

# SMITHFIELD LITTLE THEATRE

## DIRECTOR/PRODUCER HANDBOOK



Issued by Board of Directors,

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In the theatre world, the roles of **director** and **producer** are very separate and specific. Here at SLT, these roles seem, over the years, to have become less traditional and more customized to our style of production and to those individuals putting together each show. As an accommodation to that situation, the information in this handbook is offered in a manner to cover all of the needed areas without regard to who (director or producer) is specifically responsible for any given job. In general, with the exception of the actual direction of the performance, these tasks and responsibilities may be delegated as the director and/or the producer may so choose. If you have this book in hand, then your show has already been selected for production by the Board of Directors at Smithfield Little Theatre.

SLT is an organization run solely by volunteers, and we are very proud to offer the level of theatre that we do with no paid staff. We expect you to maintain this practice and to remember that working with volunteers can be very different from working with paid staff. It is important to make clear to all who are involved with the show what will be expected of them in the way of commitment of time and effort. You should always have a complete schedule of rehearsals and performances included in your orientation at the time of auditions so that there are no surprises for anyone. Remember, it is much easier to delete a rehearsal than it is to add one.

We at SLT are very proud to offer what we feel is the best community theatre in the area and would hold our productions up to any others that are performed on our level. We anticipate that as a director and/or producer, you will continue and contribute to this reputation. We are aware of the time and effort involved in achieving the end product your audience will experience when that grand drape opens each night. It often comes down to the fine tuning and the details that are instilled by the director and the producer in the cast and crew. We trust you to uphold our traditions and standards during your production. The SLT Board of Directors is here to support you and help you have a successful production.

## **THE SHOW**

### **DATES FOR THE SHOW:**

Dates for the show are set by the Board and are fairly standard from season to season. Generally, shows run for 12 performances: Friday through Saturday with a curtain at 8:00pm and Sunday with a curtain at 2:30pm. The shows will take place over four consecutive weeks. If you have any specific request regarding show dates, they should be made to the Board.

### **PERFORMANCE RIGHTS, SCRIPTS, ETC:**

The play reading chairperson will make sure performance rights for your show are obtained. Any materials that are needed can be requested at this time. They can help arrange to have all material shipped to the theatre or to your house. It is your responsibility to make sure all rental items are cleaned, packed, and shipped back at the end of your show as required/applicable. Any shipment fees can be reimbursed (with a receipt) by the Treasurer.

### **SCHEDULING:**

The schedule book for the theatre is generally held by the building and grounds chairperson. You should contact this person to schedule all rehearsals. Rehearsals may be scheduled in whatever manner you feel is most effective for your show. It is probably better to overschedule rehearsals and cut back if they are not needed than to try to add additional rehearsals. Remember, though SLT's regular season of shows is our priority, there may be other events that are previously scheduled, so you will have to work around them.

### **FRIENDS & FAMILY PERFORMANCE:**

Prior to the opening of each show, there is a performance given for family and friends of the cast and crew members. It is a free performance that serves two purposes. First, it is a bit of a "thank you" for all of those involved. Second, it serves as a dress rehearsal for the show. It is conducted as if it were a regular performance with a regular audience. This performance is customarily done on the Sunday prior to opening night, usually at 2:30pm, but can be done in the evening if you choose; scheduling the Friends and Family performance is at the director's discretion. This will leave four additional days for polishing the show as needed.

## **BUDGET:**

When submitting a show to the Play Reading Committee, you were required to submit a production budget for approval. This budget should have included anticipated expenses for all aspects of the show: licensing fees, scripts, scores, music royalties, set costs, costuming, props, cast party and gifts, make-up, lighting, sound, marquee, playbills, and any other miscellaneous or special needs for your show. Expense tracking forms can be found at the end of this handbook.

## **NON-BUDGETED DISBURSEMENTS IN EXCESS OF \$100:**

**No non-budgeted disbursements in excess of \$100 will be made without authorization by the President or majority vote of the Board.** The Board approves and authorizes the budget for each production undertaken by SLT.

## **COSTS EXCEEDING AUTHORIZED BUDGET:**

A director must have prior approval from the Board before exceeding their authorized budget for a production. The director may be held responsible for expenditures that exceed the approved budget. Exceeding the approved budget may also impact future projects at SLT.

## **YOUR CREW**

### **MENTOR DIRECTOR:**

If you are a new director to SLT, you will be assigned a mentor director by the board. The purpose of the mentor director is to assist you with any needs you might have. This could be finding production staff, helping you make contacts with committee chairs, reviewing SLT traditions and standards, and being there as a second pair of eyes as a "seasoned" SLT director. The mentor director is there to help ease the experience of working in a new space. It is up to the director and mentor director to establish how involved the mentor director will be.

### **BOARD LIAISON:**

The board liaison is a current member of the Board of Directors who acts as a liaison between the production members and the board. That person will update the board if there are any concerns with the rehearsal process. They will also be able to assist the director if no mentor director is appointed to the production. The liaison will monitor the progress and quality of the

production throughout the process. If the liaison or board have any concerns with the progress of the show or any part of the show, the liaison's decision will supersede that of the director.

The function of the board liaison is to provide a single point of contact directly to the board, an additional organizational resource for cast/crew, and guidance as requested. The frequency of contact, including rehearsal visits, will be determined between the director and liaison. The producer may function as the board liaison if the producer is currently a board member.

### **SET DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION:**

The design of the set is a coordinated effort between the designer and the director. The actual construction is done by a crew of builders and painters, which may or may not include the designer. If the designer is not a part of the crew of builders, a lead crew chief will need to be secured.

### **MUSIC DIRECTOR:**

The music director will fulfill a major role in the production of a musical, working closely with the director and, in many cases, the choreographer. The degree and nature of this involvement is to be determined by the needs of the show.

### **MUSICIANS:**

It is the responsibility of the music director to obtain and coordinate musicians as needed for the show. The use of paid musicians would be at the discretion of the Board of Directors and would come out of the production budget. If pre-recorded or synthesized music is being used for your show, it is your responsibility or the music director's responsibility to make sure that someone is secured to control and play the pre-recorded music.

### **CHOREOGRAPHER:**

You will need to arrange for a choreographer to design and direct choreography if dancing is a part of your show. SLT's theatre lobby can serve as a secondary space that you may use for rehearsal if the main stage is in use. Do not allow any activity on the wood floors that would cause permanent damage.

## **STAGE MANAGER:**

Once the show opens, the stage manager is responsible for making your production happen from backstage on a nightly basis. Your stage manager may be involved with the movement backstage and assist the crew with changes for the show, or they may "call" the show. If that is the case, an assistant stage manager may also be secured to coordinate with the backstage crew.

## **STAGE CREW:**

You will need an adequate number of stage crew to handle the backstage logistics. This crew is handpicked and trained by the stage manager. It is at the stage manager's discretion how stage crew are used for the production and how often they are required for rehearsal.

## **LIGHTING AND SOUND**

You will need to obtain competent lighting and sound designers and technicians for your show. For some shows, this can be one person, controlling both aspects from one board in the tech booth. For other shows, there will be several individuals involved. The designers will be the ones to help design the sound cues, hang lights, program lights, and run cables for the musicians. They can assist in finding the technicians to help run the show, once in production mode. The designers may choose to run the show as well. If a person you select is not familiar with SLT's equipment, ask for someone who *is* to teach them about our equipment. If you need a mentor light and sound director, coordinate with the mentor director or the board liaison.

## **COSTUMING:**

You will need a costumer to design and coordinate the gathering of costumes for the production. SLT has a large inventory of costumes that you may use for your show. If we do not have what you need, then the items may be bought or made. Make sure that adequate money from your budget is set aside to cover these costs. Any costumes that are bought or made at the expense of the theatre are considered theatre property and put into inventory at the end of the show. Any costumes that are purchased by cast members remain the property of the cast member. If your costumer rents costumes for your show, this should be included in the show budget. All rented costumes are the responsibility of the costumer for their care and return. At the end of

the show's run, all costumes are to be cleaned and properly stored in inventory.

### **HAIR AND MAKEUP:**

For many shows, hair and makeup can be done by the cast members themselves. If your show requires specific hairstyles, wigs, or makeup, you will need to arrange for a person to handle this area. SLT maintains a certain number of wigs, hair accessories, and makeup. These items are available for your production. If specific items are needed, they will come out of the show's budget. These items will remain with SLT as part of inventory. Any items personally brought in by cast members will be taken home at the end of the production by the cast member.

### **PROPS:**

Depending on the needs of your show, you may want to arrange for a prop person to obtain and coordinate props for your show. SLT has a large number of props available for use. Any props that are bought or made at the expense of the theatre are considered theatre property and put into inventory at the end of the show. Any props purchased will come out of the show budget. The prop person may also help "dress" the set as well. If they do not assist with the "dressing" of the set, someone will need to be appointed that role.

### **THINGS TO COORDINATE:**

There are many other aspects of your production that you may need to coordinate. Many of these areas have theatre members assigned to them; some don't. Some of these areas are understood and will happen with little to no effort on your part; if areas need special attention or have special requirements, it's your responsibility to make sure the communication happens between yourself and the chairperson. If you need access to a list of committees and committee chairpersons, please ask your mentor director or board liaison.

### **BUILDING ACCESS:**

You will be issued an access code to the building for the run of your rehearsals and show. You should coordinate with the building and grounds chairperson prior to holding rehearsals in the building. You will be made aware of necessary information about the building at the time your code is issued, including security alarms, HVAC, fire alarms, cleaning, and other

details. This access code will be deactivated after the run of the show is completed.

### **USHERS:**

SLT has a volunteer coordinator who will arrange for ushers for your show. Check with the board liaison to obtain the contact information for this person. They will handle the scheduling of ushers as needed. You may have friends or family who would like to volunteer to usher; please give the necessary contact information to the volunteer coordinator.

### **CONCESSIONS:**

The concessions chairperson will make the necessary arrangements for the concessions for your show. We assume that your show will have one 15-minute intermission. If this is not the case for your show, it is your responsibility to notify the concessions chairperson. Communicate with the concessions chairperson about the time length of your show, including each act, and share the date of your Friends and Family performance. You may have friends or family who would like to volunteer to work concessions; if so, please give the necessary contact information to the concessions chairperson.

### **PROGRAMS:**

The program chairperson should be contacting you to discuss the program needs for your show. If no contact has been made, please ask the board liaison for their contact information. They will review with you how they would like to obtain the information for the program. Information may include scene breakdowns, musical numbers, cast/crew bios, director's note, etc. All information is turned over to the chairperson, who will lay out the program and provide you with a proof to be approved before it goes to print. The program chairperson will create the layout of the program. Cover design can be coordinated by the program chairperson or the director.

### **PHOTOGRAPHY:**

SLT has a photography chairperson. You will need to coordinate with this person to have headshots taken for the program. They will provide the program chairperson with these photos. You will also need to coordinate with the photography chairperson to come to rehearsals to take photos of the show. This is traditionally done closer to opening night, when sets, costumes, and tech aspects are complete for these photos, however, you will need to contact the marketing chairperson to find out when promotional pictures may



be needed. Show pictures should be available to marketing no later than one week before opening. We take an entire cast/crew/production staff photo either before or after one of the performances. You will need to coordinate this with the photography chairperson as well.

### **MARKETING:**

The marketing chairperson will handle and coordinate the publicity for your show. If you have any particular ideas for your show, you should discuss them with the chairperson.

### **MARQUEE:**

There is a “season” marquee kept in the display box in front of the theatre which lists all of the shows for the season. You will need a separate marquee for your show. Contact the board liaison to find out how many marquees are needed. It is your responsibility to arrange for this/these marquee(s) to be made. All necessary copyright info should be included as detailed in your rights to the show. Other than that, the design is left up to you. The marquee should be posted as soon as you have all of the information you would like on it.

### **CAST PARTY:**

We traditionally have a cast party after the final performance of each show’s run. The scheduling of this is up to the director/producer. The cost of this party should be included in your original budget. Typically, SLT cast parties include food and beverages, some sort of gift or remembrance for the cast and crew, special gifts, roasts and toasts of individuals, and a lot of fun. Planning this well can result in a very special and memorable event for all attending. Everyone involved in the production (cast, crew, musicians, technical staff, and production staff) are invited to the cast party. At the director’s discretion, each person involved in the production can usually invite one person to attend the party with them. In this case, additional people may be asked to pay a small fee to the director/producer to help pay for their expenses.

The following are purchase guidelines established by the board:

- Cast/crew gifts should not exceed \$20.00/person.
- Cast party expenses should be budgeted so they do not exceed \$45.00/person.

If the estimated cost of either gifts or the cast party exceeds the amount outlined here, the director will need board approval prior to purchase.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **CLEANING:**

The cleaning and maintenance of the building is a major concern during the run of your production. When you begin using the theatre for your production, the cleanliness and care of the building is the responsibility of the director, production staff, cast, and crew. At the end, the building should be in the same condition in which it was handed to you. SLT will provide a cleaning person to thoroughly clean the public areas of the building prior to the friends and family performance. After that, the public areas are to be "tidied up" prior to each performance. You and your production staff may do this, or you may bring in a professional cleaner to do it at the expense of the show budget. The building and grounds chairperson will review this with you at the time you begin your production.

### **WORKING WITH KIDS:**

If you are working with kids in your show, there are a few general ground rules to follow.

- (1) Children are not allowed on the upper level of the theatre (the backstage mezzanine) unless accompanied by an adult.
- (2) Children should not be left in the theatre building without an adult present at any time.
- (3) Shows with a large number of children in the cast should have an appointed "child wrangler" who is present at rehearsals and performances and is responsible for keeping the kids safe, quiet, and out of trouble.
- (4) If you are working with any children under the age of 18, there should always be another adult present unless it is your own kid.

### **WORKING WITH ANIMALS:**

Any show, which deems the use of live animals necessary, will need prior approval from the board. A handler should be assigned for the protection and care of the animal. Animals should not be allowed on the upper mezzanine of the theatre unless accompanied by the handler.

### **ALCOHOL:**

The use of alcoholic beverages during productions is strictly prohibited at all times. Alcohol should not be consumed prior to or during a performance.

## **CANDLES / OPEN FLAME:**

The use of candles or any other type of open flame during rehearsals or performances must be approved in advance by the Board of Directors.

## **SAFETY:**

While in the building, shoes must be worn at all times, except when the show requires a scene without shoes or a certain character to not have them.

It is the director's responsibility to ensure all production decisions are made with the safety of your cast and crew in mind. Any unsafe conditions will be immediately communicated to the board liaison.

## **MEETINGS, NOTES, AND CAST CALLS:**

These things are not required by SLT, but they are suggested as extremely useful tools and ones that have proven to be very effective. Every show is different as is every director's style, so customize things as you deem appropriate.

## **PARKING:**

The theatre owns a certain part of the parking lot around the building; however, we generally share space with the Smithfield Center, which works well for both them and us. Our lot is also used during the day by the Smithfield Foods employees. The small parking lot to the right of the building is for the exclusive use of SLT workers, as the sign indicates. It is a good idea to check with the board liaison regarding events at the Smithfield Center that may coincide with your performances. In the case of a conflict, it is a good idea to make sure someone "ropes off" our part of the lot so that we have space for our patrons to park for the show. During productions, cast and crew can park on the hill in front of the theatre or on Luter Drive or may park on the last row of parking to the left of the building facing North Church Street.

## **FOOD:**

Often your cast and crew will be at the theatre for a number of consecutive hours, and may require time to eat. It is okay to allow the cast to bring food and beverages, as long as they clean up after themselves and eat backstage at the long makeup counter by the stairs. You will find that as rehearsals progress and your cast begins to form that "family," homemade goods will begin to show up. Make sure that all foods are approved by the costumer,

director, and stage manager. Please be aware of any food allergies your cast or crew may have.

## **AFTER THE SHOW:**

### **CLEANING UP:**

Smithfield Little Theatre does not require a strike after the last performance. It is highly encouraged that you schedule and organize a theatre cleanup within the first week after the production closes. This should include making sure that the lobby, house, dressing rooms, and backstage areas are returned to the condition that they were in when they were given to you. It also helps to have production staff, such as a costumer and a prop person, there to return anything upstairs or to pack up items to be laundered. Our set builders will handle striking the set.

### **BORROWED AND RENTED ITEMS:**

Any items that are borrowed or rented are to be returned in the condition in which they were given to you. If a member of your production staff borrowed or rented these items, please remind them that it is their responsibility to return them.

### **DIRECTOR DEBRIEFING:**

The director is required to attend the next regularly scheduled SLT Board meeting following the closing of the show for the purpose of discussing the show (what went well, what could have gone better, and lessons learned for future shows). The purpose of this debriefing is for the Board to improve experiences and determine how to streamline efforts at SLT. See the “Director Debriefing” form at the end of this handbook.



## Smithfield Little Theatre Director Debriefing

Plan to attend the next regularly scheduled Board meeting following the closing of your show. You will be asked to discuss the different areas from submission process to cast party. You may bring this sheet with you to the Board meeting or prepare any thoughts ahead of time. This entire process should take 20 - 30 minutes.

Show: \_\_\_\_\_

Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Scheduled Date of Debriefing: \_\_\_\_\_

- Show Submission Process
- Auditions
- Rehearsals
- Set Design/Construction
- Programs
- Marketing
- Photography
- Lights/Sound
- Costumes
- After the Show Responsibilities
- SLT Resources Available

Please discuss your overall thoughts on your experience working at SLT.

What is one thing that SLT could improve upon for their directors?

What is one thing that you enjoyed while directing at SLT?

One suggestion you would make for future directors.

What do you wish you had known or been told before directing this show?