**UNIT:** STAGE MANAGEMENT

**CREATOR**: BRIANA SHIPLEY

**LEARNING LEVEL:** BEGINNING

**PRIOR EXPERIENCE REQUIRED:** NONE, BUT SOME KNOWLEDGE OF THEATRE IS DESIRABLE

**Unit Objective**: Students will be able to understand the responsibilities and duties of a stage manager by creating a prompt book.

**National Core Arts Theatre Standards**

**TH:Pr4.1.HSII**

a. Discover how unique choices shape believable and sustainable drama/ theatre work.  
b. Identify essential text information, research from various sources, and the director’s concept that influence character choices in a drama/theatre work.

**TH:Pr5.1.HSII**

b. Apply technical elements and research to create a design that communicates the concept of a drama/theatre production.

**TH:Re9.1.HSI**

c. Formulate a deeper understanding and appreciation of a drama/ theatre work by considering its specific purpose or intended audience.

**Enduring Understandings:**

 Respect and collaboration

 Responsibility and Organization

**Essential Questions:**

 How does one person affect an entire ensemble?

 What is the importance of every role in the theatre?

**Big Idea:**

A Stage Manager is the organization and communication behind a production. The skills and knowledge needed to be a successful stage manager is vast.

**Key Knowledge and Skills:**

 Students will understand a vast majority of the vocabulary associated with stage management

 Students will be able to clearly and professionally complete several of the tasks designated to a stage manager

 Students will learn organization and communication skills

**Authentic Performance Tasks:**

 Stage Manager Prompt Book, which includes:

o Contact Sheet

o Production Calendar

o Blocking notation for one small scene

o Light, sound, and stage cues marked in entire script

o One rehearsal report

o Tabs to denote all sections

 Written Final

**\*Note: This unit is built for flexible 30-60 minute lesson plans in order to allow stage crew members time to work on set construction and lighting work for school events or productions.**

**Lesson 1: Good Qualities and Responsibilities of a Stage Manager**

Educational Objective: Students will be able to identify the responsibilities and qualities of a stage manager by answering questions on a worksheet.

Materials needed:

 Already made prompt-book (this can come from your own past shows, past students, or you might need to find examples online)

 Pre-Show Worksheet

 Stage Manager packet

(http://www.colby.edu/theater/ documents/sm\_book.pdf)

 Script

 Calendar

Facets of Understanding:

 Explanation

 Interpretation

 Application

 Empathy

Enduring Understandings:

 Every company needs a leader

 Theatre requires many hands to be successful

Essential Questions:

 What qualities are needed in a stage manager?

 How can we use the things learned in stage management in other areas of our lives?

Hook: (10 minutes)

Have students play the game “human knot”. At first, students cannot talk. Then all students can talk, eventually you tell students that a leader must be chosen and all the rest should follow that leader’s suggestions.

Step 1 - *Discussion*: (15 minutes)

Ask students what was easier; when they were silent, trying to focus on themselves, or when they had a leader? Introduce the importance of organization and communication. We had to have a single focus and voice in order to communicate clearly what to do in order to accomplish our goal. The same is true when producing a play. We all have the same goal and must work cooperatively in order to accomplish it, but there must be someone there to delicate and communicate what needs to happen.

Step 2 - *Group Brainstorming:* (7 minutes)

Ask students to write all of the positions in theatre on the board, and what they do (i.e. costume designer creates costumes for actors to wear, Technical Director, etc.). Ask students whose job is it to make sure that all of these people are communicating and collaborating with each other? The Stage Manager’s.

Step 3 - *Sharing:* (5 minutes)

Ask students to then discuss the qualities of a good stage manager. Highlight answers that students give that are particularly important. Why? Why must a stage manager have all of these qualities, and what does it do for them? Why is the stage manager the one that all communication traffic runs through?

Step 4 - *Discussion and Practice:* (10 minutes)

Tell students that there are four main phases of a show. Pre-Production, During Rehearsals, During Performance, and Post-Production. Briefly explain each of these phases to the students. Tell them that you will be starting on the pre-production of a hypothetical show today.

Show students the prompt book that you have brought. Explain to them what it is, and show them details.

Hand out the SM packet, the worksheet, the calendar, and the script to all students.

Step 5 – *Practice:* (15 minutes)

Tell students to read pages 3-6 and answer questions 1-8 on their worksheet. Then let students know that you will be working on their production calendars and contact sheets in the next class period. Students have the rest of class to work.

If time allows, explain to students the need for a stage manager to establish rules and regulations for a cast. Explain that a stage manager needs to introduce these on the first day of rehearsal and enforce these rules.

Final Assessment for Lesson 1: (10 points– worksheet)

Students are to turn in their worksheet to get credit for reading the packet.

Materials:

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**PRE-PRODUCTION WORKSHEET AND CHECKLIST**

1. What parts of the theater should you get to know for your show?

2. What items should you acquire that are usually needed in the rehearsal space?

3. Who and what should be on the contact sheet for your production?

4. Who do you need to work with to generate the master calendar?

5. What should you be scheduling weekly? What dates are these going to be?

6. Who should the production e-mail distribution list include?

7. You should generate a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

8. What technical elements of the show should you be familiar with and set up meetings for?

9. Get any answers that you will need in order to put your stage manager book together from your tech director about the production.

10. Create a production calendar. (due next class)

11. Create a Contact sheet (due next class)

**Lesson 2: Production Calendar and Contact Sheet**

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate their ability to generate a production calendar and contact sheet by creating one for a hypothetical production.

Materials needed:

 Prompt Book

Facets of Understanding:

 Explanation

 Application

Enduring Understandings:

 Importance of preparation

Essential Questions:

 How can a stage manager make life easier not only for themselves, but for the cast, crew, and production team?

Hook: (15 minutes)

Tell students to get into groups of two to three, and tell them a little story. Essentially, you need to tell students a story where an actor or crew member was hurt during rehearsal and that it was their job to make sure that the person received proper care. You can make this story up or you can pull it from your own experiences, but either way, give groups a few minutes to come up with a solution.

Step 1 - *Discussion*: (5 minutes)

Ask students what their solution was. Be sure and push them for a complete answer, for example, if a group says that they would call the hospital, ask them if they have the number for the hospital handy. Eventually, work your way around to the fact that a stage manager must always be prepared and should have any information that they might need at their fingertips.

Step 2 – *Instruction:* (30 minutes)

Pass the prompt book to students so they can look at the contact sheets. Explain to students that there are usually a few different contact sheets. A cast contact sheet, a production team contact sheet, and an important numbers/emergency contact sheet. Talk with students about the importance of this information. Also show students the production schedule. If you have different versions of a production schedule, that would be ideal so students can see that there is more than one way to do it. Talk with students about the importance of running a scene more than one time. Remind them of 1min per page and 10 min per page rehearsing.

Have students read the calendar and contact sheet section in the SM packet. Or, simply look at the examples in the appendix.

Final Assessment for Lesson 2: (40 points – formal paper due in class)

Take students into the computer lab and let them work on their contact sheets and their production calendars. Let students know that these are due at the beginning of class next time. 20 points for the contact sheet, 20 points for the rehearsal calendar.

**Lesson 3: Blocking Notation and Rehearsal Reports**

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate their knowledge of blocking notation in a script and how to write a rehearsal report by creating these for a hypothetical show.

Materials needed:

 YouTube clip from show that you have given students the script for

 Rehearsal Scenarios

 Rehearsal Reports

 Set layout to give students to tape in their prompt books

Facets of Understanding:

 Explanation

 Application

 Perspective

Enduring Understandings:

 A stage manager needs to be able to provide the director and the actors with the information they need at a moment’s notice

 Preparation and organization always will help

Essential Questions:

 As a stage manager, what do I need to know and have at my disposal to be successful?

 What qualities do I have that are good for a stage manager?

 What qualities do I need to develop to be a good stage manager?

Hook (15 minutes)

Show a YouTube clip from a show that has a large amount of blocking in a scene (a good choice would be Noises Off: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91Lwrorlhuk). Ask students to take out a piece of paper and write down all of the blocking they see. After students have attempted this, ask them how the experience went. Were they able to write everything down? Why not? How can we make this easier on ourselves as stage managers?

Step 1: *Instruction and Practice* (15 minutes)

Tell students how to write down stage blocking notation (abbreviations, using a set layout, numbering in a script, etc.). Have students watch the clip again, but this time using their newfound skills. Once students have done this, ask them how much easier it was, and why. Answer any questions students might have about blocking notation.

Give students the link to the clip of the show that they are working on. Tell students that the blocking in the clip is to be the blocking notation they put in their prompt books and will be part of their final.

Step 2: *Lecture/Practice* (15 minutes)

Hand out the rehearsal reports sheet, and ask students to listen to the following scenario:

It is Tuesday, March 25th 2014, and the director has decided to rehearse Act I Sc II rather than Act II Sc III. Sally was late to rehearsal, but the other four actors were on time. Rehearsal started two minutes late, and ended three minutes over. The director wants the actor, Jim, to roll on the floor in the scene. Another actor, Sam, has been told to work with a pipe, and the director wants Sam to be able to put it into his pocket. Judy is supposed to cry in this scene, and Grant is supposed to react to rain outside of the house.

Once you have read this to students, ask them what they wrote down on their rehearsal reports. Was it thorough? Did they catch everything? What about things that happened in rehearsals that affect several departments?

Have students read the blocking notation and rehearsal report section in the SM packet, or, if you area short on time, have them simply look at the examples in the appendix.

Step 3: *Group Practice, Assessment* (15-25 minutes, informal worksheet)

Once students have grasped the concept of rehearsal reports, separate them into teams, and hand each team a rehearsal report. Tell students that you will tell them a few more rehearsal scenarios. The group with the most comprehensive rehearsal report is the winner.

Material Example:

Saturday, May 22, 2015. Rehearsal was scheduled from 9:00 to 1:00pm, but the director was fifteen minutes late, which delayed rehearsal. All actors were on time. The planned material was rehearsed that day (Act II Sc I), but during the rehearsal of the dance, Grace sprained her ankle which delayed rehearsal and required a run to the E.R. The director let the rest of the cast go an hour early because of the interruption. During the rehearsal, the director decided that he wanted a lighting special on Daxton during his solo in the middle of the dance number. Regina also came up to you letting you know that her grandmother passed away yesterday, and that she wouldn’t make rehearsal Tuesday because of the funeral.

\*You can create more rehearsal scenarios that include more or less than the two outlined above. Go through as many rehearsal scenarios as you want in order to solidify learning and give teams a chance to write more than one rehearsal report.

**Lesson 4: Cuing a Script and Calling a Show, Review for Written Test**

Educational Objective: Students will understand how to write in and call cues by calling a show.

Materials needed:

 YouTube clip of the beginning of *Shrek the Musical*

 Script for the beginning of *Shrek the Musical*

 YouTube clip of “It’s Your Wedding Day” from *The Wedding Singer*

Facets of Understanding:

 Explanation

 Application

Enduring Understandings:

 Organization of all elements in a prompt book

 Importance of concentration and dedication

Essential Questions:

 What do I need to do to personally make sure that I am prepared?

 How do I make sure that I have “all my bases covered”?

Hook: (10 minutes)

Show the *Wedding Singer* clip. Ask students to pay attention to sound, light, and stage cues. Can they remember all of them? Ask them to try as a group to “call” the show. Obviously students won’t be able to do this, so how do we do it as stage managers? We create prompts and cues in our *prompt* book.

Step 1 – *Discussion/Instruction*: (15 minutes)

Explain to students how to write in prompts/cues/warnings into a script. Teach students about color coding and reading ahead. The difference between “stand-by” and “go”. Use your already-made prompt book and the SM packet for supportive examples.

Step 2: *Group Practice* (20 minutes)

Show students the first two minutes of *Shrek the Musical* and give them the script. Have students write down what changes happen on stage following along with the script. Play the clip a few times so students can see where things are happening. Have them mark these cues and prompts in the *Shrek* script. Have students then get in pairs and switch off “calling” the show. If you have few enough students, this can be done one-by-one, or having students switch off every couple of lines, whatever works for your classroom.

Step 3: *Application/Assessment* (20 minutes)

Go through the script that you have given students for their prompt book. Tell students to look for moments in the show where the lights would change, there would be a sound cue, or something on the stage would need to be cued (fly system, moving piece on stage). Tell students that they can decide where certain elements can go in the show, but that they have to write in every warning and cue. There must be at least two sound cues, one stage cue, and seven light cues. Tell students not to forget house up and house down as a light cue.

Hand out the study guide to students for the written test. Give students the rest of the class period to finish up their prompt book, study, or ask questions.

**Lesson 5: Prompt book Due Final Written Test**

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate their understanding of the basics of a stage manager’s duties by taking a written final and presenting their final prompt book.

Materials needed:

 Final written test

Facets of Understanding:

 Explanation

 Interpretation

 Application

 Perspective

 Self-Knowledge

Enduring Understandings:

 A stage manager’s job is vast and requires dedication and knowledge

 It takes a team to put a show together

Essential Questions:

 How can I present my work in a way that shows organization as well as knowledge?

 What qualities have I learned about and practiced that can be applied to other areas of my life?

Hook: (5 minutes)

Play a test review game, if desired.

Step 1: *Final*

Have students take the written test (30 points), and then present their prompt books. The prompt book evaluation breakdown is as follows:

Contact Sheet: 20 points

Production Calendar: 20 points

Blocking Notation for two scenes: 20 points

One rehearsal Report: 20 points

Cues/Warnings/Stand-Bys clearly marked: 20 points

**Stage Management Final – 30 points**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Circle the correct answer: (1 pt each)**

1. T F A stage manager helps build the set

2. T F A stage manager must be creative

3. T F A stage manager is responsible for the safety of every cast and crew member

4. T F A stage manager runs all production meetings

5. T F The stage manager is the one who should call cast members if they are late or absent from rehearsal

**Short Answer: (3 pts each)**

4. How do you as the Stage Manager decide what rules are appropriate for your show and your cast?

5. Who should you meet with before any production work begins? What should you discuss in this meeting?

6. Why is good communication the greatest tool a stage manager can have?

7. Give an example of a situation where you as the Stage Manager would need to be efficient and organized?

8. Name 3 things that might be in a stage manager kit

9. Name three qualities a stage manager should have and why

10. Name three people that should be on your contact list. What contact information should you have?

**Matching: (3 points)**

11. If you were on a crew for a show and you hear the Stage Manager call cues, how are each of these cue labels different?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Warning A. Crew executes the cue

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Standby B. Gives the person time to get to their station for the cue

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Go C. Crew is about to go with the cue

**Completion – Follow the directions below:**

12. 20 pts, part of your prompt book grade: Watch the clip, and write down the blocking in your script (your prompt book)

13. 20 pts, part of your prompt book grade: Listen to the rehearsal scenario, write up a rehearsal report below:

**STAGE MANAGER PROMPTBOOK EVALUATION GUIDE**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Points Possible** | **15-20** | **10-15** | **5-10** | **<5** |
| **Organization** | Prompt book has clear sections that are marked by tabs and possibly color coded. Prompt book has a cover page and contains all sections covered in class (production calendar, contact sheet, script with blocking notes, and rehearsal reports) | Prompt book is fairly organized, tabs are somewhat unclear, but there is a cover page. There are some sections placed in the prompt book, but they are either incomplete or missing. | There is an attempt at organization, but it isn’t clear. There is no cover page. There are little to no sections in the prompt book. | There is no organization and no cover page, there are entire sections missing or no sections at all. |
| **Blocking Notation** | The blocking notation is clear and uses a clear method with a key. The notation could be read and understood by anyone picking it up because the stage manager has provided a key. | The blocking notation is there, but is unclear. There is a key, but it is hard to understand. | There is little to no blocking notation and there is no key to help out anyone who might read it that is not the stage manager. | There is no blocking notation. |
| **Rehearsal Report** | The rehearsal report is concise, yet complete. Every aspect of the rehearsal has been covered and mentioned in every design area that might be affected. Dates and times are properly recorded | The rehearsal report is hard to read, but covers most of what happened in the rehearsal. Things are unclear and aren’t communicated very well. | The rehearsal report is unorganized and hard to read. Things that happened in the rehearsal are hardly covered and what is there is not detailed. | The rehearsal report has little to no explanation of anything and entire happenings in the rehearsal aren’t even mentioned. |
| **Cues** | Light, sound, and stage cues are present. They are organized and easy to read. There are stand-by and go cues for everything. | Most cues are there, with a few missing, or perhaps a stand-by for a few cues is missing. Fairly organized and easy to read. | There are many cues missing, and the organization is poor. It is hard to read and there aren’t any stand-by cues for anything | There are little to no cues at all. |

**Total Points: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_/80 (production calendar and contact sheet graded separately)**