

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## THTR 492 Producing Theatre

**Units:** 4.0

**Spring 2016—Tuesdays—10:00am-1pm**

**Location:** BIT – Bing Theatre basement

**Instructor:** Michael Bateman

**Office Hours:** by appointment, directly before or after class  
if in person

**Contact Info:** [mbateman@usc.edu](mailto:mbateman@usc.edu); 415-613-2914

### Course Description

Examination of theatrical management practice building on THTR 491 with a focus on the Stage Manager's role at nonprofit theatre institutions. Course will address career trajectories, getting hired, evaluating potential employers, leadership strategies and tactics, budgeting and planning, new work development, and current field issues.

### Learning Objectives

To build upon understanding and appreciation for the organizational context in which stage managers function in a theatre. Students will hone understanding of stage managing in a professional institutional context and will develop tools to determine a fit between their career goals and the job/production at hand. Assignments and projects are intended to engage students critical thinking and analysis skills in case study-based exercises that require applying classroom learning to real-world scenarios. Theatrical professionals will serve as guest speakers to expand students' professional networks and to complicate the often straightforward examples of best practices found in textbooks.

**Prerequisite(s):** THTR 491

**Co-Requisite (s):** N/A

**Concurrent Enrollment:** N/A

**Recommended Preparation:** N/A

### Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

*Integrating Mission and Strategy for Nonprofit Organizations*

By James A. Phills, Jr; Oxford University Press, 2005

*Stage Writers Handbook*

By Dana Singer; Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 1997

Course Reader and occasional articles assigned in class.

Copies of play scripts with show-specific cuts will be made available.

News outlets: LA Times Culture Monster and Arts and Books, The New York Times, TCG's American Theatre (magazine or online), scan Playbill.com, subscribe to You've Cott Mail

## Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Weekly assignment (10 points each)	140	39
Class participation	55	15
Midterm Report and Presentation	75	21
Final Report and Presentation	90	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

Grading	90-100% = A
	80-84% = B; 85-89% = B+
	70-74% = C; 75-79% = C+
	60-64% = D; 65-79% = D+

### Assignment Submission Policy

Reading must be completed prior to class. Be prepared to discuss the reading and any interesting/relevant theatre or non-theatre news of the week. Assignments are to be submitted in Microsoft Word Document format no later than midnight on the Sunday prior to our Tuesday class. Title your assignment with your last name followed by the due date and submit via email to the address on the syllabus with your name and "Theatre 492." For example, a first assignment would have the subject line "Bateman – Theatre 492" and would be titled "Bateman-01.10.16.docx" and would be submitted by midnight on January 10. Successful class participation includes arriving on time, please be respectful of the instructor and your fellow classmates' time by being prepared to begin by 10am. Please conduct thorough proofreading before submitting any assignment.

### Additional Policies

- Late assignments and projects will not be accepted.
- Unexcused absences are unacceptable and excused absences will be granted at the discretion of the instructor only with a minimum of one weeks' notice excepting personal health emergencies.
- In order to participate fully in class, please refrain from using electronic devices for social media or any other activities that are outside the scope of the class during class time.
- Emails to the instructor will be answered during business hours when possible.

### Privileged Materials

As an essential element of the course, students will have access to proprietary documents relating to the function and future of A Noise Within. These documents, when provided, must be kept confidential and must be shared with no one outside of the course. Access to these documents will heighten and make more concrete the concepts discussed in class. Please help maintain the integrity of the class by treating these materials with appropriate respect.

### Arranging Comps

Each member of the class may request 2 complimentary tickets for EACH production in ANW's Spring season. Please contact ANW's box office at [boxoffice@anoisewithin.org](mailto:boxoffice@anoisewithin.org) and identify yourself as a member

of Michael's USC class to arrange tickets. Students who reserve tickets but do not attend may be barred from making further reservations. All comp requests are subject to availability.

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

All guest speakers subject to change.

Always come to class having read at least one theatre-related news article (not review) for the week we will discuss a round-up at the beginning of class.

### **Week 1**

Jan 12

#### **Introduction and Overview**

Reading for Discussion: Mission and Strategy (pp 20-47), ANW's Annual Report (found on ANW website under The Company -> Finances)

Assignment: Write one paragraph explaining your personal mission statement for why you are pursuing stage management and second/third paragraph on your vision for your future career.

Guest Speaker: N/A

### **Week 2**

Jan 19

#### **Going Pro**

Reading for Discussion: Going Pro: A Study of Professionalization in Theater Management, Professionalism in Theater Management (course reader)

Assignment: Write a one-page proposal for a current field issue/area of theater operation that you have not yet covered that you would like to investigate in a future class. Come prepared to be persuasive and ready to campaign for your position.

Also, review mission statement and operational overview of your fictional theatre from THTR 491; if you do not have a theatre, draft a 1-3 sentence mission and a 1-2 paragraph description of your theatre's operations. Come to class prepared to provide an overview of your theatre to the rest of the class.

Guest Speaker: N/A

### **Week 3**

Jan 26

#### **Non-Performance Programs**

Reading for Discussion: Mission and Strategy (pp 48-70)

Assignment: Case study provided.

Guest Speaker: Alicia Green, Director of Education & Community Outreach, A Noise Within

### **Week 4**

Feb 2

#### **Leadership Tactics**

Reading for Discussion: Dignity in the Workplace (course reader)

Assignment: Case study provided.

Guest Speaker: N/A

- Week 5**  
Feb 9  
**Analyzing a Theatre**  
Reading for Discussion: Mission and Strategy (pp 153-171; 189-215)
- Assignment: Write a one-page report outlining ANW's alignment between its mission and strategies.
- Guest Speaker: N/A
- Week 6**  
Feb 16  
**HR**  
Reading for Discussion: ANW's SM handbook; ANW's artist handbook (copies to be emailed to the class by Michael)
- Assignment: Outline top 3 policies (no more than 2 pages) that will be included in the artist handbook for your fictional theatre – consider tone, culture, and procedure; who makes decisions about what?
- Guest Speaker: N/A
- Week 7**  
Feb 23  
**Building & Facilities**  
Reading for Discussion: Set in Stone (course reader); Ahmanson grant application; 2015 PRG estimates (emailed by Michael)
- Assignment: Case study provided.
- Guest Speaker: Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, Producing Artistic Director at ANW
- Week 8**  
Mar 1  
**Getting Hired**  
Reading for Discussion: Rehearsal/performance reports to be emailed by Michael
- Assignment: edit and annotate (with track changes on) a provided production report to improve the communication among departments; write up to a page to explain your tactics for making sure you get what you need and what follow up you anticipate initiating
- Guest Speaker: Geoff Elliott, Co-Producing Artistic Director at ANW
- Week 9**  
Mar 8  
**Midterm Presentation: Picking the Right Gigs**  
Reading for Discussion: Reading the script for the play you will attend is strongly encouraged
- Either (a) see *Romeo and Juliet*, (b) visit a *You Never Can Tell* tech day, or (c) visit a *Six Characters in Search of an Author* rehearsal at ANW; interview the Stage Manager or ASM on the show; prepare, rehearse, and present a 15-20-minute presentation outlining the potential benefits and challenges of (a) stage managing *this* show, and (b) stage managing *at ANW*. Come to a supported conclusion about whether you would apply for and – if offered – take the gig. Email powerpoint to Michael by midnight the day before the presentation.
- Guest Speaker: N/A

**March 15 – Spring Break NO CLASS**

**Week 10**

Mar 22

**Production Disasters**

Reading for Discussion: Production narratives (collected throughout the semester – provided by Michael).

Assignment: Case study provided.

Guest Speaker: N/A

**Week 11**

Mar 29

**Play Development Part I**

Reading for Discussion: Yale Rep commission agreement template; Author?Author! by Joan Channick; Stage Writers Handbook (pp 18-47)

Assignment: In one page, outline the potential risks and rewards of commissioning new plays

Guest Speaker: TBD

**Week 12**

Apr 5

**Play Development Part II**

Reading for Discussion: *Antigone* by Jean Anouilh, translated by Robertson Dean; Stage Writers Handbook (pp 62-95)

Assignment: Case study provided.

Guest Speaker: Robertson Dean, translator of *Antigone* – world premiere at A Noise Within

**Week 13**

Apr 12

**Field Issue: 99-Seat Plan**

Reading for Discussion: Announcement by Mary McColl

An End in Sight (1988): [http://articles.latimes.com/1988-11-17/entertainment/ca-37\\_1\\_theater-program](http://articles.latimes.com/1988-11-17/entertainment/ca-37_1_theater-program)

99-seat – the debate so far: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-99-seat-theater-actors-equity-los-angeles-explainer-20150422-htmstory.html>

AEA members file lawsuit - <http://deadline.com/2015/10/actors-equity-la-99-seat-waiver-los-angeles-1201587087/>

Lawsuit undermines bargaining power - <http://deadline.com/2015/10/actors-equity-lawsuit-responds-bargaining-power-1201587983/>

Supply and Demand in Theatre -

<http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/28/landesman-comments-on-theater/>

Additional articles to be assigned.

Assignment: Write a 1-page defense of your preferred outcome for the changes to the 99-seat plan; consider both local and national implications

Guest Speaker: N/A

**Week 14**

Apr 19

**Equity & Inclusion**

Reading for Discussion: ANW's Diversity Commitment v1; ANW's Commitment to Community, Equity & Inclusion v3; East/West Players 51% plan (emailed by Michael)

Assignment: Write a statement of your commitment to your community from the perspective of your fictional theatre (no more than 2 pages).

Bring 3 examples of diversity documents you liked/used for ideas in your own statement (they don't have to be from theatre)

Guest Speaker: Tim Dang, Artistic Director of East/West Players

**Week 15**  
Apr 26

**Student-Selected Topic**  
Reading for Discussion: TBD

Assignment: Revisit mission statement from beginning of semester. Write three paragraphs: one on your standards for the kind of theater you would work at or not work at straight out of school; a second with standards for the kind of theater you would work at in five years; and a third for the kind of theater/projects you want to be working at in 10 years

Guest Speaker: TBD

**FINAL**  
May 10  
8-10am

**In-Depth Analysis of an LA Theatre**

Assignment: Identify a theatre in LA that you think you would be interested in working at (run theatre by Michael for approval by Week 11); arrange to see a show there (comps will not be arranged, but evidence of good negotiating skills will be rewarded); interview an administrative representative of the theatre (MD, GM, or Company Manager depending on the size) and a Stage Manager for a current or recent show; interview any other members of the organization whose input may be useful in deciding whether or not you would want to work there. In a detailed and rehearsed presentation (to be emailed to Michael no later than midnight the night before the final date), review the history of the company; explain your process of data collection; identify the factors you used to judge the quality of the theatre (professionalism, size, potential salary, aesthetic tendencies, staff structure, etc.); pronounce a determination on whether (should the position become available) you would work for that company as a full-time production stage manager or equivalent.

## **Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

### **Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu> or to

the *Department of Public Safety* <http://adminopsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> describes reporting options and other resources.

### **Support Systems**

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/alj>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.