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THTR 103.01: Introduction to House Management

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Introduction to House Management

Fall Semester, 2014

Department: School of Theatre & Dance

Course #: THTR 103 01

Credits: 1

Time: F 4:10-5:00 (*for the first three weeks of class, then after assigned.*)

Location: Masquer Theatre, Montana Theatre

Instructor: Katie Helms

Office - PARTV 105 (Box Office)

Phone Number - 243-2891

Email – katie.helms@mso.umt.edu

Office Hours: By appointment only

Materials: Dark Pants (Black) or Dress, White Shirt, Dark Shoes (Black)

Course Description:

Students will learn the procedures and responsibilities of House Management and of being Front of House Staff through participation in several class/workshops and then putting those skills into practice by working School of Theatre & Dance productions.

It is expected that students will develop an understanding of the importance of House Management and Front of House, as this is the first interaction patrons have with any theatrical event they are attending, as well as the professionalism necessary to work in the industry as a House Manager or Front of House. Students will also learn methods to safeguard the audience during performances and the proper steps to take during an emergency. Finally, students will gain insight into potentially liable situations in the theatre and how best to avoid hazards.

Students will meet at the beginning of each semester as a group to have the course explained to them, 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 for that particular event each night from the House Manager. A final review and assessment will take place at the end of the semester if necessary, where students will be provided an opportunity for feedback and questions.

In order to complete the assignments for this class **you must attend all three training sessions and sign up for and work 8 shifts throughout the semester: 6 as an usher and 4 in the concession area** (the number of shifts students have to work may increase based on class numbers). **Call times will always be one hour before curtain.** If you are signed up as an usher or at the concessions stand for a show that starts at 7:30 PM, you must be dressed and at the theatre at **6:30 PM** sharp (or **1:00 PM** for matinees)! Please be aware of whether

the show you are working is an evening performance or a matinee. The meeting place for all productions will be at the UM Arts box office.

The sign-up sheets, once completed, will be posted on Moodle for the semester. Please check frequently to remind yourself of your call times. A paper copy of the sign-up sheet will also be posted in the hallway of the PARTV Building.

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to give you an understanding of the process and responsibilities of House Management and Front of House Staff at a theatrical event. A knowledge of, and an ability to understand and appreciate theatre, only occurs when we have experience in every aspect of a theatrical production. We fully expect everyone in the theatre, from directors to volunteers, to aspire for professionalism.

Safety is of utmost concern. You will learn the appropriate actions 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 nature of an audience seeing a play, 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 exiting or entering during a blackout are at a greater risk of injury. Ushers are often our only defense against such accidents.

One of the tenets of theatre is that everyone must be on time. Remember, in the 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 be 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 doesn't 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 is 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.

Grading:

It is simple, if you sign up, show up, and meet all the requirements and duties for ushering and concessions you get an A.

If you sign up for a shift and are late, the highest grade you will receive is an A-. If you show up late more than two times during the semester, your grade will continue to drop ONE letter grade for each subsequent absence.

If you sign up for a shift, and do not meet all the requirements and duties for ushering and concessions, the highest grade you will receive is a B.*

If you sign up, show up late, and do not meet all the requirements and duties for ushering and concessions the highest grade you will receive is a C.

*The requirements/duties include: Anytime the House Manager documents inappropriate behavior during your shift (spending time on your cell phone during a shift, leaving before your duties are finished, not following the dress code and having to be sent home, etc), your grade will drop by one letter grade with each infraction.

Each shift you sign up for and don't show up, your grade will go down two letter grades automatically for each absence. (ex: missing one shift and not making it up means you get a "C")

Each shift you sign up for and don't show up, but you get someone to cover your grade will not be affected. However, you will need to make that show up to meet your full requirements.

Missing two or more shifts and then making them up later will drop you one letter grade per miss from the second made up absence on (ex: missing two shifts and making them both up means you get a "B").

Each workshop/class that is unexcused at the beginning of the semester will drop your grade one letter grade.

Dress code:

When working front of house, students will wear dark slacks or skirts (skirts should be knee length), with a clean, white top. The department supplies a vest to wear along with nametags so that we present a unified, professional look to our patrons. Hats, t-shirts and distressed clothing are not allowed. Please do not wear high heels or opened toed shoes, as this may make it dangerous to move about the performance spaces. Also, please do not wear clothes that are too revealing.

Course meeting times:

This course will meet on Friday afternoons from 4:10-5:00 PM for the first three weeks of each semester for training and instruction. Students will sign up for multiple front of house assignments during the first classroom meeting time, including 5 ushering slots and 3 concession slots. At the end of the semester, students may meet with the instructor for an assessment and review of their work.

House Manager:

The House Manager is in charge of both Ushers and Concessions the evening (or afternoon) of a production. The House Manager will have you sign in and sign out, before and after your shift, and will also be signing off for you shift after you have finished with your duties for the evening. The House Manager will keep track if you are absent, late, or have any issues during your shift. The House Manager will also address any work or behavioral problems in the moment, and report back to the instructor of this class. Please pay the House Manager the respect he/she deserves, and perform the tasks asked of you for that particular show.

* Special Note : If you ever feel you are being threatened or sexually harassed by a patron, please contact the House Manager immediately.

Duties:

Ushers - Upon arrival, review the theatre space and familiarize yourself with the venue. You will greet 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 intermissions, the end of the show, or in the event of an emergency. Ushers are also required to stay until the end of the show to assist patrons with exiting the theatre and to help clean up. Additional instruction will occur prior to house opening by the Box Office and House Manager.

Concessions- You will greet audience members and sell concessions prior to the show and during intermissions. 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 PARTV building has had problems with both rodents and insects, so a proper cleaning of the concession area is increasingly important.

Staffing - 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. If you have signed up for a show and for whatever reason cannot make it, you **must arrange for someone to cover your shift!** Calling at the last minute and saying you won't be able to make it is unacceptable. Also, please make sure you don't sign up to usher in both spaces when we have overlapping performances.

Contacts:

It is your responsibility, once you have signed up for a shift, to remember your obligations. The sign-up sheets will be posted on Moodle. Please do not contact the House Manager or the instructor of the class just to ask when your shift is. If you have questions, concerns, or a last minute emergency, you must contact me by phone, e-mail, or in person immediately.

Theatre/Dance Productions Fall 2014

Once Upon a Time in Ancient Greece

September 5-6 at 7:30 pm

Broomstick

September 11-13, 16-20 at 7:30 pm

September 13 & 20 at 2:00pm

September 14 & 21 at 6:30 pm

UM Dancers on Location* Masquer Theatre Specific **Dance Concert*

October 4-5 at noon

Cyrano de Bergerac

October 7-11, 14-18 at 7:30 pm

(Montana Rep EO Tour)

Masquer Theatre

(Montana Rep)

Dance Up Close: Fall Dance Showcase

Program I: November 4, 6, 8 at 7:30 pm

Program II: November 5, 7 at 7:30 pm;
November 8 at 2:00 pm

A Christmas Carol Masquer Theatre

November 25, 29, December 2-6 at 7:30 pm

November 30, December 6 at 2:00 pm

November 30 at 6:30 pm

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/>.