

USC School of Dramatic Arts

491: Theatre Organization & Management
Fall 2018—Monday, 3PM – 5:50PM
Location: THH 113

Instructor: Mireya (“Murry”) Hepner
Office Hours: By appointment
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DRAFT: August 2018

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 as they relate to the field of stage management.

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

Invitation to the Party: Building Bridges to the Arts, Culture & Community by Donna Walker-Kuhne TCG books 2005. Chapters 1, 2 7 3 (p.3-32)

Articles from American Theatre Magazine:

Season Planning

Property Rights and Wrongs

Fundraising and Friend-raising

Social Groups to Energize the House

Where the Show begins in the Lobby

Web & Flow

The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts by Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead; Theatre Communications Group, 2005. Chapter 1 (p.3-9)

Leading Roles:50 Questions Every Arts Board Should Ask by Michael M Kaiser; Brandeis University Press, 2010. Chapter 1

Sample union agreements:
SDC, USA

Supplementary Materials

While not required reading, the following are interesting books to look at if you want additional information about topics we'll be discussing.

Invitation to the Party

Building Bridges to the Arts, Culture and Community

By Donna Walker-Kuhne; Theatre Communications Group, 2005

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

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	20 points	20% of grade
Class Participation	50 points	50% of grade
Midterm Report and Presentation	15 points	15% of grade
Final Report and Presentation	15 points	15% 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

If an assignment listed, it is due ON THE CLASS DATE. Please submit a hard copy at the start of the class. Please make sure you include your name and the date. Grammar, punctuation and spelling count! Even if there isn't a written assignment due, be prepared to discuss the reading material in class. Think of this class as a place for discussion and questions, so please be prepared to contribute. 50% of your grade will reflect your level of in-class participation. Class begins promptly at 3PM.

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

August 20

Introduction and Overview

In the first session, we'll discuss the overview of the class, goals, and expectations. Be prepared to talk about what you are looking to get out of the class, and of your experience with theatre management, if any.

Participation is crucial for the class to be successful!

- August 28** **Non-Profit vs. Commercial Producing models – plus Presenting**
 In this session, we'll discuss organizational structure and where the stage manager fits in. Who are all those people that you might encounter outside of the rehearsal room?
- Theatre Management: Chapter 5 (Non-profit Theatre: P115-129), Chapter 9 (Presenting: P.181-195), Chapter 4 (Commercial Theatre: P.75-85).
- Written Assignment: Based on your reading and the examples in the book, draw an organizational chart of the USC producing program.*
- Class Discussion: Be prepared to discuss your thoughts on different organizational structures and producing models, in class. How do you think a stage manager's job changes (or doesn't) by working on shows working under different organizational structures?
- September 3** **Labor Day.** No class.
- September 10** **Artistic Mission and vision (part 1)**
 Read: *Leading Roles* Chapter 1
 The Art of Governance Chapter 1
- In the next two sessions, we'll discuss a theatre's Artistic Mission, and how that relates to everything, from the play selection process to the culture of an organization, and more. We'll touch on casting, working with directors, playwrights, and the artistic staff of a theatre.
- Written Assignment: Pick 1 or 2 non-profit theatre companies, in Los Angeles or other cities, and find their mission statements. Write a paragraph or two on how their programming choices reflect their mission. The more specific you can be, the better.
- September 17** **Artistic Mission and vision (part 2)**
 Read: *American Theatre Magazine: Season Planning*
 Continuation of previous week's discussion, including looking at and/or creating a production timeline for an organization.
- September 24** **The Budget**
 Discussion and examples on how a budget tells the story of an organization. As a group, we'll create a budget for a production in class.
- Assignment: Read *The Emperor's Nightingale*, by Damon Chua, to prepare you to discuss the budget process in class.
 Read TM Chapter 10, Budget Planning (pp 211-247). Don't hate me.
- October 1** TBD - If possible, attend the first school Performance of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*
 At 10:00 AM. Office Hours by Skype
- October 8** **Other Theatre Unions**
 In addition to Actor's Equity, what are the other theatre unions?
 How does knowing the work rules for IATSE and the Musician's Union help you as a stage manager?
 Assignment: Please read the SDC and USA sample agreements and bring questions to class.

Also: American Theatre Magazine: *Property Rights and Wrongs*

October 15

Fundraising

How do Theatre's get the funds they need to stay afloat, and produce plays?

Read: American Theatre Magazine: *Fundraising & Friend-raising*

TM Chapter 13 (p.305-322)

Written Assignment: Write a 1 page fundraising letter that would be part of a mass mailer. You can use a current play you're working on to discuss, or you can make the letter a general pitch for the USC School of Theatre. Be concise, but still make a compelling case for why I should donate.

Be prepared to read your letter aloud as part of class discussion, as well as to talk about the reading material

October 22

Mid-Term Project in-class presentations

Mid-Term Assignment due in class on October 22nd

The class will be broken into small groups to do this assignment.

You're tasked with dreaming up a theatre company. Write a clear mission statement that describes your new organization. Tell us who you are serving and why? Describe the process of selecting your first season, with some examples of plays under consideration. For this exercise, don't worry about the budget numbers – but do supply an itemized list of budget items. Also tell us at least one idea for raising funds for your project. Be prepared to present your ideas in front of the class, and also to hand in a paper copy. The written documents should include a few paragraphs describing the process you went through to craft the final mission statement. Early draft ideas can absolutely be included.

Presentations will be graded on how well your budget items and play selections match your mission statement, and how you present them to your classmates, as well as on the written portion. Be prepared to answer questions.

October 29

The Audience, Part 1.

How do theatres get people in the seats? In this session, we'll talk about ticket sales, and the role marketing, PR and Audience Development play in enticing people to buy a ticket.

Read: American Theatre Magazine Articles: *Social Groups to Energize the House*

Web & Flow

Welcome to the Party: Chapters 1 - 3

November 5

The Audience, Part 2

How do Theatres form deeper relationships with audiences? We'll discuss Audience Engagement models, education programs, and more.

Read: American Theatre Magazine: *Where the show begins in the Lobby*

Special Performances

Assignment: Write a one-page proposal for an audience engagement activity in the lobby to enhance the experience of seeing *The Emperor's Nightingale*.

November 12

Management Challenges, Part 1

Discussion about challenges that a manager might face when it comes to dealing with people, especially creative artists. Please bring specific challenges you might be having on a show you're currently working on, or from a past show.

November 19 Touring

What kind of challenges are faced by theatre managers when it comes to touring? We'll discuss the role of a presenter, as well as the management team on the road.

November 26 Management Challenges, Part 2.

Discussion about challenges that come up outside of normal rehearsal/performance issues. We'll touch on #MeToo, harassment in the workplace, and other topics. Read: American Theatre Magazine: *Breaking Ground*

December 3 Study Day

Final Project due on December 10

Pick a management topic or question that interests you, and write a 3 page report detailing how you find the answer to your question.

Final Project Presentation Date: December 10, 2pm- 4pm

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://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 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 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.