



## **Welcome to South London Theatre and your Directors' Handbook!**

Congratulations on joining the team of directors at SLT. This guide is designed to help you understand how South London Theatre works so you can get the best out of your time working as a director here.

We've included some important dos and don'ts, as well as pointing you in the right direction for help. There's a lot of advice from people who've done many productions at SLT that should help smooth your ride. And there is some very important information for you and your cast's safety and wellbeing at the end, which you must read. You may be an experienced director at SLT, but please refresh your memory by going through the pack.

There's an awful lot to think about when you're staging a show, so we've chunked everything up to help you through it. We hope you find it all useful!

### **SLT Theatre Committee (October 2024)**

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# PLANNING

## Getting started

Once we've agreed a slot in our season with you, you'll get an email from Theatre Committee (TC) confirming all the details of your show and who your rep will be. Check all your dates and rehearsal schedule so you know when everything is happening. You'll be given:

- **A date for our season announcement** - keep it free, as it's a great opportunity to get people involved in your show
  - **2x slots for auditions** - two for your main auditions (Sunday at midday and Monday evening) and a third (the following weekend) for recalls if needed. You'll also be send audition information
- **3x weekly rehearsals** - on either Wednesdays and Fridays 8 - 10pm and Sundays 4.45 - 8.15pm, or Tuesdays and Thursdays 8 - 10pm and Sundays 1 - 4.30pm - which will have been agreed with you during the submissions process
- **A get-in date** - when you, your cast and crew can get into the theatre (usually 9 days before your opening night)
- **Your performance dates** - usually Tuesday to Saturday evenings (family shows may vary)
- **A get-out date** - when you, your cast and crew need to take the theatre back to how you found it (usually the Sunday morning following your last night)

Please make sure these are as expected. Apart from the audition slots, it's very difficult to change any of these. If you have a problem, please speak to your rep immediately. If you need to change your audition dates, please let your rep know as soon as possible. You'll need to find an alternative time and location for them as soon as you can, and will need to check with [rehearsals@southlondontheatre.co.uk](mailto:rehearsals@southlondontheatre.co.uk) on the availability of rooms. There is a separate Auditions pack which we'll send to you.

Please keep the fact that your production has been chosen to yourself until we have announced it. We need to make sure we can obtain performance rights. And we like to keep the whole season under wraps until we make a big splash with our Season Announcement, so no spoilers please!

We'll also have a new season meeting for all directors before the season starts, to discuss what's going on, give directors a chance to network and share knowledge and experience. Please try and make this if you can.

**Next, get to know your rep**, who's the person assigned to your show by Theatre Committee to help you get the best out of working at SLT. How much help you'll need will depend on your level of experience and your knowledge of how we work. They are there to oil the wheels and help you get things done. But they also have a big responsibility, as they need to make sure the final production is up to scratch. They'll keep the Theatre Committee updated as to how it's going and make sure they know of any problems you're having.

## Your creative team

Getting your creative team together early will really help keep your stress levels down. No-one can do this alone, and the size of your team will depend very much on the production you are doing - the bigger and more complex the show, the more help you will need. But there are a minimum number of people you need to get on board.

- **An assistant director** is essential. Even the smallest production can be too much for one person to manage, so we generally insist that you have an AD on your show. They'll help you with all the organisation that will be needed - from rehearsal schedules and managing your cast, to helping with set and costumes, and providing another pair of eyes and alternative ideas when you need them, or covering a rehearsal for you if you can't make it.
- **Your stage manager** will run the show for you, and you must have one. You need someone with the experience to manage all the elements of show week - from working with front of house and keeping your cast in line, to managing the technical operators and back stage crew. They may well need one or more assistant stage managers, but you can agree that together.
- **Having a designer** will help bring your production to life. You may think that it's an easy process, but choosing someone who has design experience to help you, will bring another level to your production. They can bring ideas about staging, set and scenery, costumes and lighting that you might never think about otherwise. You can also split the work between a set designer, lighting designer, sound designer and perhaps a costume designer, but you'll need to be confident enough to bring all those elements together.
- You will also need **operators to run the lighting and sound** for your show. A single operator may be enough for a simple show, but you may need a couple if there are a lot of sound and lighting effects. You can decide this with your designer. You won't need these immediately, but it's good to get people on board as soon as you can - you don't want to get into the theatre only to remember you've got no-one to operate the lights!

- You may need more specialist help. For a musical, you will already have a musical director on board (it's part of the submission), but you will probably need a choreographer too. For any fight work, you will need a fight director, and potentially an intimacy co-ordinator for close physical scenes

Our [SLT Members Group Facebook page](#) is a good place to ask for help on your show (it's a closed group so you'll need to request to join). Your rep should be able to suggest people you can ask. And chatting to people in our bar at a social event, at one of our monthly open evenings or after another show is a great way to meet enthusiastic volunteers.

Please be aware that just as for your cast, anyone involved in your show on anything other than a one-off basis must be an SLT member. Someone who designs your poster or helps with the get-in under supervision, for example, can be a non-member; but non-members should not be using power tools or working backstage unsupervised, and non-members must not enter the tech gallery.

## Designing your show

We can't give you a tutorial on stage design here. But we can give you some advice and make sure you think about how your show is going to work. And even if you have a very strong idea for staging your show, it's still worth getting a designer on board as a second brain, and at the very least talking to our backstage team to review your ideas and thoughts.

There are a number of things you need to make sure you think about when putting your design together:

- **Staging** - we have a very flexible space that can accommodate different audience layouts. But do bear in mind that these will affect how many seats you can get in, and we all want as many people to see our shows as possible - we average around 70, and for financial reasons we don't really want to go much below that capacity.
- **Set** - it may be clear from the stage directions or it may not. But think about what ideas and feelings you want to get across. What will it add to your vision for the show? Don't forget about practicalities, though. Where are the entrances and exits?
- **Lighting** - at a very basic level your audience will need to see what's going on. But lighting can add mood and atmosphere. It can tell the audience where and when the action is taking place, as well as any special effects that may be called for.

- **Sound** - this can be anything from noises off that provide an essential part of the storytelling, to incidental music to add to the atmosphere, to a full soundscape to drive the whole story forwards.
- **Costume** - whether it's a period piece or a fantasy, costume adds a whole extra dimension to your production. What someone wears tells you an awful lot about who they are. We have an extensive Wardrobe at your disposal, but if you need to hire in costumes that's fine as long as you stay within your budget (if you need more, you must request it ahead of time)
- **Make-up** - most performances in such a small space as our theatre don't need any make-up that wouldn't be used in the real world. However, you may want to use makeup to create particular effects or for certain characters. There are experts who can help you with this

Once you've firmed up your ideas, your set design will need to get the OK from our backstage team, to make sure it's both practical and safe for our theatre.

## Budget

One of the brilliant things about working at SLT is the sheer number of assets we have access to - from our huge wardrobe and well-stocked props department, to furniture, rostra, scaffolding, flats, lighting and sound equipment. On top of that, our members are a treasure trove of unusual props, costumes and furniture. We can do amazing things with what we already have.

But there will always be a need to get a difficult costume, or special material, or a hard-to-find prop. **So we give all our shows a budget of £200** (on top of rights - we pay for those centrally). And that is a maximum budget - not a contribution towards it. You can't increase it by adding your own money. That's because all our members should have a level playing field to show what they can do.

For some, more costly shows, we may agree to a higher budget, but that will be agreed at the time we accept your show into the season. Unless we have told you otherwise, your budget will be £200, but speak to us if you discover you may need to go over that. Don't spend anything more without the prior agreement of the Theatre Committee, as we won't be able to repay you any more than that.

**You MUST keep any receipts**, as you'll need to include these with your [expenses form](#) at the end of the show. And make sure you get VAT receipts, as this will help us no end. As a charity, we can claim back the VAT, so it's worth a lot of money to us.

If you buy online, for example Amazon or eBay - always ask for an invoice or receipt from businesses - they'll happily supply one - but best do it at the point you place the order, rather than waiting until your show is over!

**We don't reimburse for scripts** - this is something you and your cast need to pay for yourselves. If the rights for your play are issued by Concord publishing, they often insist that we also purchase scripts from them which your cast members must pay for. We'll help you arrange this.

## Publicity

Getting people involved in your show and getting an audience to watch it are both essential for a successful production. We'll give you lots of help, but much of the responsibility for promoting your show comes down to you and your cast. We'll give you the tools, but it's up to you to use them.

We'll send you a separate publicity pack with details of what we'll do for you and advice on what you should do. It's really helpful, so make sure you read it and take note of any deadlines.

The main things we provide are:

- **Posters and flyers.** We'll use the front cover of the play script until you get a poster designed (it's helpful if it's ready in time for auditions), and there are people we can suggest who can design your poster. If you're lucky enough to be able to design your own, or you have a friend who can, there are strict guidelines for the design which we can provide. We'll need the design in a few different proportions to use in different places.
- **We'll publicise your auditions**, but we need you to give us the information in plenty of time. See the Auditions pack for details.
- **We'll create website and Facebook events** for your auditions and performances - feel free to share these, and get your cast to do so too..
- **We also produce a programme** for you. You'll be asked to supply information and rehearsal photos for it a few weeks before your show goes up. Don't forget to keep a list of everyone who helps you so you can give them a mention.

Your responsibilities include:

- **Giving the publicity team the information they need** by the deadlines they give you.
- **Sharing the official events and notifications** about shows.
- You and your cast **using your own social media accounts** to get people interested - you can share photos from rehearsals if you like, but be careful about using copyright material.
- **Organising a photographer** to come to a dress rehearsal, so we get some photos to share on socials to promote the show and to go in our archives - we have a list of people you can ask.

- You'll also need **informal rehearsal photos** pre-show run-up week for us to use in the Director's Preview that goes out a couple of weeks before your show goes up (you'll be sent some questions to respond to in order for this to be created) Please start building up a collection as early as possible.
- Completing the [SLT archive wiki](#) after your show with show details and photos so that we have a record for the archive - we'll provide guidelines on this

## MAKING IT REAL

### Auditions

Good auditions are the making of a great show. Getting the best out of them means a bit of preparation, but it will be worth it. Give the publicity team the details as soon as you can, and then let everyone know about them. Promoting auditions is a time-consuming task, so please give the team the information in the format they need (see the Audition Notices document).

**We always hold open auditions** - meaning someone doesn't have to be a member to come along. (They only need to join if you get cast.) That means you can spread your net wider, but do bear in mind that if new people come along, you should take time to explain the way we work, rehearsal commitments and so on. You'll also need to make it very clear that they will need to become members before any rehearsals start.

**We'll be sending you a Google form to use** for people to apply for your auditions, which will capture everyone's details and give them important information about us. You can change the details to tailor it to your production, but please keep the rest of it as it is, especially the consent elements.

There's not really a right or wrong way to run an audition, but decide what you want to do based on the size of the group (there are no minimum or maximum sizes, it depends on what you think you can cope with!). Some directors prefer to see people individually or in small groups, others to invite a large group and then divide them up to workshop the script. You might want to invite people to do some improvisation to see how they think on their feet. You might also want to ask people to play a scene, offer some direction and then see how they respond.

If you're stuck, don't hesitate to talk to your rep, to TC or an experienced director for some tips!

## Casting

By all means encourage people you know to audition, but NEVER try and pre-cast your show. You might think you know who'd be perfect for a part, but you don't know who else is going to turn up to audition, how different people will interact, and who might be right for other characters. It's also not fair on everyone else who may want to be in it. Wait and see who comes to audition, and make your selection then.

If you've managed to excite the members (and our wider audience) about your show, you should get a good turn out for your auditions. We can give you a third room booking for call backs in case you need to see anyone again - or if you need to accommodate someone who can't make your main auditions.

Most shows do get cast first time around. (Having open auditions really helps extend the range of people to choose from.) When you offer the parts, it's always worth double checking that they checked the performance dates - following up a call with an email with all the details can help. If you're unable to achieve a full cast, it's fine to put out another shout for suitable people to come forward for consideration.

And please make sure that your cast knows not to make the news public, as we like to make a formal announcement on the website once the whole show is cast. Once you have the details, please let your rep know and get headshots of all cast members - it brings the announcement to life. The Publicity team will ask you for all the details. **We don't announce a cast until every person is signed up for membership**, so please encourage any newbies in your cast (or anyone needing to renew) to sort this out as quickly as possible

And **don't forget to contact everyone else who auditioned and wasn't successful**. It's really important. We're all doing this for fun, and people gave up their own time to come along and audition for you, so show them the courtesy of contacting them - even with bad news, via a standard email if needed. We may want these people to audition again, so please be encouraging, and do supply feedback if you have time or are asked for it.

**If your show involves children, you'll need chaperones** for all the rehearsals and performances (as well as DBS certificate holders for rehearsals. (There is separate guidance on this) **Please contact [training@southlondontheatre.co.uk](mailto:training@southlondontheatre.co.uk) for support and guidance well in advance if you need to cast children**



## Membership

All our auditions are open, so it's quite possible you will cast at least one person not already a member. Once you have the details of everyone you've cast, please **send Membership your cast list** (copy in your rep) including membership expiry dates for current members and the date of your first rehearsal.

It's your responsibility to make sure they join before the first rehearsal (and that no-one's membership has lapsed!). It's very easy for them to do online; there are concession rates for students, over 60s and anyone dependent on benefits. Please don't leave it to the membership team to chase your cast for renewals - neither your rehearsals nor your show can go ahead unless everyone involved is a member. All members of your crew will also need to be members.

## Ticketing

Your casting announcement will trigger Box Office to set up a page for the show on [our TicketSource booking site](#). To do that, you'll need to provide you'll be asked for the following information as soon as you make your announcement:

- A synopsis of the play - this is usually taken from the season description on our website, but this is an opportunity for you to update it if you want.
- The genre (comedy/drama etc).
- Details of the cast.
- Any advisories (e.g. adult themes, minimum recommended ages, flashing lights) that need to be added to the TicketSource page.
- Estimated Running time (this can be a MIN-MAX time range at this point, or if we really have no idea - TBA).
- At this stage all shows will be allocated 50 seats on each night to start ticket sales off.
- Please encourage your cast to share the link [www.ticketsource.co.uk/slt](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/slt) to friends and family, but please discourage them from buying tickets on behalf of others. It starts to get complicated when there are cancellations or exchanges, or even no-shows, and we don't usually refund

New members must NOT use their 2 free ticket allocation for others to come and see the show they're in - it's intended for the newbie to come and see subsequent shows or ones during their rehearsal period, and they should email [boxoffice@southlondontheatre.co.uk](mailto:boxoffice@southlondontheatre.co.uk) to request redemption of those.

## Rehearsals

Everyone generally gets the same rehearsal period (musicals may get a bit more) - two two-hour sessions on weekday evenings and one three and a half-hour session on a Sunday, for 9 or 10 weeks excluding run-up. Then you'll get just over a week in the theatre itself for technical work and final rehearsals.

Rehearsals usually take place in the Fly Loft or Kit Room (both on 1st floor), or the Theatre once you have done your get-in.

Once you're in the theatre, you have pretty much exclusive use of the space every evening and all day on Sunday. You'll usually be in the smaller Kit Room for your early rehearsals and the Fly Loft for the later ones as your production gets closer.

**On Saturdays in term time, the SLT Youth Group uses the building and directors and cast do not have access until 5pm.** Please contact [training@southlondontheatre.co.uk](mailto:training@southlondontheatre.co.uk) if you really need to come into the building during the day. The Fly Loft on a Friday in term time is also used by Youth group from 6pm - 7.45pm, so please don't attempt to enter the room during that time.

You'll be given details of how to log into the building calendar when you get confirmation of your rep and audition/rehearsal schedule. Please remember to check this regularly, as we do have to move rehearsals around from time to time. There's an iPad by the lift you can check too.

**Planning** is the way to get the most out of rehearsals. Make sure you know the dates that any of your cast can't make, then sit down and make a rehearsal schedule. You don't need to plan every minute, but do make sure you have enough time to cover everything, including runs.

You should be able to manage all your rehearsals within the rehearsal schedule you're given. One of the skills of a director is making good use of the time they have. Sometimes though, you may need to add an extra rehearsal or swap something around.

There may be times when your normal rehearsal space won't be available. This could be because a big show is on and more space is needed for dressing rooms, or building work may be happening that makes usual rehearsal rooms unusable. We will try our best to avoid this, but if you do need to find an "out" space, we'll give you plenty of notice and contact details for some very friendly local hostelries such as The Hope, The Great North Wood and The Rosendale, who can often offer a room for free - just make sure everyone buys a drink!

If you want to see if an additional space is available at the theatre, or cancel or swap a room, please email [rehearsals@southlondontheatre.co.uk](mailto:rehearsals@southlondontheatre.co.uk) as soon as you can. We need to make the best use of the space we can, so may want to reallocate rooms that aren't going to be used.

Before 7.45pm rooms may be in use by other groups who hire the space (including Youth group on Fridays in term time). If you need to start early, this should be booked into the diary in advance, but please bear in mind that our rehearsal rooms are often used for external hires in the early evening. It's also worth checking the diary on the day as bookings can come in at short notice.

## Rehearsal room etiquette

- The Fly Loft and Kit Room both have 15-20 blue chairs, and at least one small table.
- Other miscellaneous furniture such as benches and extra tables should be stored in the Props Stores or Theatre, or under tarpaulin in the backyard
- At the end of your rehearsal chairs should be stacked neatly to the sides.  
Please see the notices in each room for specific layouts.
- Litter should be put in the bins, and glasses returned to the bar.
- **Please make sure you adhere to locking up rules when you leave the building.** If you're the last group to leave, you MUST check the building, turn off lights, close/lock doors and set the alarm. Full procedures are in the folder in the foyer, but you should sign up for training before your rehearsals start if this is new to you
- Please look after any props you are using for rehearsals. You'll be allocated large plastic boxes to store everything apart from furniture on the shelves in the Kit Room, but don't leave them lying around (**see the Props appendix**)
- If you need any temporary equipment or furniture for rehearsals please email the building manager to discuss.
- There are WiFi networks available throughout the building which you can use with the password SLT@1881@1967

## Rehearsing when a show is on

Everyone using the other spaces in the building needs to be respectful during performances of the other shows. This is particularly true when you are rehearsing. There are some simple rules and guidance to follow. Remember - it'll be you in the theatre during your show week.

The Fly Loft and Kit Room are quite well insulated for sound, but you must keep the general volume down and avoid anything that will disturb the performance:

- No shouting, loud singing, amplified music or keyboards, jumping or stamping.
- Keep volume to a conversational level
- Don't exit the room towards the new stairs after 8pm or use the first floor toilets as your footsteps can be heard in the auditorium - always use the old stairs and go down to the bar for toilets, or the access loo via Wardrobe on the 2nd floor

If you're concerned that you will need to be louder, then you will have to find an "out" space. If you do decide to rehearse elsewhere, please let the building manager know so the room can be reallocated.

And always double check your room allocations when shows are on as we may have to move rehearsals and you may be in a different room that evening.

## Practical rehearsal tips and advice

### New people (performers or crew)

- Introduce yourself, tell them how you fit into the organisation, how long you have been involved etc.
- Show them where everything is – loos, bar, wardrobe, green room, kit room, fly loft – basically give a tour of the building, including anything related to health and safety.
- Buy the cast a drink if you can (perhaps at the read-through), and encourage them to use the bar. If possible, meet for rehearsals in the bar before you get started, or do notes in the bar afterwards
- Introduce them to other SLT members (especially Theatre Committee) whenever you get the opportunity – explain what people do, what they are currently involved in (and vice-versa with the new person).
- Don't use in-jokes or acronyms without explaining them – it's fun to be in the know but excluding if you're not in on the joke.
- Get everyone in the cast and immediate crew to introduce themselves, say a bit about who they are and what they do outside of SLT. Encourage them to talk to each other more generally and to take an interest in each other. It's all about mutual respect and that includes interest in people's lives in order to build a working relationship for the duration of the rehearsal period and hopefully thereafter.

### Best practice tips

- Make sure you have everyone's availability **before** rehearsals so you can work out a proper rehearsal schedule. This is particularly important with those who are in a lot of scenes and without whom it is quite difficult to do much.
- Read the whole play together early on – possibly even before the first rehearsal so you get a sense of how the whole cast reads together (with a small cast you may have worked this out in auditions).
- Have a plan and a process. Rehearsals should not just be people reading the lines against each other.

- Work out when you want to work on the text, when on blocking and when you need to work on small parts of individual scenes. Tell the actors at the end of each rehearsal what you want them to work on going forward. You can allocate time for discussion – about movement, psychology, plot – and time for improvisations that may help to move characterisation along.
- Try to do a vocal warm up and a physical warm up so actors don't go 'cold' into your rehearsal. If you're not sure what to do, ask your actors if they have something they'd like to lead the others with. There are several people with teaching experience who have specific routines that they can show you. Try to get everyone to do it – one or two may not but most will. There are many reasons for this – mostly it is to make that transition from the outer world of work or whatever people have been doing all day, to the specific world of the play and ensemble.
- Give notes from the start. Start off with encouragement and the positive things that you have seen in the performance. Remember to be specific and constructive. If it's a blocking issue, explain that you can't see them from a certain angle and explore the ways they could get out of this. If they are pronouncing a word incorrectly, say so as soon as possible so it doesn't get embedded in their line learning. If it's a question of interpretation of the character, try to work through how to get to what you want with them.
- Try not to give line readings – they should not just be copying the way you have imagined it in your head – but lead your actors to the reading you're after through a process of trying different ways to say it – or different actions, or improvisation. If it is more delicate, try to speak to the actor privately so as not to embarrass them in front of the rest of the cast. This may be worth doing if they have a specific verbal or physical tic for example – you might want to point out if nervousness means they keep slapping their thighs panto-style, or shuffling their feet. They may not even know they're doing it.
- Set a date by which you need actors to put their books down. It's helpful if people know their lines earlier as you can concentrate on business and relationships, but it shouldn't be the be all and end all. If actors want to get off book before you've had the chance to do any work on the play it can sometimes be counterproductive. But leaving it till the last-minute stresses everyone out, so set a date at about midway for people to aim at.
- **Discuss methods for learning lines.** Apart from apps or old-school repetition, you can try breaking scenes down into units and working those. Moving back and forth between units, the actors find they learn the lines in these short units very quickly in the rehearsal process.

- **Explore the subtext as soon as possible.** It will help actors to delve more deeply into their characters and to give a more rounded performance. Encourage them to research if there is a particular history and context to the play so they get a sense of what it might have been like to be people like their characters.
- Get the cast to **analyse who the characters are** – what is their story, where do they come from, what are their life experiences? And yes, what is their motivation! If you don't really know who someone is or why they are doing what they do, it's going to be pretty difficult to try to play them realistically.
- Get them to think about how their characters walk, stand, sit, and interact with others. Posture and speed of movement goes a long way to creating a character and can totally change how you see them.
- Ask your actors what they think the characters look like? Are they careful or careless in terms of their appearance? If their ideas don't chime with yours, see if there is room for manoeuvre. Often getting a bit of key costume can be a huge help with character development – a pair of glasses, a hat, a walking stick – you'd be amazed.
- If you need an actor to do something significant to their **appearance** such as hair, facial hair, talk to them before you start rehearsing so you don't have to negotiate halfway through the process. Some people absolutely love changing up their appearance; others are more circumspect. We're amateurs so there is a limit to what you can expect people to do (most people have to go to work with whatever you have lumbered them with).
- **Pin down any accents** as soon as you can. If help is needed call on those who specialise in vocal techniques, the language, or are from the place you are trying to conjure. (YouTube also offers lots of tutorials.) Even if it's just the pronunciation of a few words, it's worth getting it right early on.
- Do take on board suggestions from the cast/your AD in terms of blocking, playing a scene, how to get a certain dynamic. See how it goes. You may have the overall picture of how you want the play to be, but other people have much to bring to the rehearsal process. You don't have to carry on with it if you don't think it works but don't dismiss their suggestions unless you have tried them. No-one always knows best.
- **Never** say 'we don't do that here' if someone suggests how to play a scene or asks to try a stagecraft technique. It's incredibly off-putting and makes us seem cliquey and closeted. Other people have huge amounts of life and other experience to bring to the rehearsal process. And doing things in a different way might greatly benefit the scene.

- **With difficult scenes** that aren't working it can be useful to employ some specific techniques. The technique of 'actioning' can be very useful under the right circumstances – applying transitive verbs to individual actions to enable the actors to analyse the dynamics of a scene in detail.
- At some point in the rehearsal, getting actors to read each others' parts can give them a whole new perspective.
- As can changing accent, gender and posture for example to see what that brings to a character. And it's fun.
- **Props** – get actual or dummy props ASAP and practise with them all the time, especially if they have to prepare food for example, or carry out a complex sequence with a number of objects. Some people are hugely adept with props, others are not, and you may need to adapt the scene to your actor's capabilities. Sometimes they may just not know what they are supposed to be doing (such as being a silver service waiter). It's your job to find a way to show them how to.
- Similarly try to **get a sense of the actual furniture** so it's not a surprise when you get on set, or you have to re-block because there's no space to do what you'd rehearsed. Particularly if you need large items such as a sofa – even if you block it out on the floor, you may need to reconsider once you get the actual piece as it may just impede movement too much.
  - **Practise with costumes** for as long as possible – especially if there are lots of changes to make sure you know how to put everything on in the right order. This is especially the case with complex period costumes, or with detailed uniforms. Getting it right means the audience can enjoy your creation; if it's wrong, a portion of the audience will be twitching with discomfort!
- **Be kind and considerate.** Remember that one person's tease is another person's bullying – try to read the room and if someone seems discomfited, take them aside and ask them what the issue was. The director needs to manage this. If people don't seem to be getting on with each other try to find out why and resolve it as soon as possible. You cannot expect everyone to be great friends or even sympatico, but there must always be professional respect and courtesy in action. Your rep can also support you on this.
- Be careful, especially with young and new members, that you don't over-focus on individuals so that they feel vulnerable. If you think you need to do any one to one work with someone new, it may be wise to have your AD or another cast member with you. Socialising with individual cast members outside our bar (unless they're already friends of yours) is probably best avoided in case your intentions are misinterpreted - far safer for it to be several cast members involved.

- Please make sure you and your cast are familiar with our code of conduct and safeguarding policy. There's a lot of useful information here <https://www.southlondontheatre.co.uk/about-us/policies/>
- If there are **intimate scenes**, and you're unsure how to handle them, often your actors will decide for you by agreeing between themselves - but there are people around who have expertise in this. Do be sure though that no-one feels uncomfortable or under pressure to go beyond what feels right for them.
- If you have any **fight scenes** in the show, for health and safety these should be rehearsed alongside your warm-up EVERY show night and dress rehearsal time. Engage the help of of a fight co-ordinator early on.

## THE FINAL PUSH

### Get-in

You'll be able to get into the theatre at midday on your get-in day, and you might be able to help the previous production with their get-out to speed things up. Organisation is the key to a good get-in.

**Either you or your designer or stage manager should lead on pulling it together**, liaising with your backstage supervisor who will help you with a team of people to help with set building, painting, rigging lights and setting up sound. You'll need to have all your cast called, and maybe some other willing helpers if you have a small cast, to help with any shifting and lifting - including reorganising the seating if it needs to be moved. Your stage manager must be present at both get-in and get-out.

**In advance of the get-in, you should have at least one production meeting** with everyone involved. You can share the designs for the set and plans for sound and lighting. Establishing a plan for the day with a priority order and allocation of work will help things go smoothly. You should be able to use a lot of our existing scenery for most sets - we have a lot of flats and materials you can use - but make sure that anything additional has been ordered and will be delivered in time for your get-in.

The more you can get done on the day, the less will fall into the rest of run-up week, and the more time you'll have to rehearse.



The main things you'll need to try and get done or at least started are:

- Building the set
- Painting the set (though you may need to do this during the day that week)
- Delivering any large items for the set
- Rigging and focusing lights
- Checking sightlines
- Setting up sound (and any microphones, if needed)
- Plotting the sound and light cues
- Arranging the backstage area and props tables
- Getting the dressing room (Green Room) ready - this is the actors' home until get-out day

Although you won't be able to use the theatre for rehearsing during set prep, don't let your cast waste the time. If they aren't needed for shifting, it's a great opportunity to finalise costumes, find any last props, or just run lines.

Finally, if it's not your get-in, please exercise courtesy if you need to visit the auditorium, backstage or tech gallery and check with the incumbent director that you won't be disturbing their preparations.

## Run-up week

This is when it really all starts coming together. It's when your cast gets used to working on the set, your crew learns and practises the technical side, and you sort out any last niggles.

You'll need to:

- Finish anything not done on get-in day.
- Make sure that you leave the auditorium safe and tidy for the Youth Group when they meet on Saturdays. Put props in a safe place and don't leave ladders, paint etc lying around to create a safety hazard. As a courtesy, please talk to the Youth Theatre manager before your show if you think your set may impact on their sessions - for example, building a full kitchen, or anything that can't be moved out of the way to allow the children access to the stage
- **Please take a photo of your set and your seating configuration once finalised so that we can upload it to an archive for future reference** - send it to [theatrecommittee@southlondontheatre.co.uk](mailto:theatrecommittee@southlondontheatre.co.uk) along with scans of any sketches or plans you have
  - **Have a technical rehearsal as soon as possible** - where you run through the technical aspects of the whole show. This is often done "cue-to-cue" - just looking at the technical cues and skipping through parts of the production where nothing technical happens

- **Choreograph and rehearse any scene changes**, if the set needs to change at all. If at all possible, we'd advise it's less "clunky" to have actors do those changes
- Have at least one dress run (preferably more) as well as your proper dress rehearsal. The latter is normally run on a Monday night, and you should invite your photographer to attend one of those dress rehearsals to take show photographs
- From the dress rehearsal onwards, it's the Stage Manager's show. Directors are expected to step back and chill out, unless changes need to be made to the show because of unexpected emergencies. That means no notes!

**Make sure actors know when they will be needed during run-up week** - if at all possible they should be there every night apart from possibly when you do lighting programming. Everyone needs a break, so don't exhaust them just as the show is about to open! We'd advise that they have at least two nights off in run-up week, one of which will usually be the Saturday.

Make sure actors are included and know what is going on. Managing their expectations is also an important part of this final week. Suddenly they may feel they are less important than all the other technical stuff that is going on!

**Each show will need an audience announcement before it goes up.** This is best done as a recording (by you or someone of your choice) to be played when the auditorium goes dark and the audience has settled, and you can adapt the style and content depending on the show you are doing. But there are some important points you will need to make:

- Turning off mobiles and other devices that might make a noise or light that could distract the actors or annoy the audience
- No taking photographs or filming
- A reminder that our bar will be open during the interval (if there is one) and after the show
- If applicable, a reminder that anyone leaving the auditorium can only be readmitted at the interval

## **Dressing Rooms**

Each show is allocated a single dressing room from midday on get-in day to midday on get-out day: Usually this is the Green Room on the first floor.

We have a lot going on, so the majority of shows need to work with this space. We can allocate more rooms, for example if you have children in your show, but this should be the absolute exception, as it will stop other shows from having rehearsal space. Separate changing rooms for children is a topic covered in the Safeguarding & Chaperoning guidelines.

Your stage manager needs to make sure that the cast keeps the room tidy and that everyone has enough space. Any food in the Green Room must not be left uncovered.

## Getting bums on seats

After your get-in you'll need to finalise the details of the show with Box Office and Front of House. They will want to know the exact number of seats available (which you'll be able to count once your seating layout is in place); the running time and whether there is an interval; and whether late arrivals will be admitted. This will depend on your layout, but you may be able to identify a point at about 10-15 minutes after the start when latecomers can be admitted without causing a disturbance.

The final week is when you and your cast really need to get promoting your show. If you haven't already, get it out there on your various social media accounts. Tell friends, family and colleagues. We'll be promoting it too, but the more you can do, the bigger your audiences will be. Do feel free to discuss any ideas you have with the Publicity team.

One final note on tickets is that at SLT we have a rule that no-one is allowed to offer complimentary tickets for our shows. As a charity, we need to manage our income carefully and every ticket counts. That includes all directors and casts, for anyone including actors' agents. The only exception is the rights agent, which is part of our contract with them to put on the show. If you think you need to offer comps to anyone from outside our membership, perhaps as a thank you for any special voluntary help they've given you such as voice coaching, you must speak to the Box Office Manager first.

For anyone who's helped build your set, do please offer them a free seat at your dress rehearsal - it's good to have an audience, even if small, and it's a thank-you for them.

## Performances

Once you've done your final dress rehearsal, you hand the show over to your stage manager to run. You've done your job, so let them and the rest of the team get on with it. Sit back and enjoy. Please don't try and give notes or make any changes - it can confuse and upset people, and lead to worse performances. Trust them to get it right. If there is an issue, especially if it involves health and safety, always discuss it with your stage manager and agree on the best way to handle it.

## **End of show party**

It's traditional to have some kind of celebration after the final performance. Everyone has worked hard by this point and letting off steam is a great final opportunity to foster our sociable SLT community and mourn the end of what has typically been a thrilling experience.

Celebrations usually (but not exclusively) happen in the bar, which can stay open until 2am if it's arranged in advance. It is your responsibility to arrange this with the Bar Committee in advance and make sure you have trained bar staff signed up to run the bar for the full time you plan on having it open.

If you or your cast invite any non-member guests who've been to the show to stay for the party, that's fine, but please remember that all of you have responsibility for their behaviour. If any mess results, you and your cast have to clean it up! Please make it clear that anyone who's not invited to the party should vacate the premises when the bar closes to the public.

## **Get-out**

No-one wants to do it, but it's really important to get your whole cast and crew on board for your get-out. The more people you have, the quicker and easier it will be. You must have cleared the theatre and dressing room, leaving them clean and tidy, having returned all props and costumes, and removed any personal items by midday. That's so the next show can start their get-in promptly, so you'll normally need to start the get-out no later than 10am on the Sunday, with the aim of finishing by noon. If your show is a small cast and you have a big set to dismantle, it's worth asking the incoming show if they can help you out by coming in earlier to assist you.

## **That's a wrap**

And that's it. You just need to get any outstanding expenses approved by the Theatre Committee using this form <http://www.southlondontheatre.co.uk/forms/expenses.pdf> with receipts attached, within one week of your show coming down please. Make sure that you have shared the production photographs if not taken by our usual photographer, and you're done.

**We really hope you enjoy your experience directing at SLT. And come back and do it again!**

# **Appendix 1**

## **THE IMPORTANT STUFF**

You MUST read this and follow any instructions

It may seem dull, but a lot of responsibility comes with directing a show at SLT. Please make sure you read this section to understand what this means for you.

### **Code of Conduct**

We have a Code of Conduct that sets out how we expect our members, visitors and staff to behave. It's really just about being respectful of everyone and making SLT a great place to be. As a director, you need to be aware of what is expected of you and your team. Please have a read and make sure you know how to deal with any issues if they come up. You can find the Code of Conduct [here](#).

### **Working with children**

We are very lucky to have a fantastic youth theatre at SLT, which is great if your show has children in the cast. We always have lots of volunteers who want to audition for shows, and the Youth Group leaders will be happy to help you arrange auditions.

Naturally we have a strict safeguarding policy for any work that involves children or vulnerable adults. If you want to include children in your show, that's great, but you'll need to familiarise yourself with the policy and contact our safeguarding officer as soon as possible for specific guidance for your show. You can find our safeguarding policy [here](#).

### **Smoking in shows**

If your play is accepted for performance and it contains stage directions for the actors to smoke, please discuss this with Theatre Committee as we need to establish whether it's really crucial to the action or characterisation. If you can perform the play without smoking it simplifies matters, but if it's artistically appropriate then we'll ask you to use fake e-cigarettes or herbal cigarettes. These can only be used with your actors' consent, and you need to inform the House Manager so that a warning can be added to audience member and volunteer information.

Your stage manager will also need to disable smoke alarms for the duration of the section/s of the performance when smoking takes place - Bex Law can advise on this.

## **Signing in and out**

Always sign in and out on the sheets on the front desk, and make sure any cast or crew you are working with do the same. This is essential in the event of a fire as it will be used by the fire marshals to make sure the building is empty. During show week, your stage manager should set up a separate sign-in sheet for cast and crew only.

## **Access to the SLT Fire Station**

To request a fob, please email [fobs@southlondontheatre.co.uk](mailto:fobs@southlondontheatre.co.uk) Fobs cost £5 and will give you access to the front door and various internal doors. However, they also come with the responsibility of being the Building Guardian if you are first in or last out. You won't be allocated a fob until you've been trained to lock up either by an experienced person or at a training session. Please make sure you are familiar with the Building Guardian duties in the Building Guardian and Lead Fire Marshall guide. Regular fob training sessions are held.

(We're unable to allocate fobs to cast members - there are just too many of them, so we have to restrict it to directors and stage managers.)

There must be a minimum of two people in the building at all times, for your personal safety.

## **Building Guardian duties**

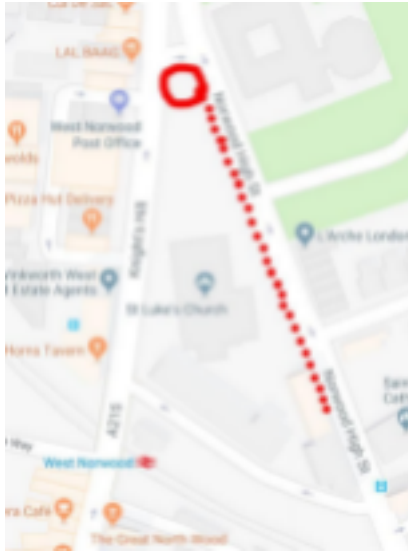
The Building Guardian is responsible for the security and safety of the building, for leading an evacuation, and for locking up at the end of the evening. It is essential to make sure that nobody is left in the building (especially unauthorised public that may have gained access)

On non-show nights whoever is running the bar is the Building Guardian. However, if there is no Bar Volunteer on-site, then the last responsible person on site takes on that role. As a director leading a rehearsal, this could be you if you and your cast are the last to leave the building.

On show nights the Building Guardian and Lead Fire Marshall will be one of the Front of House team or the Bar Volunteer, depending on how late it is. The Bar Volunteer will usually be responsible for locking up, unless a trained Fob Holder is staying later. If you stay later than the bar is open, the responsibility for locking up will pass to you.

# Fire Evacuation

If an alarm sounds at any time evacuate immediately and proceed to the assembly point (St Luke's Church Gardens). The only exception to this rule is if you are (a) in the Theatre and (b) a public performance is in progress. In this case the Lead Fire Marshall or Stage Manager will announce the need to evacuate.



Please follow their lead. On non-show nights you (the Director) are responsible for ensuring that your cast and crew know the evacuation routes, and for leading them out in an evacuation (whether or not you are also acting as the Building Guardian).

Take the building sign-in sheets with you to check people off.

## **Fire Evacuation Assembly Point is ST LUKE'S CHURCH GARDENS**

- On exiting the Fire Station, turn LEFT
- Do not cross the road
- Assemble in the Gardens

# Appendix 2

## PROPS STORES ETIQUETTE

**A polite notice from Carole Ironside and Kay George**, who look after our two Props stores on the first floor.

The locked store is just off the Fly Loft, the smaller store opposite the loos. The latter is accessible at all times unless there's a show going on beneath, but you may need to ask permission to access the locked store if a rehearsal or audition is going on in the Fly Loft. You won't be able to access it when a hire is in.

**We have a lot of props to manage - please follow these instructions.**

- It's important to keep the stores as tidy as possible as our space is extremely limited
- **If boxes are left out and props dumped, it becomes very difficult and potentially dangerous to manoeuvre around**
- Please store your show props in **labelled boxes** on the Kit Room shelves during the rehearsal period. There just isn't room to store them in either of the props stores
- If you're rehearsing in the Kit Room, please be tolerant of the cast in the Fly Loft needing to collect their props at the start of rehearsals
- **If you need help locating certain props**, please email [carole.ironside@icloud.com](mailto:carole.ironside@icloud.com) or [kaygeorge46@gmail.com](mailto:kaygeorge46@gmail.com) or [wardrobe@southlondontheatre.co.uk](mailto:wardrobe@southlondontheatre.co.uk) We can tell you if an item is available/stocked and where to find it. Please check before you use your budget to buy something that's not immediately obvious!
- We're happy for you to root around for your treasures, but **please put unwanted props and the boxes you've searched back where they belong**
- It's a good idea to take photos of the position of the boxes (most are labelled), and to **create a comprehensive "exit list"** to help during get-out to return props back to their owners or proper places
- **The SLT Members Facebook group/hivemind** is a good place for sourcing items you need. Check with your cast and crew too!
- Please **check with us before you donate any items** you've purchased, created or had given to you
- **Do return the key and gun safe key** back to the keysafe when you've finished



