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THTR 103.01: Introduction to House Management

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Introduction to House Management

School of Theatre & Dance

Course #: THTR 103
Term: Fall 2022
Credit: 1
Time: F 4:00-4:50, and as assigned.
Instructor: Mike Monsos
PARTV Building Room 191
243-4481 Office
406-240-9194 (cell, texting OK)
michael.monsos@umontana.edu
Office Hours: M,W 9-10, T 1-2, or by appointment
Materials: Dark pants/dress, white shirt

Course Description:

Students learn the process and responsibility of House Management and the front of house staff through participation in class and then putting those skills into practice by working the School of Theatre & Dance productions. Students will develop an understanding of the importance of this first interaction a theatrical event has with its patrons as well as the professionalism necessary to work in the industry in this capacity. Students will also learn methods to safeguard the audience during the events and the proper steps to take during an emergency. Finally, students will gain insight into potentially liable situations in the theatre environment and how best to avoid hazards.

Students will meet at the beginning of each semester as a group to have the course explained, receive syllabi and to sign up for their assignments. Class/workshops will occur once a week for the first three weeks of class to provide training and instruction. Students will sign up for multiple assignments throughout the semester, giving them the opportunity to work a variety of productions under a variety of situations. Students will receive final instructions each night from the House Manager.

In order to complete the assignments for this class you must attend all training sessions and sign up for and work multiple shifts throughout the semester as an usher or in the concession area. The actual number of shifts will be determined by the number of students in the class, but will most likely be between 6-8 shifts over the course of the semester. **Call times for you will always be one hour before curtain time.** If you are signed up for an usher or concession stand shift for a show that starts at 7:30 PM, you must be dressed and at the theatre at 6:30 PM sharp! Please be aware of whether the show you are working is an evening performance or matinee. Meeting place for all productions will be at the Drama/Dance box office.

The sign-up sheets will be posted on Moodle for the semester. Please check frequently to remind yourself of your call times.

Course Objectives:

This course will give you an understanding of the process and working responsibilities of the front of house staff at a theatrical event. A knowledge of, and an ability to understand and appreciate theatre only occur when we have experience in every aspect of a theatrical production. We fully expect everyone in theatre from directors to volunteers to aspire for professionalism and the highest quality possible.

Safety is of utmost concern. You will learn appropriate action to take in the case of an emergency, and you will learn to recognize and identify potential problems and accidents before they occur. Although theatres are becoming safer every year, the inherent situations created in theatres along with a history of catastrophic fires require heightened awareness and precautions. Also, theatres are often subject to litigation from audience members because of falls and accidents. People unfamiliar with a space or how to properly exiting or entering during a blackout are at a greater risk of injury. Ushers are often are only defense against such accidents.

One of the tenets of theatre is that everyone must be on time. Remember in theatre-If you are early, you are on time, if you are on time, you are late, and late is completely unacceptable. Because theatre is a collaborative art, everyone involved must be reliable and prepared to do his or her part in ensuring a successful evening of theatre. This includes actors, crew, stage managers, front of house staff and anyone else associated with the production. If any one person does not perform their responsibilities, the performance suffers greatly. We cannot stress how important you are to the success of the show. You are the audience's first and sometimes last contact with the production. It is important to set a tone that appropriate and professional.

Front of House staff must be at every performances for which they are called. YOU CANNOT MISS A SINGLE PERFORMANCE! Your grade depends heavily on it. Please dress nicely, torn or dirty clothes are not appropriate nor are t-shirts with slogans.

Dress code:

When working at the front of house, students will wear dark slacks or skirt, with a clean, white top. The department supplies a vest to wear along with nametags so we present a unified, classy look to our staff. Hats, t-shirts and distressed clothing are not allowed.

Course meeting times:

This course will meet on Friday afternoons from 4-5:00 PM for the first three weeks of each semester for training and instruction. Students will then sign up for multiple front of house assignments, including 7 ushering slots and 3 concession slots. At the end of the semester, students may meet with instructor for an assessment and review of the work.

Duties:

Ushers- Upon arrival, review theatre space and familiarize yourself with the venue. You will greet the audience members, take tickets and show patrons to their seats if the event has reserved seating. Ushers must sit near the doors during the show in order to assist in exits and entrances by audience members and to open doors quickly for intermission, the end of show, or in the event of an emergency. Ushers are also required to stay till the end of the show to assist in exits and clean-up. Additional instruction in duties will occur prior to the house opening by the Box Office and House Manager.

Concessions- You will greet audience members and sell concessions prior to the show and during intermission. You will interact with the patrons, providing a welcoming atmosphere and informing them, when necessary of departmental policies regarding food and drink in the theatre. You will be responsible for set-up, tear down and cleaning of the concession booth, as well as informing the faculty and staff of inventory and equipment malfunctions. The PART/V building has problems with both rodents and insects, so a proper cleaning of the concession area is increasingly important.

Each production staged in the Montana Theatre will need a minimum of FOUR ushers and TWO concession workers. Masquer Theatre productions require a minimum of TWO ushers and TWO concession workers. The Open Space require TWO ushers and TWO concession workers.

Grading:

Check-in and Sign-out sheets will be used for each production, the house manager must to authorize the completion of the evening's tasks. A grade will be given using the sheets and after comments and input from the stage manager, box office manager as well as the faculty and staff that had contact with you during the production. **Missing a call will result in a dramatic reduction of your grade. We wish to impress upon you the scope and importance of a theatrical production, and being left shorthanded is unacceptable.**

Contacts:

It is incumbent upon you, once you have signed up for a call, to remember your obligations. The sign-up sheets will be posted on Moodle, but you will not receive reminders after the first month of classes. If you have questions, concerns, or last-minute complications, you must contact me by phone, e-mail, or in person immediately. (Mike Monsos-240-9194, michael.monsos@umontana.edu, PART/V Room 192)

University and School Policies

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

From the School of Theatre & Dance

All Theatre & Dance students must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance *Student Handbook*. The *Handbook* is available online at <http://www.umt.edu/theatredance/about/handbook>.

There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class, shop time, or rehearsal with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others. Students participating in class/shop/rehearsal/performance do so at their own risk.

Due to safety considerations, at **no** point during a student's time spent in class or serving on a production (in any capacity) should non-enrolled persons be guests of that student **without my consent**. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.

From the EO/AA Office:

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). "Reasonable" means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <http://life.umt.edu/dss/>.

From UM President Seth Bodnar:

The wide availability of safe, effective vaccines to combat COVID-19 means that we are able to continue full in-person learning again this semester. The Office of the President urges every member of the UM Family to get vaccinated (and receive a booster shot) if you haven't done

so already. Vaccination provides the best means of protecting yourself – and others in our UM Family – from the risk of COVID-19.

Please visit <https://www.umt.edu/curry-health-center/corona-virus.php> for the latest health/safety information, as well as campus communications and plans about the global health pandemic.