

The Phoenix Players Production & Protocol Manual

What is expected of our Directors

The Director is in charge of everything that happens on the stage, from the acting to the props. It is understood that there will be variations in techniques and styles between directors, but the following is expected of all Directors:

- Choose a cast from the current members of the Acting Troupe. Only if that is not possible, may a Director request permission of the Board to hold auditions for new members of the troupe.
- You should have a vision for the production that you will convey to the members of your ensemble, including the actors and the production staff. This vision may be as complex as you wish, but should at a minimum include era in which you wish to place the play, emotions you feel are important to convey to the audience, and the overall theme of the production. This vision will help your design staff with ideas about colors, costumes, set etc and will also give your acting ensemble their cues for developing their characters.
- Work closely with the Production Manager to make sure that communication between all phases of the production work is on a good basis.
- Work through the Production Manager to solve any problems with production crew. Production crew works with The Director but is responsible to the Production Manager who oversees that work is being done.
- Problems with the Production Manager should be worked out by active communication if possible, but if necessary, the Board may be contacted for assistance.
- Reinforce The Phoenix Players policy of an ensemble production.
 - Production staff and actors are equal, so no one area is more important than any other,
 - Prima donnas are not allowed and there are no stars in a production.
 - Everyone helps to get out set pieces, props, etc whether production crew or acting ensemble.
 - No one goes home until everything is put away at rehearsals. Actors do not walk away and leave clean up etc to production staff.
 - During the production everyone works together to make sure that all of the backstage work gets done. When not on stage or getting ready to go on stage, actors become available production crew. Production crew, although assigned specific duties are available to help in other areas when not busy on their own work.
- Work with production staff, including having regular meetings to discuss the progress and problems in each area. The Director may not assign an Assistant Director to take on this role, except in an emergency situation. In such a case, the Assistant Director should work only within the parameters already set by the Director and should not

- Set rehearsal dates and times as far in advance as possible, putting together a calendar that will be given to all members of the ensemble. If and when changes are needed, these changes should be made clear to everyone, either by publishing a new calendar that is given to everyone or emailing the entire ensemble.
- Make sure that everyone knows what will be worked on at each rehearsal. Although it is not possible to always know how far a rehearsal will go, having actors sitting throughout rehearsal without getting rehearsal time is always frustrating. Thus, realistic goals for the scenes to be rehearsed should be set. Directors should consider the use of French scenes or beats¹ instead of Act rehearsals, at least in the early weeks of rehearsal. Scheduling beats at various times during rehearsal helps to avoid the "sitting around" problem.
- Give notes after each rehearsal with specific suggestions on improving the overall production to actors and production staff. For the acting ensemble, these should include, at a minimum, notes on line delivery, blocking, characterization problems, interaction with other characters, or any other information that is helpful in carrying out the overall vision for the production. For production staff, notes on props which work or do not, props still needed, costume needs or changes, set changes, lighting problems etc.
- Actors have a right to expect assistance with their character development by the Director. Variations in styles will determine how this assistance will be given, but consideration should be given to character development evenings, discussion time carved out for character discussion, scheduled individual discussion between each actor and the Director, or other techniques that will help. The extent to which the Director dictates character will depend on the individual style, but actors should be given at least some latitude to work out their own character.
- The Director will work with the Assistant Director and Stage Manager to determine what role each will play in the production. Assistant directors may be given as much authority as the Director wishes, but anyone without on-stage experience should not be giving acting notes. The Assistant Director may also double as the Stage Manager.
- Begin rehearsals on time and deal with problems of actors consistently arriving late before it becomes a problem for others in the production.
- Maintain a serious tone to rehearsal to the extent needed to allow the other members of the acting and production crews to focus on their own work.
- Work with the Production Manager to set a schedule for production "deliverables" such as lights finished, set done etc.
- Set the curtain call on or before the final dress rehearsal. The order of curtain call is completely the prerogative of the Director, but some thought should be given to the ensemble tradition of The Phoenix Players. Unduly highlighting any one actor is discouraged. This does not mean, however, that the actors all have to come out together.

¹ French scenes or beats (various names are used for these) are parts of the script that the Director creates for rehearsal. They need not be scenes per se as specified in the script. To create them, attention should be given to places where there are changes in characters, motivation, setting,

- Cooperate with the Publicity Director in getting word out about the show. No direct communication with a press person should be instituted before checking with the Publicity Director. Interviews may be arranged after publicity is sent out, but The Publicity Director should be informed ahead of time about the interview date, time, and press person.
- Gifts to the actors are not expected, but if The Director wishes to purchase them, The Phoenix Players will reimburse up to \$10 per person in the cast.

What is expected of our Stage Managers

Along with the Director and the Production Manager, the Stage Manager has one of the most important jobs in the production. The Stage Manager is the Director's right hand during the rehearsal phase of the production and in charge of the show after final dress rehearsal. The Stage Manager may also serve as an Assistant Director, if the Director wishes. In The Phoenix Players, the Stage Manager is expected to:

- Meet with the Director before the cast call and first production meeting to get a handle on what the Director's vision is for the production. This can be an informal meeting in which various aspects of the show are discussed in order to begin to sort out areas of need, special problems, casting, production needs etc. As each Director uses a stage manager differently, there should also be a discussion of expectations to and from each party.
- Attend all production meetings, keeping notes of what is discussed and who is doing what. If possible, these should be typed up and distributed to all in attendance as soon as possible after the meeting.
- Work with the Production Manager to put together and distribute a contacts sheet for all members of the Ensemble as soon as possible, and to make changes when needed. Cell phone numbers are necessary for actors so that they can be called if they are not at rehearsal on time.
- Attend all rehearsals, helping out as the Director requests. At times, the Stage Manager may be asked to do prompting, write in blocking, stand in for absent actors, or other duties as needed.
- Keep the list of who needs to be at what rehearsal and date or time conflicts that people have.
- At each rehearsal, take "attendance" to determine when everyone who is expected to be there has arrived so that you can inform the Director that he or she may begin. Call any cast members who have not shown up to determine their ETA.
- During hell week, the Stage Manager will be working backstage getting ready to run the show. This means coordination with the tech people on who will be doing what aspects of the show. At a minimum, such matters as the following need to be determined:
 - Who will decide when to order "go lights" "lights off" "go sound," "fade sound" etc. to begin and end the show, and each scene.
 - Where props will be located and what needs the actors have for backstage space for sitting and waiting, changing etc. Coordinate with Production Manager or Head of Set to get spaces, chairs etc for this.
 - Where costumes will be located and whether there is a need for people to help actors with quick changes
 - At what time the Director expects to open the house before each show.
 - What tech duties (sounds etc) will be done backstage and who will do them. It is best for the Stage Manager to assign these to someone else, but they can be done by the Stage Manager if necessary.

- During the show's run
 - Take over the control of the show.
 - Run the backstage and make sure that actors are ready for their entrances.
Follow script to make sure that people are ready for their duties.

What is expected of our Production Managers?

As the Production Manager for a Phoenix Players production, you are responsible for making sure that the Director's vision for the show is carried out by the members of the production crew. It is best to get people to volunteer and committed to their positions as early as possible because the Production Manager is expected to handle anything that "slips through the cracks" production-wise.

Specifically, the Production Manager is expected to:

- Work with the Director to get people to head the areas that will be needed with regard to production: Head of Costumes, Head of Set, Head of Props, Head of Makeup and Hairstyles, Tech Manager, and Lights Manager.
- Call an early production meeting to introduce everyone on the production crew to each other and to the Director. Get all contact information from everyone for a show contact sheet. Some Directors like to run these meetings, but if not, make sure that the Director conveys his or her vision for the production well enough that your crew knows where they are to begin (Costumes knows that they are looking for calico fabric not velvet for example). Make sure that everyone gets any questions or concerns aired before the end of the meeting. Set a schedule for regular production meetings.
- Get a key for the rehearsal space and make sure that it is there when needed, either with you or with the Director.
- Work with the Head of Venue to solve any problems that may be occurring with the rehearsal or final performance space.
- Call regular production meetings in which the heads of props, costumes, set, tech, lights etc and the Director get together and discuss their ideas, problems, and solutions.
- You will be responsible for making sure that each member of the production crew is on schedule, has what they need, and knows what is expected of them (product and time-wise), so regular communication at rehearsals and/or by email or phone is necessary.
- Work with the Head of Publicity to get necessary information and pictures for publicity purposes.
- Make arrangements for someone to take charge of arranging headshots of cast and crew and putting together the lobby boards.
- Make arrangements for a corsage or boutonnière for the Director for opening night and give it to him or her when they arrive.
- Make arrangements for flowers or other suitable presentation gift to be available for the cast to present on stage during the last show of the production.
- Work with the Tickets Chair to make sure that there are ushers available for each production.

What is expected of the Head of Costumes?

Costumes are an important part of the production, and in order not to have any misunderstandings, the following are the policies of The Phoenix Players in this area:

- A Head Costumer will be appointed who will coordinate with the Director, attend production meetings, and report regularly to the Production Manager with regard to progress and problems. Assistants will work under the Head Costumer, taking direction from him or her.
- Before beginning any production, a production meeting will be held in which you will be introduced to the other members of the production crew. At this meeting, the Director will be discussing his or her ideas for the play, including basic thoughts about costumes. Some Directors are more involved than others in choosing costumes, so it is a good idea to find out if choosing fabrics, etc will be left up to the costumers or whether the Director wants to approve at each step. At a minimum, the Director will be approving the final costume and requesting any changes, so continual communication when possible is a good idea.
- Try to attend one or two rehearsals before beginning the costumes to get a feel for what the Director is trying to accomplish. This is not necessary but may help to stop problems that may occur later in the process.
- Costumes should be brought in as finished or as needed for fittings throughout the rehearsal process. While it is not expected that all costumes, fittings, changes etc be done until dress rehearsal, most Directors like actors to begin wearing costumes as early in the process as possible.
- The Production Manager will be checking in with you regularly to work out any problems that may be occurring. If additional sewers are needed, the Production Manager should be informed right away.
- The Head of Costumes should be available to attend as many rehearsals as possible during the last week before the show opens, so that the Director can give notes on needed costume changes.
- The Head of Costumes is expected to be at Dress Rehearsal.
- You will be reimbursed for anything you spend on costumes, but please save receipts. You can give receipts as you get them or all at once at the end to the Production Manager who will make sure a check is issued to you.

What is expected of the Members of Our Acting Ensemble?

The Phoenix Players may not be run exactly as other theatre companies, so we want to make sure that there is no misunderstanding about our policies and requirements for being in one of our productions.

- Our auditions are held to become a member of the troupe, not for any particular play. Once a member of the troupe, you can be cast in any productions as long as you are a paid member of the Players before October 15 of each season.
- Members of the Acting Ensemble are chosen by the Directors from paid members and only if there is not someone in the troupe already who fits a role can the Director look outside the group or audition for the part.
- Directors have the option of choosing members of the Acting Ensemble and contacting them individually or calling a "cast call" for any interested members of the troupe where readings will be done if there are questions about how to cast the show from those in attendance.
- It is expected that you will be at all rehearsals unless you indicate at the beginning of the casting process that there are days or dates that you are not available, and the Director approves those. Too many absences from rehearsals causes problems with the ability of other actors to do their best, as well as causing bad feelings about the person who is not as committed to the production.
- We expect all members of the Acting Ensemble to be on time for rehearsals and show calls. If you are delayed, you should immediately contact the Stage Manager to let them know. Make sure that you have this number in your cell phone if necessary. When you are late, everyone who arrived on time must wait for you in order to begin. If this occurs more than twice, the Director has the option to remove the cast member.
- Except for emergencies, it is expected that all members of the Acting Ensemble will be at all rehearsals during the week before opening. This is an important time for the members of the cast with regard to getting ready to be together on the stage, and anyone missing causes problems for everyone.
- Costumes and all costume pieces will be given to you in clean condition. After that, you are responsible for taking care of them. This means that they will be hung up after every rehearsal where they are used and left in good condition in the costume area or taken home with you. There are no personal maids in our productions, so hanging up and taking care of your own costumes is each actor's responsibility. If laundering needs to be done before the show or between shows, it should be done by you. When the show closes, you are expected to launder the costume or arrange for dry cleaning if necessary and return it to the Director or head of costumes within two weeks in clean condition. If this causes a hardship for some reason, the Director should be informed of the problem.
- We do not have any "class distinctions" in The Phoenix Players. We are an ensemble group and every person in the cast and production crew is as important as every other one. Actors are expected to help with any set up of the stage before or after

rehearsals or shows. No one should leave a rehearsal until everything is put away, unless they are informed that help is not needed.

- Members of the Acting Ensemble are part of the ensemble in The Phoenix Players and are expected to help in every aspect of the production as needed. When not on stage or getting ready to go on stage, actors should be prepared to do anything needed backstage to help the production. In other words, actors are considered a part of the production crew.
- Members of the Acting Ensemble must make sure that their props are set before each rehearsal or performance where they are used and return them to the Head of Props or the props table at the end of the rehearsal or performance. You should report anything missing to the Head of Props immediately.
- Members of the Acting Ensemble may have assistance during the rehearsals in doing makeup, but they should expect to do your own makeup before each performance, unless the Head of Makeup determines that the complexity of the makeup will require assistance at the shows.
- Members of the Acting Ensemble must keep the backstage areas clean, picking up after themselves. No one wants to stay any later than necessary picking up after others. The crew's job is to help with production, not provide maid service.
- Members of the Acting Ensemble will not get involved, unless asked, in production discussions or decisions, including staging, lights, costumes, and props as well as the coaching of other actors. If an actor has a suggestion in any of these areas, they should be made individually and discretely to the Director. The final decisions on these matters are entirely within the jurisdiction of the Director and the Production Manager who have the vision for the entire production in mind.
- It takes a great deal of backstage work to give the actors their chance to be "in the spotlight," so we think that "paying your dues" for that opportunity is an important part of being in a theatre family like The Phoenix Players. Therefore, in order to remain eligible to act in the next season, members of the Acting Ensemble are expected to work in some area of production during the season in which they have an on-stage role. For Phire Phlies members, this may be done by a member of the child's family. This will normally be in a production other than that in which the actor is on-stage, but extensive help, such as Production Manager, Stage Manager, Head of Props or Costumes) by a parent in a Phire Phlies production can be seen as adequate to satisfy this requirement.

Additional Protocols & Policies

Every theatre company has traditions that are expected to be kept from production to production. Our protocols include the following:

- We expect that casting will be done on one basis only—what person does the Director think best fills each role. We strive to make sure that we put the best possible cast on stage, without consideration to such matters as the length of membership, special relationships, etc. All other things being equal, however, those who have done more to help the group in the past can be given preference.
- In order to be eligible to be cast in a show during the season, dues must be paid by October 15.
- We adhere to the "Ensemble Tradition," meaning that we recognize no "stars" in shows and will not tolerate "Prima Donna" behavior from anyone.
- Every person who comes to a production of the plays is expected to buy a ticket for each show they attend.
- Volunteer workers at any performance, including ushers, flower sellers, and ticket takers will be allowed to watch the performance after their duties are done on a seat available basis.
- The following special passes will be available to anyone who wishes to see more than one performance of a show without being a volunteer worker: The cost of these passes will be determined by The Board at the beginning of the season or before an individual show:
 - Show pass – Allows the person to see any and all performances of a show on an unreserved seat basis
 - Priority show pass – Allows the person to see any and all performances of a show on a reserved seat basis.
- On opening night, before the curtain, the Director is given a corsage or boutonniere by the production manager on behalf of the Board. This will be paid for by The Players
- After curtain call at the last performance, there is to be an acknowledgment of the production crew (individually by name) and the Stage Manager and Director by a cast member (the decision as to who will do this should be made with consideration to seniority in the troupe, role in the play, and Board membership). A bouquet of flowers or other small token is to be given to both the Stage Manager and the Director who are to be called to the stage for audience acknowledgment. The Director may wish to be called first and do the recognition of the Production Staff him or herself and should be consulted before the final performance as to preference. If there is a production member who has done an exceptional job for the show (fantasy makeup, extensive hair work, props above and beyond), that person may also be called to the stage and given a gift of flowers. The giving and opening of gifts while the audience is still in attendance is not allowed, however.