

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## 491: Theatre Organization & Management

Fall 2016 — Monday, 3PM – 5:50PM

Location: *Grace Ford Salvatori Hall, GFS 210*

**Instructor: Mireya (“Murry”) Hepner**

**Office:**

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Contact Info:** [hepner@usc.edu](mailto:hepner@usc.edu)

Revised 8/22/16

### Course Description and Overview

An examination of the principal components of theatrical management with an emphasis on not-for-profit institutional theatre practice. Business and production management, unions, marketing and sales, fundraising, organizational budgeting, board of trustee relationships and artistic staff relationships will be addressed.

### Learning Objectives

To acquire an understanding and appreciation for the organizational context in which stage managers function in a theatre. Insights into organizational structure, mission statements, budgets, theatrical unions, fundraising, marketing, ticketing processes and other issues will inform and put in context the duties for stage managers, and ultimately production managers. Class projects are geared to challenge problem solving skills and to develop an appreciation of the creativity and collaboration involved in having a theatre run smoothly. This class will provide a context for the various functions and people in a theatre organization. Since most stage managers are guests at organizations with full staffs, this class will be a practical guide to all of the areas within an organization that contribute to its overall health.

### Required Text and Readings

*Theatre Management (“TM”)*

*Producing and Managing the Performing Arts*

By David M Conte and Stephen Langley; Silman-James Press, 2007 (or published by Quite Specific Media)

*Course Reader*

*Trade Papers*

Read the LA Times Daily Calendar and Sunday Arts and Books sections, The New York Times, American Theatre Magazine.

### Supplementary Materials

While not required reading, the following are complimentary to this class and are recommended if you want additional materials found in the course reader:

*Leading Roles*

*50 Questions Every Arts Board Should Ask*

By Michael M Kaiser; Brandeis University Press, 2010

*The Art of Governance*

*Boards in the Performing Arts*

By Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead; Theatre Communications Group, 2005

*Invitation to the Party*

*Building Bridges to the Arts, Culture and Community*

By Donna Walker-Kuhne; Theatre Communications Group, 2005

The Artistic Home

Discussions with Artistic Directors of America's Institutional Theatres

By Todd London; Theatre Communications Group, 1988

## Grading Breakdown and Criteria

Weekly Assignments and presentation	40 points	40% of grade
Class Participation	15 points	15% of grade
Midterm Report and Presentation	20 points	20% of grade
Final Report and Presentation	25 points	25% of grade

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

## Assignment Submission Policy

Each week students will be expected to complete the reading and submit the assignment in writing as a Word or pdf attachment no later than midnight the day before class. For example, the first assignment is due midnight, August 21. Be sure to include your name and the due date of the assignment. Before coming to class be prepared to discuss the salient points of the reading material and your assignment, envision a freewheeling discussion and come prepared to contribute. Class begins promptly at 3PM. Submit assignments via email to [hepner@usc.edu](mailto:hepner@usc.edu) with the subject line "Theatre 491". Grammar, punctuation and spelling count!

## Additional Policies

Late assignments and projects are not accepted. There are no unexcused absences. Attendance is important as it is necessary for class discussion and participation.

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

<b>August 22</b>	<b>Introduction and Overview</b> Read and be prepared to discuss Theatre Management (TM) Chapter one (pp 1-18)  Assignment: In two comprehensive paragraphs tell what you are looking to get out of this class and how you may see its application in your professional theatre career. In a third paragraph, please indicate what experience you have in Theatre Administration or Management, not including production.
<b>August 28</b>	<b>Producing and Presenting /Non-Profit vs. Commercial Theatre models</b> Chapter 5 (Non- profit Theatre: P115-129), Chapter 9 (Presenting: P.181-195), Chapter 4 (Commercial Theatre: P.75-85).  Assignment: Write your thoughts in answer to the following question: How do you think a stage manager's job changes by working on shows working under different organizational structures? What type of staff or personalities would you come in contact with in a resident non-profit theatre, as part of a presented production, or on a commercial show? Be prepared to discuss your thoughts in class.  We'll also look at and discuss organizational charts for the different types of producing models.

**September 5**     **Labor Day.** No class.

**September 12**     **Artistic Mission and Artistic Staff**

Read (From the Course Reader):  
The Artistic Home (foreword, p.1-3)  
Leading Roles p. 1-5  
The Art of Governance p. 3-9

Assignment: Look up various mission statements from theatres in Los Angeles and then discuss how these theatres follow their mission based on their choice of plays. The more specific you can be, the better. Class time will be spent discussing the importance of mission as it relates to programming as well as the various roles that make up an Artistic Staff.

**September 19**     **Board of Directors**

TM Chapter 3 p.49-54 121TM Chapter 3 :p.124 – 126  
Leading Roles (from Course Reader) p. 8-10, 15-19, 42-43  
The Art of Governance: p. 119-123

Assignment: Based on the reading assignment, what surprised you the most about the function of a Board of Directors?

**September 26**     **Budgeting**

Read and be prepared to discuss TM Chapter 10, Budget Planning (pp 211-247)

Assignment: Consider the following questions and be prepared to discuss each and the reading. Please answer Question #1, and then select two others from the questions below and write a substantive paragraph on each.

- 1) *Look at the sample Operating Expenses Budget on page 222/223 of the book. What can you learn about that organization based on the budget?*
- 2) *If tickets have been sold but the performance has not yet occurred, then who owns the money?*
- 3) *If a ticket holder has missed their performance, should you honor the ticket for a later date? Does it affect the budget?*
- 4) *What do you do with an unanticipated donation that is restricted by the donor to be used for a specific production; does it change the budget?*
- 5) *Imagine that you've just started technical rehearsals and discovered that the director needs an expensive piece of equipment that is not in the budget but is required to create the dramatic effect necessary for the climax of the act. What do you do?*
- 6) *At what point do you close a successful show? As soon as the weekly running cost exceeds weekly ticket sales?*

In class, be prepared to discuss answers to the questions, and be prepared for more class discussion about how a budget tells the story of an organization. What are the priorities? Does most money go toward artists, staff, or physical production? Is revenue mostly based on sales or on donations? What's the relationship between the budget and the mission?

**October 3**     **Marketing**

Read and be prepared to discuss TM Chapter 14, Marketing.

Assignment: You're tasked with marketing a production of STUART LITTLE. The show hasn't started rehearsals yet, and the director lives out of town. Write one page on what information you'd need to decide on the marketing plan – and what steps you'd take to get the information.

*Marketing vs. Artistic – how does it work? Who leads? What are the factors?*

**October 5<sup>th</sup>**      **Field Trip!** Class will car-pool to Rancho Cucamonga to see the 9:15 AM performance of STUART LITTLE at the Lewis Family Playhouse. Comps will be provided.

**October 10**      **Publicity and Media Relations**

Read and be prepared to discuss TM Chapter 15, Publicity and Media Relations.

Assignment: Now that you've seen the show, prepare and write three distinct "pitches" to the media that you would use to promote STUART LITTLE. Are they different for different types of media outlets? This class will also build on the Marketing discussion from the previous week. What are the challenges with marketing a short vs. long run?

**Mid-Term Assignment due by midnight, October 16** via email with subject line:

*Theatre 491 Mid-Term* (two to three pages, double spaced)

You've just inherited \$300,000.00 and have decided to start a small non-profit theatre company. Write your mission statement, and create an organizational chart for the organization. What type of people do you need for your board of directors? What staff will you need? Write a paragraph about who you are serving and why. What makes your theatre unique? Draft a preliminary budget for your organization's *expenses* in the first season. Bonus! You already have a space and will pay no rent or utilities for the first 3 years. (You will be using this imaginary theatre company as part of your Final, which will include more details and projected revenue).

**October 17**      **Mid-Term Project in-class presentations of (aprox. 15 mins)**

**October 24**      **Production Management**

Assignment: Consider the production you saw of *Stuart Little* and the challenges it may have presented for the production department. Write and submit several observations on this subject from a Production management perspective (budgeting, design, crew size and roles, scheduling, etc.). Be prepared to share observation in class, and to have more in-depth discussion regarding all of the factors that go into creating and staying within budget when it comes to crew and materials.

**October 31**      **Box Office and Sales**

Read and be prepared to discuss TM Chapter 12, Box Office and Ticketing.

Also possibly read: Scalper article about Hamilton from NY Times

Assignment: Consider and write your view of various pricing structures and discount measures used to maximize sales. Discount early to reward the buyer who commits early? Or better to start high and create sale pricing later if needed? Is dynamic pricing fair? How best to structure pricing to encourage early and consistent ticket purchase? What factors contribute to deciding when and if to offer discounts?

- November 7 Fundraising and Donor Relations**  
 Read and be prepared to discuss TM Chapter 13, Fundraising and Contributed Income. Leading Roles p. 56-58 (from Course Reader)
- Assignment: Write a few paragraphs as though you were a board member of a theatre asking for support for that company. Please indicate what type of donor you're approaching (individual, foundation, corporation, etc.). Be prepared to discuss your approach in class. Would the approach be different coming from a staff member?
- November 14 Theatrical Unions**, with a focus on Actors' Equity Association, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, and United Scenic Artists.
- Read TM pp 133-135; pp 65-70.
- Review and be prepared to discuss the AEA/LORT Rulebook, available online [http://actorsequity.org/docs/rulebooks/LORT\\_Rulebook\\_13-17.pdf](http://actorsequity.org/docs/rulebooks/LORT_Rulebook_13-17.pdf) and the SDC/LORT Rulebook, available online <http://sdcweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2012-2017LORT-SDCAgreement.pdf> and the USA/Southern California rule book: [https://www.usa829.org/Contracts/UnionProjectAgreements\(UPAs\).aspx](https://www.usa829.org/Contracts/UnionProjectAgreements(UPAs).aspx)
- As a stage manager, you'll likely learn the various AEA rulebooks – but it's good to look at it from the other side. Every rule is in the book based on negotiations.
- Assignment: You are preparing to go into SDC/LORT contract negotiations (You represent a LORT theatre). What are you going to ask for? What are you not willing to budge on? Cite three separate rules and propose a change or addition that you would advocate in the next round of contract negotiations with SDC. Explain why/how you want to elicit this change. Be prepared to present your case in class.
- November 21 Audience Development through Audience Engagement**  
 Read and be prepared to discuss Invitation to the Party (pp 10-13; 24-32) from the course reader, and read at least one of the *TCG Case Studies in Audience engagement*: <http://www.tcg.org/fifty/audrev/resources.cfm?type=Round1CaseStudies>
- Assignment: Write about your observations and audience experience when you attended a school performance of *Stuart Little*, and come up with your own audience engagement activity or idea that might bring new audiences to a weekend performance.
- November 28** Possible *In-class screening of documentary on Joseph Papp and the founding of the Public Theater in New York City.*
- Assignment: TBD
- December 5 Study Week**
- Final Project due by *midnight, December 11*** via email with subject line: *Theatre 491 Final Project*

It's time to add details to your imaginary not-for-profit theatre. Give it a name and create a logo that you think represents its mission. Choose a season of three events, describe why you picked those particular events, and how they fulfill the mission. Add more details and update your expense budget to reflect the shows you've chosen. Add projected revenue to your budget, and explain how you expect to raise the revenue (ticket sales, fundraising, etc.). In addition to your written documentation, prepare a 10 - 15 minute in-class presentation to the class describing your theatre as if you are speaking to potential stakeholders you want to engage in helping you get your new theatre off the ground.

### **Final Project Presentation Date:**

Monday, December 12, 2pm – 4pm

### **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://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety 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 [sarc@usc.edu](mailto: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/ali>, 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.