Theatres Across America

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Theatres Across America: Montana Repertory Theatre 2018 National Tour

Sophia Holter Davidson’s Honors College Senior Capstone Project

The University of Montana

20 April 2018
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Students go to college to better prepare themselves for the professional world. For theatre students, being able to gain job experience and work in a professional environment is the most valuable way to learn. The Montana Reparatory Theatre (MRT) is a professional company that is affiliated with the University of Montana and offers a few select students the opportunity to gain professional theatre experience by working with them. There are many opportunities for students to work with MRT, one such opportunity is with a position on the national tour. Positions within MRT vary, with some students being hired as actors and some students being hired in technical theatre jobs.

For the 2018 MRT National Tour of *On Golden Pond*, I was hired to be the Assistant Stage Manager (ASM). While the basic principles of stage management are universal, working in a professional setting was different than being in an educational setting. The National Tour includes professional actors, which means that the rules of rehearsals and shows are going to be different. Of the tour company, three actors and the Stage Manager were members of Actors’ Equity Association (AEA), which meant that the entire company had to abide by AEA rules. These rules determined when we had rehearsals, how long rehearsals were, how publicity can be done, etc.

The duties of the ASM for the Montana Repertory Theatre National Tour are vital to the production process. The ASM helps the Stage Manager get all paperwork together, sets up the rehearsal space, and get all props ready. While in rehearsal, my main job was to set up all of the props needed for the day and resetting props and the set when needed. On the road, the ASM is responsible for unloading/loading the road boxes with furniture and props.
Doing a tour of one show was a daunting task. It was the same show every night, but no matter how many times the company has done the show and how well we knew the script, the audience didn’t have that knowledge: they were seeing it for the first time. At first, I was worried about how well the artistic integrity of the show will hold up as the tour progressed: as everyone settles more and more into the show, we start to relax into it, which can cause slip ups during the show. Each show was a success, even when mistakes were made: professional actors are good at covering up any line inaccuracies and professional technicians are spectacular at trouble shooting any problems.

Embarking on a national tour as a student is extremely nerve-racking. Professional theatre is a high paced environment with very little room for errors. At the beginning of the production process I had a lot of questions as to what exactly to expect as a student ASM working in a professional company: some of my questions were answered, while others I had to figure out for myself. It took me some trial and error to find out my place in the company. If I was start the process again, the main component I would change about my experience would be the knowledge that being a student and working in a professional environment is a terrifying experience at first, but a lot of the questions I was so worried about would be answered with time, and to remember that to err is human: after you make a mistake, life – and the show - will go on.

Going on a national tour is an experience that I will forever hold near and dear to my heart. While I am grateful for all of the experiences I had, I learned that touring life is not for me. I loved visiting different theatres and traveling the country, but I much prefer working on shows with a residency. While my future is still a bit uncertain, I learned about a few new career interests I will be looking into, one of which is a booking agent for touring shows. How and why
venues are picked for tours is something that is interesting to me, especially after going on a tour where we played varying venues, from a gym to a historic opera houses and to huge Broadway style theatres. How and why these venues and locations were picked is intriguing. That is why for my capstone project, I took notes on each venue to better understand the criteria venues need to meet to be able to house a touring show.

For each venue, I tried to take pictures of the house and the stage, both before and after the set is up. The show was designed for the Montana Theatre at the University of Montana, so there will be no evaluation of that space. Along with photos, there are notes about the local crew, the technical strengths/weaknesses of the venue, and notes on how the performance went.
2018 NATIONAL TOUR

JANUARY
19  FRI  Benefit / Missoula, Montana / UM Montana Theatre
20  SAT  Missoula, Montana / UM Montana Theatre
22  MON  Plains, Montana / Plains High School Gym
23  TUE  Helena, Montana / Myrna Loy Center
24  WED  Butte, Montana / Mother Lode Theatre
25-27  THU-SAT  Missoula, Montana / UM Montana Theatre
29  MON  Lewistown, Montana / Fergus High School Performing Arts Theatre
30  TUE  Great Falls, Montana / Mansfield Theatre

FEBRUARY
1-3  THU-SAT  Missoula, Montana / UM Montana Theatre
  5  MON  Billings, Montana / Alberta Bair Theater
  10  SAT  Sioux Falls, South Dakota / Mary W. Sommervold Hall
  12  MON  Oskaloosa, Iowa / George Daily Auditorium
  16  FRI  Appleton, Wisconsin / Fox City Performing Arts Center
  18  SUN  Jasper, Indiana / Jasper Arts Center
  20  TUE  Somerset, Kentucky / Center for Rural Development Theater
  23  FRI  Newberry, South Carolina / Newberry Opera House
  24  SAT  Latta, South Carolina / Ellis Performing Arts Center
  28  WED  Texarkana, Texas / Perot Theatre

MARCH
  8  THU  College Station, Texas / Rudder Theatre
  9  FRI  Orange, Texas / Lutch Theater
 10  SAT  Galveston, Texas / Grand 1894 Opera House
 13  TUE  Brewton, Alabama / Woodin-Patterson Auditorium
 16  FRI  Pound, Virginia / Adams Performing Arts Center
 17  SAT  Jonesville, Virginia / Lee High School
 18  SUN  Asheville, North Carolina / Diana Wortham Theatre
 21  WED  Aventura, Florida / Aventura Arts & Cultural Center
 23  FRI  Belle Glade, Florida / Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center
 27  TUE  West Palm Beach, Florida / Century Village Theatre
 28  WED  Pembroke Pines, Florida / Century Village Theatre
 29  THU  Boca Raton, Florida / Century Village Theatre
 31  SAT  Clermont, Florida / Performing Arts Center

APRIL
  5  THU  High Point, North Carolina / High Point Theatre
  6  FRI  Pembroke, North Carolina / Givens Performing Arts Center
  7  SAT  Morganton, North Carolina / Morganton Municipal Auditorium

As of October 10, 2017 (Subject to change)
**Location:** Plains, MT  
**Date:** January 22, 2018  
**Venue:** Plains High School Gym  

**House Count:** No house count was given by the venue.  

**Local Crew:** The load in crew were high school student volunteers. The students were helpful, but times it became apartment that some were only there to get out of class because they avoided doing any actual work. The load out crew were local adult volunteers who were more eager to help keep things moving.  

**Technical Strengths:** This venue does not have any technical strengths. The gym isn’t equipped to handle a touring show.  

**Technical Restrictions:** The venue was not equipped for a touring theatre show. Seeing as it is a gym, they have no technical elements needed for running a show. We had to bring trusses to hang lighting instruments on, and lighting didn’t have the proper electrical devices needed to run lights, so we had to bring our own special equipment to run the show lights. The main problem with this is that that equipment we brought needs a ton of electricity to run, and we ended up 3, so the performance had to be done with only the gym lights on. Another restriction was that there are no curtains in a gym, so we had to use our road cases as stand ins, so we could have a separate backstage space (as seen in picture below). Due to high restrictions, the backdrop was no put up.  

**Performance Notes:** The performance went smoothly for the most part. When lighting stopped working, we had to hold the show to get it fixed, which only lasted a few more minutes. It was decided that it would be best to do the show with the gym’s lights on, with no blackouts in between scenes. This meant that the audience got to see the transitions happen, something that is rarely done in theatre as it can take the audience out of the world of the play. The audience loved the show and had an engaging talkback with the actors following the performance.
Plains High School seating area. The audience sat in the bleachers.

Plains High School “stage”. The playing space is a gym floor with a protective covering.
The venue does not have lighting equipment, so we brought trusses to hang instruments on, so we could have lights.

We traveled with large masking flats to help create a backstage area in this venue.
The masking flats we brought were not enough to fully give us a backstage area. Road boxes were placed in a line to act as curtains.

A different view on how road boxes were placed to mask the backstage area.
Location: Helena, MT
Date: January 23, 2018
Venue: Myrna Loy Center
House Count: 238 (Sold out!)

Local Crew: The local crew was made up of volunteers, most of them have a theatre background, so it was easy to communicate what needs to happen. They had designated sound, lighting, and carpenters. The crew helped to the best of their ability

Technical Strengths: The theatre is equipped for a touring show. They had proper lighting and sound equipment for us to use, and their designated crew members helped get in every way they could for lighting and sound.

Technical Restrictions: The stage is narrow and shallow compared to most spaces. Due to hazardous road conditions, only one truck carrying road cases was able to make it to the loading dock to be unloaded. The scenic truck was unable to be unpacked. In order for the show to go up, there has to be a door and a fireplace, which we borrowed from my father’s theatre (he is a theatre teacher at Helena High School) and painted to better match everything else. Since we could not get any scenery in, the stage was very minimal and all of the furniture and very little set dressing. This type of set up became known as the “Helena Special”, as we used it many other times on the road.

Performance Notes: The show went well, actors were a bit thrown off by not having the entire set, which is understandable. The audience couldn’t tell that most of the set wasn’t there, and they loved the show.
The stage of the Myrna Loy Center Theatre.

The seating of the Myrna Loy Center Theatre.
The view from the back of the “Helena Special”.

The door unit that was borrowed from a local high school.
The brown lines in the bottom right corner mark where the corner floor piece would be.

A view of the fireplace borrowed from a local high school.
Location: Butte, MT  
Date: January 24, 2018  
Venue: Mother Lode Theatre  
House Count: 786  
Local Crew: The crew was non-union professional crew. They were an excellent group of people to work with and they helped everything moving at a good pace. They had designated lighting, sound, and carpenter positions. For the most part, the crew was good at keeping busy, although it did get difficult to be productive while waiting for the hydraulic lift.  
Technical Strengths: The venue had up to date technical equipment for us to use. Our master electrician had a genie lift for focus. The crew being professionals made explaining the process easy and they were able to do tasks timely and efficiently.  
Technical Restrictions: The venue’s loading area is higher up than the trucks, so a hydraulic lift was used to bring everything up and down from the space. Using the lift added a lot of time to load in and load out. Load in ended up going so long that we had to hold the house so we could finish putting the set together and getting everything set up. Load lasted approximately seven hours, ending around 5:30 am (to put in perspective, most load outs took around three hours). The set had to be pushed downstage to all of the wall units in, which meant the stair unit had to be cut.  
Performance Notes: The performance went very well; the audience was very responsive to it. During the transition into act 1 scene 3, the stage manager accidentally hit the buttons that control the houselights, causing the houselights to turn on during the transition. It was quickly taken care of and handled professionally, but it did cause some confusion for the audience as some of them did think it was intermission.
The stage of the Mother Lode Theatre.

The house of the Mother Lode Theatre.
The hydraulic lift to get items from the truck to the stage.

A view of the back of the set.
The finished set.

Another view of the finished set.
**Location:** Lewistown, MT  
**Date:** January 29, 2018  
**Venue:** Fergus High School Performing Arts Theatre  
**House Count:** 456  

**Local Crew:** The crew was made up of volunteers from the local Kiwanis Club. They were very helpful, but most of them did not know theatrical terms so we had to take time to explain how the set goes together and what different terms mean. The crew were fast learners and picked up everything quickly.

**Technical Strengths:** The venue had decent lighting and sound equipment for us to use.

**Technical Restrictions:** The venue was shallow, so we cut the last row of floor panels, shortening the set by 4 feet (this became known as the “Lewistown Special” as it was used throughout the tour). We were also not able to get the stair unit in place. Due to rigging locations, the backdrop was not hung.

**Performance Notes:** The performance went well. The actors adjusted to having a shallower set very nicely. The audience was very attentive to the show and laughed at just about every joke.
The house of Fergus High School PAC.

The venue’s stage.
The “Lewistown Special” version of the set.

The set is shortened by 4 feet and the farthest beam stage left isn’t installed.
**Location:** Great Falls, MT  
**Date:** January 30, 2018  
**Venue:** Mansfield Theatre  
**House Count:** 426  

**Local Crew:** The local crew were members of International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), the stage hand union, and were fantastic to work with. Each crew member stuck with their designated department (lighting, sound, carpentry) and did tasks timely and efficiently. The crew was dedicated to making load in and load out as easy on us as possible and were extremely helpful to us.

**Technical Strengths:** The had up to date tech equipment, it was easy for lighting and sound to set up. The theatre is run by professionals, so everything was kept tidy and it was easy to find any tools, ladders, etc. that we needed to use. Their line-sets made it possible for us to put up the backdrop.

**Technical Restrictions:** The venue was shallow, so we did the “Lewistown Special”.

**Performance Notes:** The performance went amazing. The audience was very lively, laughing and clapping at every opportunity.
The house of the Mansfield Theatre.

The stage of the Mansfield Theatre. The open space on the right is the door used to get items on stage.
The set in the Mansfield Theatre.

The “Lewistown Special” in the Mansfield Theatre.
Location: Billings, MT
Date: February 5, 2018
Venue: Alberta Bair Theatre
House Count: 455

Local Crew: The local crew were union members and were good to work with. The crew were good workers, but they did have times where they stand around and needed a reminder that there were jobs that needed to be done.

Technical Strengths: They had up to date tech equipment, it was easy for lighting and sound to set up. The entire set (minus stairs) was put up, including the backdrop.

Technical Restrictions: The stairs unit wasn’t installed because of where masking needed to be.

Performance Notes: The audience was energetic, and the actors fed off of it creating an incredible performance.
The house of the Alberta Bair Theatre.

The stage of the venue.
The stair unit did not fit in this venue, the empty space is where they would normally be.

What the complete set looks like with the farthest stage left beam.
A view of the complete set.

A wide shot of the complete set.
**Location:** Sioux Falls, SD  
**Date:** February 10, 2018  
**Venue:** Mary W. Sommervold Hall in the Washington Pavilion  
**House Count:** 1,136  

**Local Crew:** The local crew was made up of seasoned professionals. The lighting, sound, and wardrobe tech were there during the show in case we needed anything. Their experience made load in and load out go efficient, shortening the total time from start to finish.

**Technical Strengths:** Their tech equipment was state of the art, as they are a venue known to house large professional tours. They have a double loading dock which meant that both trucks could be loaded/unloaded at the same time. They had ample storage space for road cases to be put and be out of the way. The entire set was put up in the space, no cuts.

**Technical Restrictions:** None.

**Performance Notes:** The perform was magnificent. The actors used the energy from the large crowd to fuel their performance.
The house of the theatre.

A different view of the house from the stage, with the lighting and sound equipment.
The stage of the venue. The door on the right is how road boxes and set pieces got into the space.

The complete set on the stage.
A wide shot of the complete set.
Location: Oskaloosa, IA
Date: February 12, 2018
Venue: George Daily Auditorium
House Count: 317

Local Crew: The local crew was made up of inexperienced volunteers. The crew was larger than other venues (10+ people), which meant that a lot of people were standing around with nothing to do. The local crew members were easily distracted by each other and needed constant reminders to complete the task they were given so we could keep moving forward with load in/load out.

Technical Strengths: They were well equipped for lighting and sound.

Technical Restrictions: The stage was shallow, so we did the “Lewistown Special” with no stairs. The crew were inexperienced which meant that most questions were left unanswered unless we could figure out the answers.

Performance Notes: We had one actor that was pretty sick, which seemed to throw everyone off a little bit, but overall the show went smooth. The audience seemed to enjoy the show, but they were very talkative during the performance.
The stage of the George Daily Auditorium.

The house of the venue.
The “Lewistown Special” in the George Daily Auditorium.

The set in the pre-show lighting.
Location: Appleton, WI
Date: February 16, 2018
Venue: Fox Cities Performing Arts Center
House Count: 1,271
Local Crew: The local crew were members of IATSE. They were very efficient and helpful during the load in and the load out. Their efficiency helped cut down on time, meaning we got out earlier than normal.
Technical Strengths: The venue has a double loading dock for both trucks to be in, though the venue prefers to load/unload one truck at a time. The venue is deep enough for that the entire set fit behind the proscenium line, which meant that talkback could be done in front of the main curtain, giving us the opportunity to start strike during it. They are a professional house that is used to hosting large tours, so they were well versed in what we could and could not do technical elements wise. The venue offers subtitles for the hearing impaired to use during shows.
Technical Restrictions: The legs didn’t come onstage enough to mask the escape stairs, so the audience was able to see them.
Performance Notes: The performance was excellent. The cast was energetic, and the audience was responsive and laughed at all of the jokes. The only blunder was that the light on the fireplace mantle kept turning on and off during the first two scenes.
The house of the Fox Cities PAC.

The venue’s stage. The large doors on the left are the loading doors to the space.
Location: Jasper, IN
Date: February 18, 2018
Venue: Jasper Arts Center
House Count: 408

Local Crew: The local crew was made up of non-professional volunteers. The crew were eager to help out in any way they could, and they were quick to learn what needs to be done and how to do it.

Technical Strengths: The stage was deep enough for us to get everything but the stairs in. They had adequate lighting and sound equipment for us to use.

Technical Restrictions: The venue had a small, single loading dock for the trucks to back up to. There was not a lot of storage for road boxes. They have an open pit and no lip on the stage to prevent anything from rolling into it. But, they do have a net over the top of it.

Performance Notes: The cast put on an outstanding show. The audience was quick to laugh at any jokes and were very attentive throughout the entire show.
The house of Jasper Arts Center.

The pit has a net over it to keep anything from falling into it.
The stage of the venue with the net in view.

The Jasper Arts Center stage.
The set in the venue.

A clearer picture of the set. There wasn’t room for the stairs.

Location: Somerset, KY
Date: February 20, 2018
Venue: Center for Rural Development Theatre
House Count: 314
Local Crew: The crew were non-union and were able to help us to the best of their ability. They were hard workers and did tasks in a timely manner.
Technical Strengths: The stage was shallow, so we had to do the “Lewistown Special”, but the stairs did fit. The venue has a double loading dock with space in a workshop for the road boxes.
Technical Restrictions: The venue had outdated sound and lighting equipment, meaning we had to use most of our own. A lot of the venue’s lighting instruments did not work, so our master electrician had to use most of the owns we brought with us and hang them as he focused.
Performance Notes: The show went well. The audience was extremely quiet, which was off-putting to the cast. Apparently silent crowds are a normal occurrence at this venue.
The house of the venue.

The door on the right is the loading door for the road boxes and set pieces to get to the stage.
The stage of the Center for Rural Development Theatre.

The stage right portion of the set, with the stairs.
The stage left portion of the set.

The “Lewistown Special” in the venue.
Location: Newberry, SC
Date: February 23, 2018
Venue: Newberry Opera House
House Count: Matinee: 314, Evening: 123
Local Crew: The local crew was non-union volunteers. They were handworkers and they were very accommodating to make sure that we had everything we needed for the show.

Technical Strengths: The venue has a covered double loading dock area. They had a paging system to reach both the house and the dressing rooms. There was ample storage space for road boxes off stage left near the freight elevator.

Technical Restrictions: The stage was small, so we did the “Helena Special”. The theatre is located on the third floor of the venue, which meant that all of our road boxes and the scenic pieces we used had to go up and down a freight elevator. Having to use a freight elevator added time to the load in and load out. The off stage right area is extremely small and almost nonexistent.

Performance Notes: Both shows in the venue went amazing. The cast was flexible and worked with having the “Helena Special”. The audiences loved the show: most of the audience members were from neighboring towns that came to see the show.
The seating in the Newberry Opera House.

A picture of the stage with electrics flown in.
The small off stage right space.

The shop, with freight elevator, is where road boxes were stored during the performances.
Location: Latta, SC
Date: February 24, 2018
Venue: Ellis Performing Arts Center
House Count: 296

Local Crew: The crew was made up of volunteers, most of whom have no theatre experience. There were miscommunications with the crew, specifically with what different theatrical terms mean.

Technical Strengths: The venue has working sound and lighting equipment.

Technical Restrictions: The stage is shallow and narrow, so we did the “Helena Special”. There is no loading dock and little backstage space, so road boxes were unloaded in the hallway behind the theatre and everything was carried up to the stage. Their lighting system is outdated and not compatible with any of the equipment we had. With the space being small, mics were not used, with the exception of the offstage voice of the operator.

Performance Notes: The rep was the first professional company to play in the community. The audience loved the show and held an engaging talkback with the cast following the performance.
The house of the Elli PAC.

The stage of the venue.
A view of the set from off stage right.

A view of the “Helena Special” in the Ellis PAC.
A full view of the set.
**Location:** Texarkana, TX  
**Date:** February 28, 2018  
**Venue:** Perot Theatre  
**House Count:** 469  

**Local Crew:** The local crew are professionals. They were very helpful and knew what they were doing. Many members of the crew were religious and didn’t tolerate swearing, so the MRT crew had to watch what we said because we did not want to offend anyone.  

**Technical Strengths:** The theatre has up-to-date lighting and sound equipment for touring companies to use. We were able to get the backdrop hung for the performance.  

**Technical Restrictions:** We did the “Lewistown Special” in order to keep our set behind the fire curtain line.  

**Performance Notes:** The venue asked for the cast to omit all of their “Goddamn” lines in order to not offend any religious audience members. The performance went great, and the audience seemed very pleased with the production.
The Perot Theatres’ house.

The stage of the venue.
The Perot Theatre is known for its beautiful blue and gold decorations.

The “Lewistown Special” in the venue.
Location: College Station, TX
Date: March 8, 2018
Venue: Rudder Theatre
House Count: 407
Local Crew: The local crew were mostly non-union professionals. Many of the crew members were a part of the theatre program at Texas A&M.
Technical Strengths: The venue has good sound and lighting equipment for touring companies to use. Their legs are easy to adjust to help with sightline issues. They had large dressings rooms with showers in them for the cast and crew to use.
Technical Restrictions: The venue is a unique curbed shape, and because of this the backdrop was not hung and we just used their curved cyc. The beams were not put up because they would hit the cyc, and because the height of the beams was not there, the top of the fire place was not installed to keep everything near the same height. The backstage crossover was downstairs on either side of the stage, through the hallway which housed the dressing rooms, and upstairs on the other side.
Performance Notes: The cast gave a high-energy performance and they audience loved it and laughed throughout the entire show.
The seta in the Rudder Theatre.

The stage of the venue.
Due to a dead camera battery, the set pictures were taken after furniture was taken off.

A version of the “Lewistown Special” without the beams because of height restraints.
Location: Orange, TX
Date: March 9, 2018
Venue: Lutcher Theatre
House Count: 542

Local Crew: The venue has union local crew members who are handworkers and very enjoyable people to work alongside. The local crew members were good at keeping busy to ensure that load in and load out went as timely as possible.

Technical Strengths: The stage was large enough for the entire set (stairs and backdrop included) to fit. They had up-to-date lighting and sound equipment for touring companies to use. The venue’s loading dock is a part of a large shop space, which can be used to store road boxes during the performance. The venue’s clear com boxes are wireless and are able to reach throughout most of the venue.

Technical Restrictions: The crossover was the hallway behind the stage that houses the dressing rooms.

Performance Notes: The performance was decent. The energy from the cast felt low, but the audience loved the performance nonetheless. The rake (an essential prop) was discovered to be missing before the show started. The rake wasn’t found, and a broom was used in its place.
The Lutcher Theatre seating.

The stage of the venue.
The loading door to the stage.

The complete set in the venue.
**Location:** Galveston, TX  
**Date:** March 10, 2018  
**Venue:** Grand 1894 Opera House  
**House Count:** 534  
**Local Crew:** The local crew were union members and were decent to work with. They were good at their respected jobs.  
**Technical Strengths:** The entire set, minus the stairs, fit on the stage. Their tech equipment was up-to-date and well taken care of. The venue has a double loading dock that both trucks can fit at. There is video feed of the stage that the stage manager can use to call the show.  
**Technical Restrictions:** The loading docks were shallow, and everything has to be carried up a steep ramp to get to the stage from the loading dock area. The backstage areas were adequate size, but there were horrible sight line issues that the company had to be very careful with. The audience also had sightline issues, as there were large pillars in the house.  
**Performance Notes:** The performance went very well. The audience was lively, and the cast fed off of their energy. The rake was not found in Orange, so a new one was bought for the performance and it worked perfectly.
The Grand 1894 Opera House Seating area.

The stage of the opera house.
An angled view of the house and the off stage right area.

The pillars in the house caused sight line issues for certain seats in the house.
An example of the obstructed view of the stage from a pillar.

The complete set in the venue.
Location: Brewton, AL
Date: March 13, 2018
Venue: Woodsin-Patterson Auditorium
House Count: 190

Local Crew: The local crew was smaller than we were used to and was made up of non-professional volunteers. The crew were quick learners and eager to complete tasks.

Technical Strengths: The venue has working lighting and sound equipment. Their loading dock is very close to the stage.

Technical Restrictions: The venue is shallow, so we did the “Helena Special”. The venue does not have sound equipment that would work for our audio engineer, who then had to use all of audio equipment we brought us. Their lighting dimmers are faster than most, which the master electrician skillfully worked around. They have a single loading dock, which is through a loading door on the upstage wall of the theatre. There wasn’t a lot of storage space for road boxes, so many were either back loaded on a truck or strategically placed outside on the loading dock.

Performance Notes: The cast gave a wonderful performance that the audience loved. The house was quieter than normal, with mostly soft chuckling instead of the laughter the cast is used to hearing.
The house of the venue.

The venue’s stage with the loading dock door open.
The loading dock door opens directly onto the stage.

The “Helena Special” in the venue from the stage left vantage point.
The entire set in the venue.
Location: Pound, VA  
Date: March 16, 2018  
Venue: Adams Performing Arts Center  
House Count: 166

Local Crew: The local crew were non-professionals, but they were handworkers and performed given tasks timely and to the best of their ability.

Technical Strengths: The venue had working lighting and sound equipment for us to use. Their loading dock opens into a small shop that can be used for storage of road boxes.

Technical Restrictions: The stage was small, so we did the “Lewistown Special” with no stairs. They had a small single loading dock and very little storage space for road boxes.

Performance Notes: The performance was good. There were a few line mistakes that threw the cast off, but they always came back from it smoothly. The audience was very responsive, mainly a child that could be heard laughing at just about everything. The show seemed to be a huge success at this venue!
The venue’s seating.

The venue’s stage.
A view of the stage and the loading dock area from stage right.

The “Lewistown Special” at the venue.
Location: Jonesville, VA
Date: March 17, 2018
Venue: Lee High School
House Count: 31
Local Crew: The crew was the same crew from Pound, VA.

Technical Strengths: The venue had working lighting and sound equipment.

Technical Restrictions: The stage is very small (and covered in decorative duct tape), so we did the “Helena Special”. The loading dock was small, which made it difficult to get our road boxes in, and there was no place that was out of the way for road boxes to live during the show. There are no dressing rooms in the venue, so the actors had to use the band and choir rooms in the high school. The venue was uncomfortably hot because the heating in the building is controlled by the school board building, which the promoter did not have access to and couldn’t find anyone to adjust the heat.

Performance Notes: The audience was small and a bit quiet, which threw the actors off. Overall, the performance went smooth and the audience appeared to love the performance.
The venue’s seating area.

The view of the stage from the audience.
The decorative duct tape that covered the stage.

The “Helena Special” in the Lee High School Theatre.
Location: Asheville, NC
Venue: March 18, 2018
Venue: Diana Wortham Theatre
House Count: 321
Local Crew: The local crew was a union crew. They were amazing to work with and they were fantastic at their jobs. The lighting, sound, and wardrobe crew members stayed for the show in case we needed their help with anything. The crew made load in and load out go extremely smooth.
Technical Strengths: The venue was designed to house large touring productions. Their lighting and sound equipment was state-of-the-art and ready for us to use when we arrived. The fly system at the venue made it possible for the backdrop to be hung. There was ample space for road box storage.
Technical Restrictions: There is a single loading dock that is down a long alley that the trucks have to back down. The stage wasn’t deep enough for the entire set, so we did the “Lewistown Special” with the stairs.
Performance Notes: The actors gave an energetic performance and the audience responded well to the performance and laughed at almost every joke. The performance felt like it went amazing for both the cast and crew.
The seating area of the Diana Wortham Theatre.

The stage of the venue.
A view of the “Lewistown Special” from stage left.

The “Lewistown Special” with the stairs.
**Location:** Aventura, FL

**Date:** March 21, 2018

**Venue:** Aventura Arts and Cultural Center

**House Count:** 99

**Local Crew:** The crew were non-union professionals. They were extremely helpful and accommodating, willing to help in any way possible.

**Technical Strengths:** The venue had a double loading dock, though it was outside and a bit small. The venue’s technical equipment was up-to-date and easy for our sound and lighting guys to plug in our equipment. The venue was easy to maneuver and very accommodating.

**Technical Restrictions:** The crossover is a hallway behind the stage. There is little storage for road boxes inside the venue, but the sunny weather of Florida allowed us to store road boxes outside. The stage wasn’t deep enough for the entire set, so we had the “Lewistown Special”.

**Performance Notes:** The cast gave an amazing performance. The audience was very quiet for a good portion of the first act, but once they warmed up they could be heard laughing throughout the show.
The venue’s seating area.

The Aventura Arts and Cultural Center stage.
The “Lewistown Special” in the venue.

The set in the pre-show lighting.
Location: Belle Glade, FL

Date: March 23, 2018

Venue: Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center

House Count: 260

Local Crew: The crew members were non-professional volunteers. They were inexperienced and not well versed in technical terms, so load in and load out took longer than normal.

Technical Strengths: The lighting and sound equipment were efficient to use. The theatre was average when it came to technical capabilities. The venue’s loading doors open right up to the stage.

Technical Restrictions: The stage didn’t allow for the entire set to fit, so we did the “Lewistown Special” without the beams and the top of the fireplace. The stage isn’t very tall, which was limiting. The houselights for the space cannot be ran by the light board, there has to be someone turning the switch on and off, with no capability of fading.

Performance Notes: The cast gave an amazing performance and the audience sounded like they loved every minute of it.
The seating area of the theatre.

The stage with the loading dock door open.
The “Lewistown Special” in the venue.

A view of the set from stage left.
Location: West Palm Beach, FL
Date: March 27, 2018
Venue: Century Village Theatre
House Count: 314
Local Crew: The local crew were non-professional volunteers with little to no theatre experience. They needed extremely detailed instructions to do simple tasks and would need reminders to keep moving forward to get the job done.
Technical Strengths: The stage is wide, but shallow. They had acceptable technical equipment for us to use.
Technical Restrictions: The houselights came on during the middle of the show because the switches to turn them on/off cannot be locked out by the light board. The trucks had to back down a long drive way to get to the venue, where there are no loading docks. Road boxes had to go up a long ramp with many turns and fit through a small door. Many road boxes did not fit and had to be unloaded outside, and they stayed there throughout the show. We did the “Helena Special”, but we had to build a new door unit as ours did not fit through the doors. To focus the lights, tall ladders were used.
Performance Notes: The cast gave a good performance, but it did feel low energy and some points. The audience was average when it came to laughing, not too loud or too quiet. The audience really perked up within the last few moments of the show; they really loved Ethel and Norman’s kiss and their final lines.
The seating area of the Century Village Theatre.

The stage with the ladders used for focusing.
A view of the “Helena Special” from stage right.

The set in the Century Village Theatre.
Location: Pembroke Pines, FL
Date: March 28, 2018
Venue: Century Village Theatre
House Count: 397

Local Crew: The local crew were professionals who are fun to work with and who get tasks done timely and efficiently.

Technical Strengths: The technical equipment was better kept at this venue. They had a proper single loading dock. There was plenty of storage for road boxes.

Technical Restrictions: The stage was shallow, so we did the “Helena Special”, this time with our usual door unit.

Performance Notes: The actors were more energetic than the previous show. The audience was lively and seemed to enjoy the show. They were a talkative audience, including the ushers; some of the ushers kept talking to the audio engineer during the show while he was trying to adjust mic levels during the show. During intermission an usher went onto the stage and was taking set dressing books off stage to show a patron.
The house of the venue.

The stage of the Century Village Theatre.
A view of the stage from stage right. The loading dock is located stage left.

The “Helena Special” in the venue.
**Location:** Boca Raton, FL

**Date:** March 29, 2018

**Venue:** Century Village Theatre

**House Count:** 299

**Local Crew:** We had the same crew as we had in West Palm Beach. The crew was better to work with because they had already done load in and load out once with us.

**Technical Strengths:** The stage was slightly bigger, but we still did the “Helena Special”. The venue had plenty of storage for road boxes.

**Technical Restrictions:** The theatre is not on the first level of the building, so a fork lift was used to get road boxes to the space. The forklift is a decent solution, but it did run out of fuel before everything was in the space which was a setback. Due to the forklift malfunction, we had to use the door unit we made in West Palm Beach.

**Performance Notes:** The cast gave a wonderful performance. The audience was a bit talkative during the show, but they seemed to have loved it as they laughed at everything and whistled during the bows.
The venue’s house.

The theatre’s stage.
A view of the stage from stage right.

The “Helena Special” in the venue.
Location: Clermont, FL
Date: March 31, 2018
Venue: Clermont Performing Arts Center
House Count: 102
Local Crew: The local crew were professionals. They were fun to work with and made load in and load out go smooth.

Technical Strengths: The lighting and sound equipment were well kept and easy for our crew to use. There was plenty of storage for road boxes.

Technical Restrictions: The stage is small, so we did the “Helena Special”. There is no proper backstage area: it is created by moving curtains to mask the audiences’ view. The backstage areas we had were small with sight line issues. There is no proper loading dock, but there were double doors for road cases easily get into the building.

Performance Notes: The cast gave a lovely performance, but the audience was very subtle with their reactions. The audience did not applaud right away at the end of the show, which is something that rarely happens. The crew members in the house started clapping which the audience then joined in when curtain call started.
The venue’s seating area.

The stage of the venue. They had large, white curtains on the sides.
The stage left portion of the set.

The “Helena Special” in the venue.
Location: High Point, NC
Date: April 5, 2018
Venue: High Point Theatre
House Count: 112
Local Crew: The crew were non-union professionals. They were hard workers and ran a smoothly.
Technical Strengths: The lighting and sound equipment was well kept and up-to-date making it easy for our crew to use. The stage is a good size and well kept. There is plenty of backstage space for road box storage.
Technical Restrictions: The stage sits below ground level, and the only ways to get to the stage are with a hydraulic lift or a small freight elevator. The elevator was too small for some road boxes and scenery units, and the hydraulic lift’s weight limit meant the heavy floor carts couldn’t be get to the stage. Due to these restrictions, we ended up doing the “Helena Special”, but with the backdrop.
Performance Notes: The cast put on a wonderful show and the audience seemed to love it. The only distractions were from the floor above the theatre, which sounded like it was under construction.
The venue’s seating area.

The theatre’s stage.
The hydraulic lift that was used to get road cases to the stage.

The set with light fixtures in view.
The “Helena Special” at the High Point Theatre.
Location: Pembroke, NC
Date: April 6, 2018
Venue: Givens Performing Arts Center
House Count: 390
Local Crew: The local crew were non-union professionals. The lighting and sound crew members appeared to be helpful to our master electrician and audio engineer. The carpenters were excellent and fun pleasant to work with.

Technical Strengths: The entire set, minus the stairs, fit on the stage. The backstage areas were spacious and had decent storage for road boxes. The lighting and sound equipment were in good working order. The venue has a double loading dock, which helped load in and load out go smooth and efficient.

Technical Restrictions: The houselights are controlled by switches and not the lightboard. A house technician controls the houselights during shows.

Performance Notes: The audience was spectacular and love the show. The cast gave a marvelous performance and fed off of the audiences’ enjoyment.
The venue’s house.

The stage of Givens Performing Arts Center.
The full set, minus the stairs, in the venue.

The full set from the back the middle of the house.
Location: Morganton, NC

Date: April 7, 2018

Venue: Morganton Municipal Auditorium

House Count: 485

Local Crew: The local crew were non-union professionals. They were productive with the tasks given to them, and they did a fantastic job with load in and load out.

Technical Strengths: The venue has a single loading dock for trucks. The stage is large, and we were able to fit the entire set, stairs included! The lighting and sound equipment were state-of-the-art and worked wonderfully for us. There was plenty of storage space in a back room for all of the road boxes.

Technical Restrictions: The crossover was through a room behind the stage.

Performance Notes: This was the final performance! The cast gave a strong performance for one of the best audiences we’ve had! The audience was quick to laugh at jokes and sounded like they loved the show.
The seating at the venue.

The view of the stage from the house. The large door on the right leads to the shop and the left is the loading dock.
The full set (stairs included) for the final performance.
Looking through each venue and seeing what it looks like, what the technical strengths and weaknesses are, how the local crew is, and the performance notes for a tour is a unique glimpse into the life that the tour company had. No venue is the same, and each venue has their own strengths and weaknesses to offer touring companies.

When it comes to booking a touring performance, the show has to go where audiences will see it. The Montana Reparatory Theatre is a smaller professional theatre company, so it can get away with touring to smaller venues that don’t always have the state-of-the-art technical equipment to use. MRT visits many of the same venues year after year and having photos and notes about each venue is useful for future tours to reference so they can know what to expect.
Glossary

- **Backdrop** – A piece of scenery that is painted cloth that is hung at the back of the stage.
- **Calling the Show** – A term for the stage manager’s duty during the show. The stage manager has all of the lighting, audio, scenic cues written in their script and they tell the person responsible for the cue “Go” at the correct time for the action.
- **Cuing** – The act of creating the cues for the performance.
- **Curtain Call** – Bows at the end of a performance.
- **Cyc** – Short for cyclorama, a large cloth that is usually white or a natural colored muslin that takes on the color of the light on it. The cyc is often used by lighting designers to add color on the stage.
- **Fly System** – A system of rope lines, pulleys, and counterweights that make it possible to fly things such as curtains, lights, scenery, and people on stage.
- **Focus** – The act of focusing a lighting instrument to its correct position
- **Hang** – The act of putting lighting instruments into their correct location.
- **Helena Special** – A version of the set that consists of only the furniture, up stage center door unit, and fireplace.
- **Holding the House** – A term that means waiting to start the performance due to patrons not being in their seats.
- **House** – A term used to describe both the seating area in the theatre and the audience.
- **Houselights** – The lights in the audience.
- **IATSE** – International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees – A common stage hand union.
- **Lewistown Special** – A version of the set where the living room section is shortened by 4 feet.
- **Lighting Instrument** – The light used to illuminate the stage.
- **Load In** – The act of unloading the trucks and setting up the stage, lights, audio, and props for the show.
- **Loading Dock** – The space where the trucks park to unload.
- **Load Out** – The act of packing up all props, lighting and audio equipment, and loading the trucks.
- **Master Electrician** – The person responsible for making sure the lighting designers design is implemented to the best of their ability. On tours, the ME is responsible for focus and cuing.
- **Road Box/Case** – The box/case that touring companies use to pack their equipment to make moving it easier.
- **Strike** – The act of putting away props and taking down the set and lighting/audio equipment used for the show.