you are considering have a shock value that might damage the Parish Players' reputation? Or would its shock value be healthy for this area?
- You may want to choose a play for a particular actor that you have in mind. Or you may want to think in terms of a large cast knowing that this gives lots of people an opportunity to have parts and may draw a large audience. You may consider whether it may be easier or more interesting to work with just a few people.
- Does your play require actors from a demographic that is hard to find in this region?
- If you want to do a period play, will you be able to costume it? The Parish Players have a limited number of period costumes.
- If you do a play involving a complicated set, can you manage to keep the cost within your budget? Lumber is expensive and budgets are small. Do the Players already have what you need in the way of flats, etc.? Could the set be modified to reduce cost? Have you sufficient crew?
- Do you have or can you get enough background information for the play you are considering?

- What kind of plays have been produced recently at the Grange? Would the play you have in mind add variety?
- Most important, do you like the play? It is almost impossible to sustain the necessary interest in it if you do not.

Here are some of the places you can find scripts to read:

- Both Baker Library at Dartmouth and Howe Library in Hanover have collections of plays.
- The Parish Players have a library upstairs at the Grange. You are encouraged to browse. You will find a number of scripts as well as catalogues from publishers.
- Among the many online resources are Dramatists Play Service at <http://dramatists.com> and Samuel French at <http://samuelfrench.com>.

Get Your Show Approved

Every Parish Players production must be approved first by the Program Committee (the “PC”) and then by the Board of Directors. The PC is responsible for soliciting, selecting, and scheduling all Parish Players productions. It also coordinates the use of the Grange Theater by outside groups. The Board, which must authorize any expenditure of funds, discusses and votes on productions recommended by the PC.

As a prospective director, it’s always good to start by discussing your plans informally with someone on the Program Committee. If you don’t know who is currently on the committee, send email to pancho@parishplayers.org and ask to be put in touch with someone.

When you are ready to request formal approval of your production, it’s time to write up the proposal. It should contain the following items:

1. Several copies – three is nice – of the script that you plan to use. The Program Committee will read your play before taking up your proposal.
2. A director’s statement that will include: a brief summery of the play, a description of the production concept, description of scenic needs and ideas, a list of characters in the show, and any special elements of the show (i.e. musicians, choreography, special effects, etc.)
3. A list of the production staff that will be necessary and the people you have lined up to fill those jobs (if you have them). Refer to the descriptions of staff jobs in Part 2 to see what you might need.
4. A calendar of proposed dates, including all rehearsals and performances. The Program Committee often has to juggle competing demands for use of the Grange, so be as flexible as you can. Also consider holidays, school vacations, and outside events that might compete for your actors, crew, and audience.

5. A budget showing all anticipated expenses and income from the production and the performances.

The budget for a show is a major part of the proposal. The budget needs to show all show-related expenses and a reasonable estimate of revenues. Parish Players productions are expected to at least break even financially, and a small profit helps cover overhead and builds up a reserve to finance future shows.

Here are some of the expenses you may need to include in your budget:

- **Scripts:** the total cost of books or photocopying.
- **Royalties:** The cost of an initial performance and each subsequent performance. In the case of unpublished works, you may want to budget an honorarium for the author.
- **Publicity:** The cost of designing, printing, and mailing audition notices, posters, and publicity postcards; the cost of newspaper or other print advertising; the cost of radio ads (“underwriting”).
- **Lights:** Cost of any newly-purchased or rented lighting equipment. If you do not foresee any extraordinary expense, you should write in a token \$20-\$50 to cover the possible purchase of tape or gels or a lamp for the lighting instruments.
- **Costumes:** The cost of costume construction or rental or the purchase of extra costume pieces. Please think about all the zippers, buttons, ribbons, socks, gloves, etc. you might need. Include any fee paid to the costumer.
- **Props:** When you are figuring the cost of props, you should consider items consumed on stage, such as food, drinks, cigarettes, etc. as well as any hand props.
- **Make-up:** Any special make-up costs. If you are planning to use the Parish Players’ supply, put in a token \$20-\$50 to cover replacement costs.
- **Refreshments:** Coffee and cookies or similar goodies are often served at the intermission. The food is often contributed, but include something for extras you think might not be covered, such as cups, cream, sugar.
- **Amenities:** Your cast will probably want some sweet edibles and drinks – especially at final rehearsals and performances. These help with energy prior to opening or between acts and thereby can assist with the energy of the performance both psychologically and physically.
- **Programs:** The cost of designing, writing, and printing your program or playbill.
- **Complimentary tickets:** Parish Players’ policy is that comp. tickets are an expense of the show and must be shown as such in the show’s budget.
- **Salaries:** Are you paying any member of the cast or crew, including yourself?
- **Cleaning:** If costumes pulled from stock are soiled they will need to be washed or dry cleaned before returned to the rack. If they, or other items are damaged, they will need to be repaired.
- **Overhead:** A fixed amount is added to the budget of a show to cover a share of general overhead such as utilities and insurance. The amount differs according to the length of the show. The Program Committee or your board liaison will suggest an amount.

On the revenue side of your budget you should include:

- Receipts from ticket sales: Multiply the ticket price by the expected number of seats sold. The ticket price will generally be set by current Parish Players policy. The number of seats will be the number of seats in the house times the number of performances times the expected house percentage. There is clearly some estimating needed for the percentage; ask the PC or your liaison for likely values. Show your math.
- Revenue from the sale of ads in the playbill, if any.
- Revenue from any underwriting by area businesses, if any. The use of underwriters is a recent and somewhat controversial matter, so if you plan to use them, be sure to discuss it with the PC before approaching any businesses.

When your proposal is ready, submit it to the Program Committee. You can deliver it to your PC contact, and it's a good idea to plan to attend the next PC meeting to present the proposal and answer any questions the committee has. After that the committee will read your script and vote on your proposal. If it's approved, the PC will send it to the Board for a vote at their next meeting.

Someone from the PC should be in touch with you about the progress of your proposal, but don't hesitate to contact them yourself and ask about progress.

Although some committee work gets done by phone or email, the Board and the PC formally meet monthly. This means it can take several months for your proposal to work its way through the approval and scheduling process. And then you need time to recruit staff, advertise for and hold auditions, rehearse, and open the show. So plan ahead! Allow up to six months lead time for a major production.

Line Up Your Staff

There is no absolute or rigid system for setting up your staff. But in order to be sure all your production requirements are covered, you should consider all the possible staff positions and what they are created to do. Part 2 of this manual contains an exhaustive list of staff positions and their duties. Few plays can make use of all of them; many use only a few. In many cases one individual can handle several of these jobs simultaneously.

Ideally the play's director deals primarily with the actors and, along with the designers, exercises overall artistic control of the production; the producer (sometimes called the production manager) is responsible for all other aspects of the show – staffing, publicity, budget, house, and so forth. If you are a director who likes to do it all yourself and can handle the work load, fine. Otherwise, you should spend the time and effort early on to recruit a producer to help line up staff. You do not want to find yourself one week from opening and discover that you have to take time out to recruit, say, a house manager!

The Players have a database of members who have expressed an interest in getting involved with productions. If you need help with staffing, ask your Program Committee contact, your board liaison, or your producer to send an email appeal to this group of members.

Get Your Scripts

For copyrighted plays, the easiest way to get scripts is to buy them online from the publisher. The Parish Players have accounts with the major publishers.

For public domain plays, obtain a copy of whatever edition you prefer and then have photocopies made for your cast and crew.

Remember to order enough scripts for you, your cast, stage manager, conductor, accompanist, and the tech staff who will need them, especially your light and sound crew.

Hold Your Auditions

Auditions should be publicly and broadly advertised well in advance of the audition date. Start by sending an email announcement to the Players' list of participating members. Include the time and place of the auditions, a brief description of the play and the available parts, the planned production dates, your contact information in case someone has questions, and whether actors should prepare a reading.

You could also consider postcards to people you might not otherwise be reached by the email, as well as posters and newspaper announcements, and of course the old standby: word of mouth. Don't hesitate to call anyone you may have in mind for a part, or who you think may be interested.

On the night of auditions you will need to have cards or forms and pencils for the people auditioning to provide their personal information. A sample form is on the website. Or you can just have them provide:

- their names,
- addresses,
- telephone numbers and email addresses,
- what their time commitments are,
- whether they are interested in specific roles, and
- any other information you need, such as whether they would be interested in any other aspect of the production.

Above all try to create a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. Warm-ups and theater games are popular ways of getting people to feel comfortable.

As the audition proceeds:

- Keep in mind a clear idea of how your cast should look.
- Try to remember that people who aren't physically ideal in your picture might work if you make a slight adjustment to your picture.
- Sometimes the sound and combination of voices are important.
- Don't forget the cast's emotional content, especially if you are putting together a realistic play as opposed to a stylized or surrealistic piece.

There are myriad auditioning methods. Some directors ask actors to present memorized pieces (if you choose this method, be sure to state so in your advertising). Some like reading from the script; some prefer reading from other material such as newspapers. Some use improvisations, some want to see body movement, some have people working in groups, some work them individually, and some use a combination. Once again, whichever methods you use, a relaxed atmosphere is best for an audition.

The job of selecting a cast is often difficult. If, after the first auditions, you still cannot choose between certain individuals, you might wish to call them back (have a "call-back") and have them work for you some more. If call-backs are a possibility, let your actors know the details at the first auditions.

Yours may be a multi-show audition where more than one director is viewing the actors at the same time. This is common when the production is an evening of one-acts. It can be difficult to assign actors to shows fairly in this case; ideals have to be sacrificed and adjustments made. After one of these auditions, the directors usually sit together and make lists of the people who could fit into their casts in order of preference. Then they discuss their most important needs and haggle a bit until they come up with the casts most satisfactory for all.

Final cast lists should be made available to all actors, including those who were not cast. This is typically done by email or by phone. However you plan to do it, be sure to announce your intentions at the first auditions. When announcing the cast list, include a time and place for the first rehearsal.

You will have to deal with actors' scheduling vagaries. Sometimes they want a night off for a good movie, and sometimes they will have babysitting difficulties. Although it takes consistent hard work to produce a good show, your actors are people with families, jobs, and involvements in the community.

Schedule Your Rehearsals

Rehearsals normally take place at the Grange if scheduling permits. Other possibilities include public spaces such as church or library meeting rooms or even the living room of someone in your cast or crew. You might also wish to consider areas other than Thetford if they are more convenient for your actors.

Hold Production Meetings and Rehearsals

Early in the rehearsal period it is essential to meet with:

- your producer
- your set designer
- your lighting designer
- your costume designer
- your music director
- your stage manager
- your publicist

Meetings with the set, lighting, and costume designers should occur early in your schedule so that the staff can work concurrently with your rehearsals and be prepared for the tech and dress rehearsals that you have planned.

Early meetings with the publicist and house manager are also important so that dates can be set for photo shoots, etc., and so that the house manager can recruit house staff.

A full discussion of rehearsal technique is beyond the scope of this manual. Great volumes have been written on the subject. One rather good book, *On Directing* by Harold Clurman, can be found on the Grange's bookshelves, at libraries and online retailers, or in bookstores. But here are some things to decide as you begin rehearsing your show:

- how to organize your script
- whether or not to use warm-ups
- whether and when you want to use improvisations
- how you should handle blocking
- if you want your cast to use a technique or “method” approach
- how much reworking and polishing you want to do (and have time for!)
- whether line runs and other memory exercises will be helpful

Hold Technical and Dress Rehearsals

The tech rehearsals are devoted to perfecting these technical aspects of the show:

- scene shifts
- adjustments to the lighting focus or gelling
- light and sound cues
- the exact timing of off-stage effects
- practicing with props

It is often useful for the tech crew, or at least some of them, to have “dry tech” rehearsals where there are no actors, but cues are read for technical changes. Tech rehearsals with actors which can be tedious unless the tech crews are well prepared and the actors are forewarned that they will need to stop and start and repeat scenes to let the crews practice particular technical effects.

When you are scheduling dress rehearsals, be sure to allow sufficient time for actors to put on unfamiliar costumes and makeup. Dress rehearsals should be as similar to a performance as possible, including call times. Remember that cast and crew will be keyed up and anxious, so preliminary warm-ups and encouragement may be useful. Consider having a small, invited audience for the final dress so the cast can get used to audience reactions.

As the rehearsal proceeds, there may be unforeseen problems with costumes and tech. That is why one or more of these rehearsals is important. But try during these dress rehearsals not to interrupt the action, but allow a smooth and complete run of the show. Notes can and should be taken during the run-through and given to the cast and tech crews afterwards.

An inexperienced actor (as well as some experienced ones) may feel a great deal of frustration and anxiety as opening night approaches. A director should expect this eventuality and be prepared to handle it. If the stage manager is going to be backstage during the performances, she/he should be there during the dress rehearsals to try to rectify or alleviate any problems that actors or crews might have.

Run Performances

You or your stage manager should be sure cast and crew are clear about performance logistics. This includes:

- where to park
- call times and checking in
- dressing room etiquette
- scheduling the hall for warm-ups, lighting checks, set preparations, and opening the house

Most casts like to have warm-ups before a performance. These can be led by you, by the stage manager, or by a cast member. To insure inclusiveness, choose warm-up routines that are comfortable for all ages and abilities in your cast.

No matter how well rehearsed your actors are or how well trained in preparing themselves for a performance, they will need your continuing support and advice. Although after the first performance you may feel you do not need to be present in the theater every night, many actors, especially inexperienced ones, need to feel that your psychic drive and interest are very much with them during subsequent performances.

Be sensitive to the highs and lows your cast is feeling, either because of public reaction or because it is now near the end of a long piece of work. Help your cast to use these feelings creatively.

Strike the Show

Sometime near the end of the rehearsal period you or your stage manager should talk to your cast and crew about striking the show. The expectation is that every cast and crew member will help strike, putting away the sets, lights, costumes, makeup, chairs, and cleaning up the building after the last performance. Schedule the strike as soon after the final performance as possible, even the same evening. It can be difficult to get people to return after the run is over. The strike makes use of the energy created by the last show and affords the cast some useful time to wind down.

If you have actors who are performing here for the first time, they may not be familiar with strike, and they will need to know about it well in advance. Remind them that they might also be asked to repair and wash their own costumes from the show. Your designers and stage manager should be there to supervise activities in their respective departments. Don't overlook clean-up of the kitchen, greenroom, and dressing rooms. If supplies need replenishing or trash needs to be taken to the dump, be sure to notify your producer or board liaison.

If there is another show loading into the theater immediately after yours, check in advance with the director and designers of that show to see if lighting or set pieces can be left in place rather than returned to storage. If your show used an unusual seating arrangement such as round or on-stage seating, it is your responsibility to return the seating platforms and chairs to their normal configuration. The same applies to the light booth, which is sometimes moved to a different location.

Part 2: Production Staff and Their Responsibilities

This part of the manual contains a list of all the staff positions you might need for your show. All of these people have been used in some Parish Players production at some time, though many shows need only a few of these. You and your producer should go over this list, decide if you are going to need these functions performed, and then determine who is going to carry them out. Bear in mind that one person may be able to do several functions on a given show. Let's start with you, the...

Director

The director has overall artistic responsibility for the show. As described in detail in Part 1, the director will:

- Determine the artistic concept for the production.
- With the producer, shepherd the production through the approval and scheduling process with the Program Committee and Board.
- Audition and select the actors for the show.
- With producer, recruit and organize the staff to handle all the design and production aspects of show. Be clear ahead of time as to who will be responsible for what. You may share certain jobs with your producer or hand all production details over to him or her.
- Rehearse the actors on stage.
- Work with the actors and assist them with the development of their characters.
- Transform the script, through rehearsal, from the written word to a finished, three-dimensional presentation.

Producer or Production Manager

The producer, sometimes called the production manager, is responsible for everything the director is not responsible for. This means all non-artistic aspects of the production.

Here is a list of the producer's responsibilities:

- Recruiting production staff including a publicist, stage manager, property master, playbill producer, one or more house managers, as needed. Working with the director, the producer also helps recruit artistic staff – designers, music director, and choreographer.
- Keeping in close touch with the director and staff throughout the production to make sure things are on schedule and on budget, and to handle any problems that arise.
- Working with the house managers to keep track of box office receipts and make sure that they get deposited or turned over to the treasurer.

- Seeing that all expenses are recorded and that all bills are noted, collected, and submitted to the treasurer for payment.

The producer and/or the director will put together a report to the trustees about the production after it closes. This will be kept in the archives and may be useful for reference for future productions. The report shall include the following items:

- A narrative about the production, which might include thoughts about the production from the director or producer, description of the house and stage set up, any problems which arose, any recommendation for future productions.
- The schedule, including audition dates, general rehearsal schedule, production dates.
- Copy of the original proposal, including budget, as approved by the program committee and the board.
- Final financial report, showing actual amounts of revenue and expenses, especially noting any significant deviation from budget.
- Posters, postcards, press releases, e-mail announcements etc. Copies of newspaper articles, ads, calendar announcements, photographs, reviews.
- Copy of the program.
- Records of audience attendance.
- May include photos, video, if available.
- May include scripts.
- Anything else that helps us know how the show went or was received.

Board Liaison

Every production should have a designated board liaison. This is a member of the Parish Players Board of Directors who is available to the director or producer to answer questions and help handle any unexpected problems that require board action. The liaison does not have direct production responsibilities; rather he or she is the show's channel to the board.

Set Designer

The set designer works with the director to design and build a set appropriate to the style and period of the play and the director's concept of the production. Specific tasks include:

- Deciding on the orientation of the set and seating within the hall,
- Designing, building, and painting sets for the individual scenes,
- If needed, recruiting a master carpenter to assist the designer,
- Selecting furnishings for the set,
- Work with the stage manager to plan and rehearse the scene shifts,
- At strike, oversee the deconstruction and storage of the set, and restoring the hall to its normal condition.

Lighting Designer

Like the set designer, the lighting designer works with the director to light the actors and set in a manner consistent with the director's concept of the production. Typically this includes:

- Designing a light plot for the show,
- Making sure the light board, power packs, cables, and instruments are in good working condition,
- Arranging for the purchase or rental of color media and any special lighting equipment,
- Working out cabling, patching, and dimmer assignments,
- Hanging, focusing, and gelling all lighting and special effect equipment, installing outlets, wiring practical lamps, and generally doing any jobs involving electricity.
- Recruiting one or more light board operators and training them on the use of the light board and the procedures for running a show,
- Prior to the tech rehearsals, and working with the director and set designer, setting dimmer levels for all scenes,
- During tech and dress rehearsals, work with the board operator to make adjustments to the levels and timing of light cues,
- At strike, remove and store all instruments and cabling unless requested otherwise by an incoming production.
- Report any needed repairs to the Building Committee or to the board liaison.

Sound Designer

The sound designer works with the director to design recorded music and sound effects for the show. Specific duties include:

- Deciding what music and recorded sound effects are needed for the show,
- Obtaining recordings of the needed sounds,
- Transferring the music and sound effects to the appropriate medium – typically CD – for running the show,
- Making sure the theater's sound equipment is in good working condition,
- Recruiting one or more sound operators to run the performances (unless the sound designer plans to do this),
- Prior to the tech rehearsals, working with the director to design levels and timing for all sound cues,
- During tech rehearsals, making any needed adjustments to the sound cues,
- At strike, disconnecting any special sound equipment and returning the sound gear to its normal configuration,
- After the show, returning any borrowed material to its owner.

Costume Designer

The costume designer, sometimes called the *costumier*, works with the director to choose costumes and accessories – built, borrowed, or pulled from storage – for the actors. The costume designer is responsible for:

- Recruiting a crew of seamstresses.
- Making a list of the costumes and accessories needed by each of the show’s characters.
- Pulling from storage any Parish Players costumes.
- Purchasing materials and constructing new costumes.
- Making all necessary alterations and repairs to costumes pulled or borrowed.
- Working with the stage manager to arrange for backstage changing areas and storage of costumes between performances.
- Recruiting costume changers for each performance where required.
- Coordinating the costume strike, including the cleaning, repairing, returning of costumes to their owners or to Parish Players storage, and reporting any damaged costumes to the producer.

The Parish Players have some long-time members who are familiar with the costume collection – what is there and where it is stored. The producer or board liaison can refer the costume designer to these experts as needed.

Property Master

In simpler shows the cast can often provide their own props. In a show with lots of props or unusual or exotic props, there will be a property master – the “props person” – to locate and manage properties. The props person will:

- Work with the director to list all props needed for the show.
- Work with the set designer to identify furnishings needed for the set.
- Locate, purchase, borrow, or build all props and, if requested, furnishings.
- Make special arrangements for valuable or dangerous props, especially explosive effects and firearms. This includes training of anyone handling the prop and securing the prop between rehearsals and performances, preferably off-site.
- Work with the stage manager to arrange hand props backstage in an organized and convenient fashion. It helps to have a labeled location for each prop so it is quickly evident if something is missing.
- Run props for tech and dress rehearsals and performances. This might be done by the property master, the stage manager, a prop crew person, or the actors themselves. It includes:
 - a) being sure that props are in place at the beginning of each scene and are returned to their places afterwards.
 - b) replenishing consumable or perishable props such as food, drinks, and flowers. Be sure that any props stored in the refrigerator are clearly marked as props.

- c) washing and drying any dishes or glasses and returning them to their proper location after each performance.
- d) checking props for damage after each performance and repairing or replacing them as needed.
- See that props are repaired or cleaned, if necessary, and returned to their owners at the end of the run.

Makeup Supervisor

The makeup supervisor is responsible for:

- checking the Grange's makeup supply and ordering any needed replacements.
- obtaining any new or special makeup for the show.
- checking how actors' makeup looks under stage lighting.
- being at dress rehearsals and, if needed, performances to assist with makeup.
- doing complicated or difficult makeup jobs on the actors.
- teaching basic makeup skills to characters with simple makeup requirements.

Music Director

The music director is responsible for:

- working with the director to select and arrange music for the show,
- obtaining scores for musicians and cast,
- working with the producer to be sure that music royalties are paid,
- recruiting musicians,
- calling music rehearsals for actors and musicians,
- conducting the orchestra or music ensemble during full and dress rehearsals and performances.

Choreographer

The title of choreographer includes traditional dance, but may also include anyone who supervises any kind of special movement, such as a fight director. The choreographer is responsible for:

- Under the guidance of the director, choreographing all dances.
- Conducting all dance rehearsals.
- Attending tech and dress rehearsals to make any necessary changes in dances or movements.

Publicist

Without good publicity, even the best show will play to empty houses. A lot of publicity is expensive, and the search for the most cost-effective type of publicity is never-ending.

Here are some of the types of publicity that we have found to be effective and for which the show's publicist is responsible:

- Email announcements. Email is free, and the Players has a list of email addresses for our past patrons. The publicist should write the announcements and give them to the Players' email guru for sending to the list. The producer or board liaison can provide the contacts.
- Posters. Most shows produce a poster and distribute it to bulletin boards around the region. The publicist should recruit a poster designer to produce an electronic version of the poster, often for a fee, and arrange to have it printed at one of the local printing businesses. (*N.B.*: All printed publicity should include the Parish Players logo, the so-called little man. Digital images are available on the website.) The cast and crew of the show are usually recruited to hang the poster in their neighborhoods. The same graphic design may also be used for the...
- Postcard mailing. Often the same printing business that produces the poster can print up postcards for mailing and hand-to-hand distribution. The Players have an extensive list of postal mailing addresses that can be sent to the printers, who usually will print the addresses and mail the postcards using their own postal permits.
- Radio underwriting. New Hampshire and Vermont Public Radio accept advertising in the form of underwriting announcements. These spots are expensive, and their effectiveness is still the subject of discussion.
- Radio interviews. The same two public radio outlets also have locally-produced shows featuring interviews with people involved in, among other things, regional arts projects. If your publicist can arrange one of these on-air sessions, it will greatly benefit the show.
- Photographer. The publicist may want to arrange for a photographer to do a photo shoot for publicity or for use in the playbill.

Stage Manager and Crews

The Stage Manager (SM) is in charge of the stage, the actors, and the crew. During rehearsals the SM serves as the director's assistant. During performances the SM is in complete charge of the production – cast, crew, and house staff.

The stage manager's role is most important in a large production because of the number of people who need to be coordinated. In a smaller production, the director may take on stage managing responsibilities, or the show may not have any stage manager at all. If there is a stage manager, it is important that the SM and the director agree on who is in charge during performances, especially if something goes wrong. The best strategy is for the SM to be in charge and for the director to take notes for later discussion.

The stage manager's duties include the following:

- Making sure all the cast and crew are present at call time and ready to go.
- Informing everyone of any changes to the rehearsal schedule.

- During rehearsals, opening the building, checking the heat, cleaning up, closing the building. (During performances this would be done by the house manager.)
- Being “on book” (following along in the script), recording any cuts or changes the director makes.
- Writing the blocking in the margins of the script or director's book. (Tip: to increase margin space, paste the play pages on notebook paper in a loose-leaf binder).
- Writing all tech cues into the script.
- Making sure actors are in the right place backstage at the right time. Some directors will want the stage manager backstage during the performance with script so no cues are missed.
- Sweeping the stage before rehearsals and performances.
- Setting up the playing area with the proper set pieces, furniture, and props before rehearsals and performances.
- During performances, deciding when to open the house and when to start each act. This requires checking with house manager, cast, crew, and musicians.
- During tech and dress rehearsals and performances, coordinating all technical aspect of the show. In a technically uncomplicated show, this may simply involve checking with light and sound operators before each act to be sure everyone is ready to start. In a complex show the SM might use an intercom to issue tech cues to the light and sound operators and music director.
- During tech and dress rehearsals and performances, supervising the running crew, prop crew, and costume dressers.

The stage manager may be requested to perform the following additional functions:

- Running warm-ups for the actors prior to rehearsals and performances.
- Seeing that amenities – snacks, juice, soda – are provided for the cast and crew.

Every show has a crew to run the backstage and technical aspects of the performance. They are responsible their respective designers, to the stage manager, or, in the absence of an SM, to the director. Their duties typically commence with the tech rehearsals. The crew includes:

- Stagehands: operating curtains and other running gear; seeing that the stage is set with the proper scenery and set pieces before each act begins; shifting and changing all scenery and set pieces throughout the course of the performance. Actors can sometimes serve as stagehands.
- Light board operator: performs a dimmer check before each performance; replaces burned-out lamps and gels; corrects any accidental changes in light focus; runs all light cues during the show. Lighting designers sometimes act as their own light board operators.
- Sound operator: checks sound equipment before each performance; runs all sound cues during the show. If sound cues are simple, the light board operator may be able to serve as sound operator.

- Prop crew: makes sure props are in place before and after a performance; if necessary, hands props to actors and collects them from them.
- Dressers: assists actors with costume changes; checks costume fit and appearance before actors' entrances; make minor make-up adjustments if needed.

Playbill Producer

The playbill producer creates the program for the show. Duties include:

- Working with the director, designing the playbill – its size, number of pages, contents, and artistic design.
- Assembling the text for the program – scene description, cast and crew list, cast and crew bios, director's notes, special credits and thank-you's, announcements of future productions.
- Collecting graphics and photography for the program.
- Soliciting advertising, if any.
- Arranging for the printing of the playbill.
- Working with the house manager to be sure enough copies are available for audience members and cast and crew.

House Manager and Staff

The house manager is responsible for all front-of-house activities during performances. Although he or she works with the director and stage manager, the house manager's real customer is the patron – the audience member. The house manager's duties include:

- Managing the telephone messaging (voicemail) system, including updating the recorded message, listening to and clearing reservation messages, and calling back patrons when necessary, such as when a performance is sold out. A phone reservations form and instructions for operating the voicemail system are available on the website.
- Recruiting ushers for each performance.
- Recruiting parking assistants and refreshment servers if these jobs are not being done by ushers.
- Working with the treasurer to manage box office functions including handling the cash box, having change available, collecting refreshments contributions, and submitting all receipts to the treasurer.
- Implementing the Players' policy on complimentary tickets. Currently each member of the cast and crew is entitled to a single comp ticket, good only on opening night of the run. Check with your producer to see if the policy has been changed.
- Training and supervising the ushers, parking assistants, and refreshment servers.
- If necessary, preparing a seating chart for each performance. This is important for performances which are – or might be – sold out; when the house is lighter, open seating is the norm. Remember to leave seats for your ushers and other staff.

- Seeing that fire and safety regulations are adhered to. This includes making sure all lighted exit signs are on and that all escape routes are clear of obstructions.
- Seeing that the hall is adequately heated or cooled for each performance.
- Cleaning and restocking bathrooms after each performance.
- Seeing that the hall is cleaned up and locked up at the end of each performance.

The house manager should be familiar with Part 3 of this manual – The Eclipse Grange Theater.

Ushers

Under the direction of the house manager, the ushers are responsible for:

- Having the chairs set up and ready for each performance. To allow time, especially on opening night, ushers should be at the theater at least an hour before the performance.
- Cleaning up hall before the performance.
- Handing out programs and showing people to their seats.
- Tidying up the hall after the performance.
- After the final performance, assisting with the strike of the show, especially rearranging audience seating.

Parking Assistant

Under the direction of the house manager, the parking assistant should:

- Be at the theater at least an hour before the show.
- Set up no-parking signs in the Grange driveway and along Academy Road.
- Direct traffic in the handicapped parking spaces in front of the Grange.
- Have a flashlight to help people find their way around puddles and other obstructions.
- Help patrons who need assistance getting in and out of cars and into the Grange.
- Advise the house manager or stage manager when all patrons have arrived.
- After the performance, collect and store the no-parking signs on the porch.

Car parkers should read the section on parking in Part 3 of this manual.

Refreshment Servers

Refreshments are traditionally served during intermissions at Parish Players productions. A refreshment cart is set up in the kitchen and wheeled out into the hall during the breaks. Rather than charge for refreshments, we place a basket on the cart so patrons can leave a donation.

The people taking care of refreshments – usually ushers – will work with the house manager to:

- Decide what to serve. Cookies (often homemade), soda, and cider are popular choices.
- Determine quantities. Long-lasting items can be stored in the refrigerator in the kitchen.
- Purchase or make the refreshments. Keep receipts: refreshments are a production expense.
- Determine what supplies are necessary (e.g. coffee pots, creamers, sugar bowls, cups, etc.) Borrow or purchase what is needed. Unused items are stored in the kitchen cabinets. Again, keep receipts.
- Consult with the stage manager or director to decide where and when to serve refreshments and when each service should end service.
- Manage the contributions basket. “Seed” the basket with a few dollars. Turn the contributions over to the house manager after each performance.
- Be sure a trash receptacle is available in the hall during service. Clean up after the last intermission or at the end of the performance.

Tip: Cast and crew often store their own food and drink in the refrigerator. It is wise to use signs or labels to make clear which food is theirs and which is strictly reserved for refreshments.

Part 3: The Eclipse Grange Theater

The Eclipse Grange Theater is home to the Parish Players. Like any building, especially theater buildings, it has its systems and procedures. Here is a summary of ours.

Building Access

Once your show has been approved, you should contact your board liaison person to obtain the combination or keys for accessing the Grange building. Access is through the double doors to your left as you walk up onto the porch.

Fire Safety

Our normal entrances and exits are the two sets of double doors that open onto the porch. In addition, there are two emergency exits: one is the door in the east wall of the house; the other is the door backstage which opens onto the fire escape landing. *During a performance it is mandatory that these exits be accessible and easily opened.* So please make sure that the access to each of these is not cluttered and that the door is unhooked. Make especially sure that the stage right hallway from the auditorium door to the fire escape landing is not cluttered. A cluttered exit-way and a surprise visit from the fire marshal could get us into trouble, not to mention the ensuing mayhem and danger if we really had an emergency.

The emergency lighting system is hooked into the circuit breaker which controls the house lights. If this breaker, or the electric source to this breaker, fails, the emergency lights will automatically come on lighting the exit doors. It is important that you use the light switch in the house or the light control board to control the house lights. If the breaker (lowest on the right inside the breaker box) is used to shut off the lights, the emergency lights will come on and, if left all night will wear down the batteries that power the lights. If these switches are unclear to you, ask the producer to show you where they are.

During performances the lighted exit signs must be turned on and visible to the audience.

Heat

The Grange has a gas-fired forced hot air heating system with three zones. One zone is the main hall; it is controlled by a thermostat located on the house-left proscenium wall. Another zone is the kitchen, greenroom, bathrooms, and hall; it is controlled by a thermostat located in the greenroom. The third zone is for the upstairs dressing rooms; it is controlled by a thermostat located in the dressing room. When the building is not occupied, all zones should be set at 55 degrees. When the building is in use, set the thermostats in the occupied areas to what ever is comfortable.

Note that the main hall often warms up from stage lights and human bodies. Do not set its thermostat too high or the hall will be uncomfortably warm by intermission.

The upstairs rooms and attic at the Grange, reached by going up the stairs and turning right, are not heated. To conserve heat, this area is blocked off by a foam “door” fitted into the doorway at the top of the stairs. If you need to access the upstairs room or attic, please be sure to replace the foam door.

House and Work Lights

The house lights can be controlled in two modes: manually from a standard light switch located on the wall of the hall next to the door into the hallway or from a dimmer channel on the light board. The manual mode is used at all times except tech and dress rehearsals and performances. A standard light switch located in the backstage closet housing the lighting dimmer packs controls which mode is in use.

High-intensity work lights are mounted in the ceiling on stage and in the house. These are controlled by standard light switches located on the stage-right backstage wall.

One thing to keep in mind is that stage lights are much more expensive to operate than house and work lights. So at least early in the rehearsal period our expenses could be reduced if you would use stage lights only when necessary.

Lighting Equipment

The Grange lighting system is controlled by Lightronics TL-2448 24-channel lighting control console located in the light control “booth,” a moveable platform normally located in the back of the hall. Lights are powered by two SmartPak “ETC” 12-channel power packs located in the lighting closet backstage right. Each channel is rated at 1,200 watts. Bear this in mind when planning your cabling and patching.

Ceiling-mounted outlet boxes in the house and over the stage are patched to the power packs by standard three-pin lighting cables in the lighting closet.

An assortment of light cables and two-fers are stored on pegs on the stage-left backstage wall and in the attic.

The Players have an assortment of ellipsoidal spotlights and Fresnels, gels, gel frames, top hats, and barn doors.

Sound Equipment

In the light and sound booth there’s a massive stereo amp (50 watt). The amp has many RCA plug inputs², and outputs for two sets of speakers (you can select set A, or set B, or A+B).

² Source 1 input has been flaky, use Source 2 or any of the "Tape" inputs.

Right-left balance is adjustable with the ring around the perimeter of the volume knob (not obvious). It has jacks for a microphone and a headset as well as a slew of frequency filters and enhancers. It does not have a radio tuner.

Six speakers, none of superior quality, (but usually functional) are scattered around backstage, hanging on the walls in the hall, or upstairs in the light/sound storage area immediately to the right as you enter the attic.

Speaker wires snake behind the platform adjacent to the booth through a hole in the center of the floor next to the south wall.³ Two wires reappear behind the right and left vertical columns of the proscenium. Others wires have been used to power speakers that are mounted either on the back (south) wall, hung from the grid, or placed under the platforms.

Most recent sound designers have assembled sound clips and burned (elsewhere) CD's of music and sound FX , then furnished their own CD players and plugged them into the amp, placing speakers wherever they're most effective.

There are spare wires that have been used to ring phones in various places and a recently acquired a push button "phone ringing transformer" that plugs into the outlet strip in the booth and provides the correct pulsing voltage to ring any of the myriad "standard" phones in the prop room.

At this time the theater does not contain an intercom system for crew to communicate between backstage and the light and sound booth. There is, however, a "baby monitor" capable of transmitting stage sound to the greenroom or dressing rooms. The monitor is current stored in the right-hand drawer of the dressing room vanity.

Platforms

The theater has a set of 3' by 8' platforms of varying heights. These platforms are normally used for audience seating and allow a variety of configurations of the acting area and house. The most common arrangement is a rising tier of seats facing the proscenium and positioned against the east wall of the house. Other possibilities include in the round, or facing any other direction. Platforms can be stacked two-high if necessary for extra height.

We have the following platforms:

Quantity	Dimensions
3	3' x 8' x 4"

³ The crawl space under the floor is accessible thru a "pull out" panel to the left of the chimney on the south wall. Reaching into the darkness, your left hand might find a light switch affixed to the floor joists.

5	3' x 8' x 8"
5	3' x 8' x 16"
4	3' x 8' x 24"
3	3' x 8' x 32"
2	3' x 8' x 6 to 24"
2 rolling storage boxes	4' x 8'1" x 48"

There are “bridges” available to put between platforms to extend length. There is one bridge which should be screwed between the 48" rolling boxes, 5 bridges that can go between two platforms of other heights, and one 4" mini platform which extends the 4" platforms.

A crew of at least two – preferably more – will be needed to rearrange the platforms. Depending on the final configuration, new railings or backing strips for the platforms may need to be constructed.

Be mindful of safety requirements, being sure that exit doors are accessible, not blocked, and that aisles are sufficiently wide.

Set Materials

A modest assortment of set materials are available, including flats, platforms of various sizes, various window and door units, large and small furniture, and assorted lumber which can be used to build sets. Ask for assistance to locate the items you wish to use.

Flats and set pieces are stored in the attic and at the off-site barn. Paints are stored just off the greenroom under the stairs.

Properties

The Players’ modest prop collection is stored in the upstairs room – formerly the greenroom – reached by turning right at the top of the stairs.

Costumes

The Players have an extensive costume collection, including accessories, stored in the attic. Please ask your board liaison or producer to put you in contact with one of the Players’ costume mavens to help you find the costumes you need.

Parking

Unfortunately, the parking area in front of the Eclipse Grange Theater is quite small and becomes even smaller in the winter.

During rehearsals the Grange driveway can be used by cast and crew as long as the south leg of the drive is not used or blocked, as this leg also serves as the driveway for our

neighbors. The neighbors take good care of their lawn and don't like to have people parking on it.

During the performances, however, the Grange driveway must be kept clear for emergency vehicles. The only parking permitted are handicap-tagged cars, which may park in the handicap parking spaces directly in front of the Grange to the left of the entrance ramp.

During performances everyone else – cast, crew, and audience – should park either at Thetford Academy or behind Latham Library. People may be unloaded at the Grange or on Academy Road, but *under no circumstances should anyone park along either side of Academy road.*

For each performance the house manager should designate a parking assistant who is responsible for enforcing parking procedures.

Noise Levels

Theater work can generate a lot of noise, especially at night. At the same time it is essential that we remain on friendly terms with our neighbors. So try to keep noise under control, especially outside the building at night.

Cleaning Up and Closing Up

In most vocabularies “cleanup” is a dirty word. It's one of those things that no one likes to do, but eventually has to be done. In order to try to keep ahead of the job, we ask that after work times, rehearsals, and performances, major messes and such things as cups and potato chip bags and technical gear be cleaned up before going home. Trash should be bagged and stored inside until after strike.

Closing up is not that big a deal, but can be tricky because there are so many individual light switches and doors to lock.

- All interior lights should be turned off. The parking lot floodlights are controlled by a timer located just inside the main entrance doors near the bathrooms. You can set these to five or ten minutes to give everyone time to leave before the lights go out.
- Set the thermostats back to 55 degrees.
- Be sure all outside doors are locked. The door which is almost always forgotten is the backstage door opening out onto the fire escape landing. Please make sure that this one is hooked and that the main entrance by the light board is barred and bolted.

Part 4: Online Resources

The Parish Players' all-purpose email address is pancho@parishplayers.org. Email to this address is read frequently by a board member who will reply directly or forward the message to the appropriate person.

The Parish Players website is at <http://www.parishplayers.org>. The site contains information about up-coming productions, the organization, the Eclipse Grange Theater, and recent shows.

At the bottom of the home page is a link titled "Calendar." The link takes you to a calendar for the Eclipse Grange Theater showing performances, rehearsal periods, meetings, and other Parish Players events.

Another link at the bottom of the home page is titled "Pancho's Place." Following this link requires that you enter a user name and password. The user name is "will" and the password is "shakespeare." This link takes you to a page with links to many useful documents⁴ including:

- A list of board members
- Players' stationery and clip-art
- The organization's bylaws
- Publicity resources
- Sample production proposals
- Voicemail instructions
- A scale drawing of the theater
- The owner's manual for the light board
- Other information.

In addition to the website, the Players operate two internal mailing lists. One, board@parishplayers.org, reaches members of the Board of Directors. The other, program@parishplayers.org, reaches members of the Programming Committee.

The Players maintain an electronic database of members, audience members, and media contacts. The database includes postal and email addresses. This list is available for all electronic and postal publicity mailings.

⁴ Some of these documents are not on the website at the time of this writing. We plan to have them available soon.