

NEWSLETTER # 163 26 September 2002

Please note:

This transcript is from our first meeting of the 2002-2003 season. As such, this letterhead reflects the Officers and Board for 2002-2003.

MARCI: For those who don't know me already, my name is Marci Glotzer, I'm the second vice chair of the SMA, and we have some board members here with us today. We have Ira Mont and Sandi Bloom. Past Chair Janet (Friedman), who is waiting outside the door, is going to be one of our tour guides today. Janet is a founding member of the SMA. We have Zoya Kachadurian here, another past Chair and also a founding member of the SMA, and Bill Dodds sitting in the front row, a lifetime member [and Del Hughes Award winner]. And about 17 other people. Rock and roll.

[Marci asked for reports from the Treasurer and various committee Chairs – none were present, and there were no reports.]

Job hotline is going well. Remember, if you have not renewed your membership, you are not getting Job Hotline notices, so please renew quickly so you can take advantage of all these hot jobs that are coming around.

Flea market, was anybody at the flea market, at the table, anyone know how we did?

MAN: I think Jim [D'Asaro] had just turned in [about] \$3,000 before I got there at 2:30.

MARCI: Operation observation. [Again, no report available.] If anybody has an operation observation that they can accommodate, please give the SMA a buzz via the website.

WOMAN: I know that I offered an observation opportunity that never got offered to the membership. So I guess I may not know how to appropriately advertise it.

MARCI: Okay. Did you send it through the website?

WOMAN: Yeah.

MARCI: I know that Bill Jones, who is our web guru, was working on the website a lot this summer. So there might have been some problems with getting stuff through. But if you don't get any response back from sending it through the website, I would say just contact one of the board members directly. Speaking of the website, anybody on the website committee?

ZOYA KACHADURIAN: I'm on the directory committee.

MARCI: Yes. Moving on to old business: directory committee then.

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ZOYA: We had a very active participation amongst Bill Jones, Nadine Charlsen and Shelli and me. We have been meeting and Bill has come up with a form that will go on the website, we can keep updating and we've been checking printer things. The plan is currently to have a directory on line that with a password you can continuously update and if we still decided that we want a printed form, even though everyone's sort of computer literate, so that a company manager on the road can have access to the directory and that it serves like a phone book, you don't have to go on line and get really elaborate to check someone's resume. We're hoping to have the directory by January. It's going to be a very short window of time once we get it together for people to put their resume together and you have to be a paid in full member, we're not sure what the cost to membership if any will be. Previously it was \$40 for the directory. Now with technology we're hoping it will be less, we're bringing some suggestions to the board. Part of the costs that we accrue are -- we send out to the New York tri-state general manager/producers for free, so it also serves as a calling card for the organization. We'll have a lot more information soon, but everyone will have to register their resume on line and even though we know that not everyone has a computer, it was decided that since you can go on line at libraries and internet cafes, that it really did cut down the process by having everybody do that. It will just be a hardship for a few members; we're sorry but that's the only way that we could do it. We're also going to dedicate the book to Cathy Blazer who really was the initiator and did it in the old days when it was a really horrendous task, so there will be a dedication to her. There will also be ads We're going to be forming an advertising committee, so if you know theatrical groups or restaurants or friends of the SMA, start to talk to them about the need for advertising. We'll have a rate sheet and all of that information. [Ed. Note: the committee decided subsequently to dispense with ads.1

WOMAN: And what's the time frame?

ZOYA: We're hoping to either print it by January or go to print by January. Obviously it will hit the website quicker because once you've entered it, it's in, but we think with the technology the turn around time to print it shouldn't be bad. Before the spring theatrical season, we're hoping the theater community will have the printed form and know about the website as well. It's been about 6 or 7 years I think since we've had a directory. [Ed. Note: the publication date has been pushed ahead to Fall, 2003.]

MARCI: Great. And along with that and the website and old business and committees, the mentoring project has morphed into a Q&A. We've been getting questions on the website from non-SMA people asking stage managerial type questions and we wondered why our members shouldn't get the same service. William Jones has come up with a great name - "AskUs" and it's on the website. We're in final testing, making sure that people get emails back to them. And if you have any kind of stage management question, we have it broken down by contract category but there are also general questions, too. If you have a question, you can post it on the "AskUs" section of the SMA website and your questions will be directed to board members, present and past, and you should get a response back, hopefully in a few days. We'll do a frequently asked questions [FAQ] page if we get a lot of questions like that, but that should be up and running hopefully by the time this newsletter comes out.

Let's see, anything else under old biz or new biz? Any other committees that I left out want to report back? Yes, Sandi. T shirts.

SANDRA M. BLOOM: They're in black or in purple; they're \$10 apiece; if you buy them by mail you have to add postage. They're really, really neat, and they're very comfortable. I wore them all summer long and they're very sturdy. We have two sets: we have brand-new-unused-never-been-worn, and then we have a bunch that went through Hurricane Andrew that have been washed and cleaned and are just as good as new. Anyone who wants one can send an e-mail to me [smbloom@prodigy.net] or through the website.

MARCI: Great.

SANDI: And if you have suggestions for other colors or something for the future, let me know about that as well.

MARCI: Okay. Anything else in the business department? Couple of milestones to share, some good, some bad. And then we will commence with the tour. Our first one on the good front: Kate Broderick had a baby boy on August 2nd, John Joseph. If anybody watched her try to production coordinate House and Garden at 8 months pregnant, that was quite an amusing sight. So congratulations to Kate. Just also noting the passing of Josephine Abady on May 25th. She was one the Artistic Director of Circle in the Square. And also Bob Borod passed away on August 25th, a stage manager who was active in the business for over 40 years. The SMA has a really nice little bio of him on the website, if you search on it you can find it. It talks a lot about his career, some of the shows he did and some of the amazing people who he's worked with.

I did the Funny Girl benefit on Monday night and I know that as of curtain up, we raised half a million dollars. Donated goods and services. I don't know what the final tally is. Seth Rudetsky thanked stage management profusely from the stage afterwards — Lisa [Iacucci?] and the whole SM team. So that was a nice little bonus to cap off a really amazing evening.

Any other business people want to discuss – old, new?

[None was forthcoming. The meeting segued immediately into the "Backstage Tour of 42nd Street."]

Backstage Tour of 42nd Street

September 26, 2002

MARCI GLOTZER: Then without further ado, let me please turn this meeting over to Arturo Porazzi, Tripp Phillips, Zoya Kachadurian and Janet Friedman, who are the stage management team from 42nd Street. And on with the tour. Arturo, would you like to start?

ARTURO PORAZZI: This is the theater. (LAUGHTER) Hi, welcome. I'm sorry; I'm a little blasé about theater tours. Theaters are all the same except some have more space, some have less and you think about the show you're going to put in there and you go Oh, Okay, or Oh Yeah! But it's great to be here.

I did this show 22 years ago, I was on the original team with Steve Zweigbaum and Jane Neufeld, and it's been quite interesting to come back and see the somewhat new version. A lot of it's the same, and to say this, it actually dates me. 42nd Street originally, was down in Washington, D.C. at the Kennedy Center. The beauty of the Kennedy Center Opera House is fabulous! You can lay scenery out everywhere, and if we don't want this or that, you send it off to the wings. (LAUGHTER) And it would just go away. Then 3 days later we'd pull the item out and use it. The carpenter at the time, Teddy Van Bemmel Sr., a legend in his own right, would be backstage every day working out how he was going to manipulate that scenery into the Winter Garden Theater which was, as you know, quite, quite small compared to the Kennedy Center stage. And it went in, literally as they say, "with a shoe horn." Everything had its place; everything had a routine that he had worked out on paper with cut outs and little toys. It was perfect, just perfect.

To see it here, different sets, same scenes but different sets, things moving with more automation here is great. I sort of wish we had this room back then. It's rather interesting to come back to a show that you know, saying "I know this show, I know this show – oops, look what they did there!" (LAUGHTER) So there was a lot of that, there was some...and Janet will tell you because she was on the show too, about 2 years after...?

JANET: I joined it three years after you. ARTURO: And there were times when you would hear something like, "Oh, does a light cue come up?" "Not anymore." (LAUGHTER) "Remember when this was longer?" So we would have these discussions constantly back and forth. But the person who is the expert, and I mean expert on this production, as I was on the old production (LAUGHTER) Is Tripp Phillips. He is our encyclopedia not only of this show but of many other shows, so we give you Tripp Phillips. (APPLAUSE)

WOMAN: Can you tell us anything about the history of this theater?

TRIPP PHILLIPS: Well this theater was reconstructed from the remnants of the Lyric and Apollo Theaters. It opened with Ragtime at the end of '97. This is only the third show that's played here at the Ford Center. Ragtime played about 800 performances, and then there was a very short-lived revival of Jesus Christ Superstar, it ran about five months in 2000. Of course we opened last year in May. We started the load-in, the hanging and rigging, last January, so it's been going on two years that the show has been in here. And they did a great job renovating and one of the great things that's unique in my experience is that in this theater, all of the auxiliary space, all the wardrobe rooms, all the dressing rooms, the hair department, the stage manager's office, the crew heads, all that, they're in the basement, one level down. I just did a show at the St. James before here, and you had to go up six or seven flights to get to the dressing rooms stage left. In this show, whenever the dancers are not on stage, they're usually changing clothes so it's great for them to cut that down to one flight of stairs, and it also makes the backstage a little more civilized. It's a really big stage as you can see, really deep, it goes about 56 feet deep and about 42, 44 feet wide. Those steps that you see all the way in the back, if you haven't seen the show, the steps play in the finale and they store up against the back wall, but as Arturo says, it's great to have the space so we can do the show really well. I think...I'm pretty sure right now it's the biggest company on Broadway, we've got 56 actors in the show, with SMs that's 60 Equity contracts, It's a 24 piece orchestra, 23 plus the conductor. We have 25 on the wardrobe staff, which is quite a few -- 3

supervisors and 22 dressers, which is what it takes, because when all 36 of the chorus is changing, like in the finale, they do the ballet and they come back on for the stair dance, about a minute later, in completely different costumes and shoes, it takes a crew that size to do it. There are also 10 hairdressers and 11 carpenters - people ask this at Q & As all the time. (LAUGHTER) There are 4 guys on the rail, 1 guy hitting the button for the automation; about 60 to 70% of the rail cues are automated and the other 30 to 40% manual by three guys pulling ropes the old-fashioned way. So there are 4 guys who handle those cues. 1 guy in the basement, who does deck automation, hits the buttons for that stuff, and then we have 6 carpenters on the stage, 3 on each side of the stage usually to handle everything else. We have 6 prop men, 3 on each side of the stage. There are several things like two pianos that require all six of the prop men to bring it in, and what else? 5 electricians, the light board is run from right up there in that box behind that red velour masking. I don't know why they chose that specific locale; it's not a very good seat. There's one deck electrician and there are three follow spots all the way across the top there, there are 4 people on the sound crew, 3 are deck guys, one downstairs, and there are the four stage managers, so ...

MEMBER: How many microphones are there?

TRIPP: 60 microphones. There are actually 48 people it takes to perform the show, 48 plus their understudies, and all 48 of them have their own wireless mike and then there are another 10 mikes, they're what we call tap mikes, so a number of feature dancers and some of the chorus people wear a second microphone with 2 extensions that go down the back of their legs that are attached to their feet so that -- the mics are actually elastic banded to their feet so that it amplifies the tap sounds.

ARTURO: It's a little unflattering for some of the women because they're trying to make it look like the old seam in the stockings and sometimes it looks like varicose veins. (LAUGHTER) Very embarrassing.

TRIPP: The crew then with the 4 of us, with the 4 managers, it takes about 142 people to run the show, not counting

front of the house, ushers and all that.

MAN: Three of you to run the show, calling and running the deck?

TRIPP: Three of us to run the show; one calling and one on each side. Briefly, when we call the show there are nine cues lights, plus conductor and sound. Three for the auto deck, for the scenery that comes on and off of the deck, three for the automated rail, three for the manual rail. There's at least one time during the show when all of those nine lights are on at the same time, going out of what we call the Broad Street Station in Act II, we have all nine lights lit up there so it can look a little intimidating when you're first learning to call the show, when you get to that scene change-

JANET: (LAUGHING) We just learned how to call it.

ARTURO: To add to that, let me just say, to compliment the original stage managers, that the show is very well laid out. They have taken into consideration all the little internal moves that have to be done, like tabs that have to get out of the way so the scenery can roll, they've placed it just so, it's very, very safe. I can call a show, but to sit there, and know someone else set this up...and you're like, "Okay, what does this do?" You're afraid to throw that switch even though it says what it's going to do, you're still afraid because you question why is the cue important on that word? Eventually you find out it's really not important on that word as it is a safe time to do it. Nobody's looking, it's only a preset. There's a lot of presets going on.

TRIPP: That the audience never sees.
ARTURO: It's laid out very very well.
We've been here...I've been here since
August 3rd and the show runs smooth,
and clean. I can't say we have had any
trouble at all.

TRIPP: I mean we've stopped the show I think 3 times, I think 2 or 3 times in eighteen months, one time because our Dorothy Brock literally got sick and one time we had a major problem with the automated rail, we lost power to all the scenic pieces, which is one of those things you really can't foresee. But as far as what Arturo says, yes, we're very lucky but also it's very safely set out, it's very important because of the amount of cues, the ladders that come in and out in the wings, the "Buffalo" cars coming in from above and all that sort of stuff, so

we've been lucky, the only real accidents we've had have been dancers slipping on the deck, and even then those are not really serious, we haven't had any real safety-related injuries.

ARTURO: The crew too is quite attentive, and they're quite wonderful to deal with. There's none of that oldworld attitude, "You want what?" They're really so nice. They're right there for you. It's such a pleasure to come here and do something that's going to work all the time.

TRIPP: We're very lucky with our crew and you don't -- for the most part, have any say in who those people are, so it truly is luck that we have such a good group of people running our show. Do you guys have any other questions about the show that we can answer?

ZOYA: I don't know if you want to generally advertise this, but if you go to the Equity website you'll learn this anyway, on and off throughout the Broadway community you can get Equity rush tickets for some shows. At the moment we're one of them, you can get a \$26 ticket. There are a limited number and you can't get them on a Saturday night but you probably can get a seat.

TRIPP: And that's 7:30, at the ½- hour. ZOYA: It's literally rush at half hour. TRIPP: Just show your union card. WOMAN: How long did it take to tech?

TRIPP: We rehearsed the show for 5 weeks in the studio, the first week it was just dancers. After that it was the entire company. And then we started on a Monday, we teched the show for 2 weeks and 2 days, sixteen days, we had our first preview on that Wednesday night, and it took almost two weeks to get through the whole show. And also the logistics of the wardrobe changes were very very complicated, the amount of them and how quick they are. As Arturo said, this is a revival, obviously, but there's a lot of new material. There were three songs that were not in the original that were put into this production. There's a lot of new choreography. There are new scenic designs, it was a new costume designs, a new lighting design - it was all new designers whose idea was to look at it fresh. So even though the show was known as an entity that works, it was,

quote, a fresh look, and that required some time, you know, to set. We were very lucky and so we had...we actually had the Monday and Tuesday to do two run-throughs; you know, sometimes we don't get any run-throughs, you just put it up there in front of an audience and that's the first time you do a run-through, so they gave us the time to do that. And we continued to work all through previews, the first week was previews, making changes, fixes and little cuts, a lot of little dance stuff that had to change but you know, it's certainly not quite the same thing as starting with a new show where the material was changing; for the most part things did not change significantly but the tech production, the lighting, was fiddling all through previews. And also since we were the final show to open this last season, the season that ended a year ago May, as soon as we opened, I mean immediately after we opened, there was a rush of things that had to get put together. The cast album, of course, and then we were the number that opened the Tonys, so we filmed that until 4:30 in the morning on a Wednesday morning in the subways and then we came in and did two shows that day. We also made a commercial the week after we opened and we were on the "Rosie" show and the "Today" show, all that stuff. All that was in the first eight weeks of the show and of course that's when your understudies are the least prepared, when they're least ready to go on, and that's when people start dropping with illness and fatigue and all that stuff. It was particularly difficult because we still had people who needed to see us who vote for the Tonys and all those other awards. But there was a certain cache to opening late in the season, getting the Tonys, getting to open the Tonys, it was really amazing.

JANET: I got out my old calling script, and in the original show they had 114 light cues. This one has almost 500 light cues.

TRIPP: It's a challenging show, a busy show, which for me, having done it for a long time, makes it more fun than when it's not a busy show, because that's part of it, to stay alert when you're doing it time after time. And also the show is very musical so the show is called out of a count script. You know, some of our shows, I think Les Miz is calling it out of

the score; I've done it both ways. We have a lot of dance music in this show, a lot of tap music that's not vocal so you have to be fairly musical, you have to be able to keep the counts while you flip the lights and call the cues, and everything is timed so that the light cue has to land at the end of a number or on a certain phrase in the music so that's something that makes it a little challenging.

ARTURO: That has a lot to do with the robotic lights because they take time to react and to get to where you want. So you may be calling a bump earlier than you want to because they have to land at the same time. It's very well laid

TRIPP: So I think it makes it fun. Sometimes it's like, you know, doing two different things at once. I think one of the reasons the show has been successful... it's one of the biggest shows physically with the costumes and all that, and I think the audience gets their money's worth. There's a lot of entertainment. There's a certain satisfaction to a show that's very small and very intimate, but when you want to see an old-fashioned big musical -

ARTURO: And it has a good address. (LAUGHTER)

MARCI: Are you still in understudy rehearsals on a regular basis?

TRIPP: We're trying not to be now because our understudies are really well prepared. We have a little rehearsal tomorrow in the afternoon - we're replacing someone next week, so we're having a put-in for him tomorrow. Since Arturo's been here what we're trying to do, what I'm pushing for is ... for most roles we have 2 understudies, 3 in a couple of cases. Outside of someone coming in who has to learn the show we're trying to get two cycles of understudy rehearsals every three weeks so that every cast gets rehearsed every six weeks, which is what you're required to do in the Equity book. All our covers, 95 percent of them have been on many times, they just need to keep it in their minds, they don't need to be drilled over and over.

ARTURO: The situation with the understudies, well, I'm kind of the new kid on the block. It's been interesting to see what they have, what they don't have, much like race horses, they're dying to get out on the track and just go and run the distance, not thinking that

they really have to pace themselves. Some of them just come out there and they just go. They forget that they're not in balance with everybody else who has been doing the show nightly. The other actors are like, "That's not what we do." (LAUGHTER) But it's been interesting to see them all on, and I have seen them all except one. They have different...different levels of where they are in the role and each one brings something to the role. Some of them don't bring enough and that's because of direction they have or have not received. The other problem is that Mark Bramble, who I personally have not worked with since 22 years ago, and who is not here, he has given specific directions and the understudies, have gotten some direction from Karen (Armstrong, the PSM prior to Arturo). But, they've been rehearsing and rehearsing and rehearsing; they've been doing special events and they've been going on when someone's sick... there has not been real concentration to really think about what they're going to do. We started to do that just last week, I took a few of them, I said, "This is not about whether you know your roles or not, it's about what you are doing. Let's just concentrate on when you go out there; do you fit in with what everyone else is doing?" It was interesting; it pulled some people back and it made some people juice it up; so that they would be more in sync with the regular cast. They appreciated having that time instead of being drilled with do you know this or do you know where you enter or can you do this number? Now when they are told with some notice that they're going on, they have a sense of, "Okay, I want to work on this and make this happen." It's been very successful. A lot of them have taken the notes and have grown. It's been great to see. There are some that just...you know.... (LAUGHTER)

MAN: How many swings do you have to players?

TRIPP: We have 6 swings, 4 women 2 men, one of whom includes the dance captain, who's been on before. And then we have 2 understudies, one man and one woman who cover, between them, 5 principal roles, and - standbys. Of the six swings, it's rare that someone's not on. We haven't had...I think since...I

think this calendar year we had three shows where there wasn't someone out, because when you take a company, and someone has a vacation every week except for holiday weeks, and leaves of absence, physical problems, people get injured obviously -

MAN: Do you go short or adjusted often? TRIPP: We go in cycles with that. Last Saturday we did split shows both shows Saturday.

ARTURO: 7 people were out. MAN: How many people short were you?

TRIPP: Well technically speaking we were short 2, one and a half really, because Kelli [Barclay, dance captain] does a part in the show when she has to go on. But the audience would never know that, you would have to know the show so well to see that because the cast is so big, the ensemble is 36, then there's the four principals dancing, so when you have 40 people in a dance number and instead there are 37 or 38 - and our dance captain is wonderful, she has been great, she knows the show inside and out, so we have what we need to be covered, you know what you need to do to properly space everything out. The hardest thing to resolve is wardrobe, but they've all been very good about accommodating. Sometimes - often - we have a split show and we say this understudy or this swing will do so-andso, so let's get somebody else to do that next scene because it's more important that we have that body than the other body, so there's a lot of jumping around, a lot of split tracks to plan for.

MAN: And is it you guys, the dance captain and the music director or there are residents or associates in house?

TRIPP: It's us.

MAN: Bless your hearts. (LAUGHTER) TRIPP: I can't imagine it being any

ARTURO: I think everything is workable. But different. You know, you either are working harder or a little less and you either say, "Oh by the way there's a problem," or "There's a problem and I have to deal with it." Either or. As long as it's addressed, the show is maintained.

ZOYA: That's the bad thing about us all being new to the show, but they are so bright, I mean, when we have to split a part they're right there, somebody knows that they're not going to have a

part, that they're not going on. I mean it's all spelled out but their absorption rate is wonderful whether they're new or if they've been in that track before. I'm amazed.

TRIPP: It's rare that an understudy will have to go on and do a split show. We make very detailed track sheets so that when we have split shows everyone can follow the tracks, who does what, we even have all those little things on there like, "Erica does the plie at the end of the second part of the ballet." But for the most part, most of the combinations—we've done over 600 shows, 700 shows, that it wouldn't be very valuable for the actors in understudy rehearsals.

WOMAN: Tell us about...since 3 of the 4 of you are also fairly new to the show, tell us about your adjustment to the show. What were your put-ins like?

JANET: Well you know, stage managers never get to rehearse except in front of an audience, so right away you're ... calling, it's a real challenge, there's a moment when you get it, you know, and then you're okay. And learning the deck on stage left and right is fairly routine; it was easier for me because I knew the show. I think — I won't speak for Zoya but I think she got thrown in on stage right because it's the harder of the deck jobs and she'd never been on the show before, so she was learning cues but they didn't mean anything to her.

ZOYA: I came in and it was four o'clock and I started at six. I'd seen the show in the opening week. I knew the show a little, but I certainly didn't know the show. I was backstage running and I didn't see the show until, I think, 5 or 6 performances after I was backstage. There's a "Poppy and Iris" number, and because of where I had to be on the deck, I had no idea, I sat there and went, "There are poppies and irises in the show!" (LAUGHTER) So I mean that's how blind it was for me running it, and once I saw it, my learning level went up. But we also have a woman here who we should introduce, Patty Lyons, who is a sub now on the show, so she's doing the same thing that we were doing.

JANET: And from my experience, when I was learning to call the show, Arturo touched on this a little earlier, I had in my mind where things were supposed to happen. Also even though it's 20 years ago and if you work on a

show for 3 1/2 years, it's in you some place, you know. So I had the same thing, "No, there's supposed to be a cue here," "No, what's that doing there," you know, and of course as I said, you know there are an enormous number of light cues, and I'm not sure how Tripp feels about this but the most frustrating thing in the show is...I'm going to take a stab, 75% of the cues are bumps-

TRIPP: A lot of zero counts.

ZOYA: Anyway my experience coming onto the show is that it's the most remarkable crew and cast and they've all been incredibly warm, welcoming and supportive, especially supportive of us just learning their names. The ensemble women each wear 3 wigs in the show and then they have their own hair colors so you see them out of costume and out of wig, you have no idea that they're the redhead. The second week we had a put in rehearsal and the women came on stage and Janet and I just both went, "Who are they?" (LAUGHTER) So it's very difficult.

JANET: My personal approach has always been to learn the stage hands first since they're the ones you need as your best friends. (LAUGHTER) And they have, all the stagehands have been incredibly helpful, supportive and, you know, they're struggling through listening to three people learning to call the show in several weeks and there were a couple times where you threw a light wrong and they didn't take it because they knew it wasn't supposed to go there, you know, they'd take the cue where it was supposed to go. And that ...when you have that sense of security, it really gives you something, some foundation to build on. I can't say enough about the crew.

ZOYA: It's true; they're a breath of fresh air, especially if you've been on the road.

WOMAN: How long did you train before running the show?

JANET: Well I guess I had trained, you mean calling?

TRIPP: You had as long as you needed.

JANET: I had as long as I needed, I
think Arturo, you watched me 4 or 5
shows, and I had trained --

ARTURO: At least 3 to 4 shows, yeah. TRIPP: And you would never...I mean you would never ask anyone to call something like this before they were ready. You give them the book and you

listen to the calling tapes and they come up and play with the cue lights and study on their own, and they ask a lot of questions. When they're ready they say, "I'm ready."

TRIPP: I can't imagine someone would call this before they were ready.

ZOYA: There was pressure to know the deck because as I said in my example, the woman would have to stay an extra day because they hired me so late, so even though no one made me feel badly, I was constantly feeling if I need an extra day, that's costing the company money because they didn't bring me in soon enough. That was more of a pressure because that side is so tight, there's a choreography.

TRIPP: I think with this show you can learn stage left in four shows. For stage right, six shows comfortably. Is that true?

JANET: That's true because she left by the sixth show, she watched me do that one. And as Tripp mentioned, in terms of learning to call the show we had Karen Armstrong, who was the outgoing PSM, do a recording of calling the show; and nobody has to know how many times I listened to that tape on my own. you know. And then I would come in and stand at the desk and play with the cue lights as long as I needed to until I got my rhythms right. The cue lights on this show are very close together which in a way is necessary because if my hand were any smaller I wouldn't be able to reach a couple of times, so it makes sense but you still need to make sure you throw the right light. Arturo was mentioning that the safety factors are built in. There's almost always time...I would say 100% of the time there is time to know that your hand is on the right switch. You never have to go so fast that you can't double check that.

WOMAN: Might miss a light cue while you're looking at the switches. (LAUGHTER, ALL TALKING)

JANET: We do have enough time for the switches, and of course the tricky thing, even though we have the technology to pace that stuff there's always that section where they say "Look upstage for the 'what' and the only chance you have is when a person's calling, because you're learning it from them, and you're hoping to see the thing you need to see when you are doing it.

TRIPP: Does anyone else have a

question?

MAN: Do you have many stage hands

TRIPP: Yeah, they all have been out. MAN: Do they always have the same replacements?

TRIPP: No, they don't.

ARTURO: It's interesting, we get a piece of paper that says so and so is going to be out for 5 days, so and so will be your replacement.

MAN: Who do you get that from? From the house heads?

ARTURO: Yes. For a single day maybe nothing will be generated, but when Ron was out recently, Jamie came in, I had a piece of paper all filled out with the dates.

MAN: From the head's office?

TRIPP: It goes from the heads to the company manager and to Peter Fulbright's office. Most of the, I don't want to say important because that's the wrong word....but the more vital or the more busy crew tracks are the ones that we go for then, when someone's out, someone's always here for who's out and then there are the lesser tracks, again that's not the right choice of words because they're all important, but the ones that are not as complicated, these are what the people come in on. And I have to say, you know, I mean it'll be the case where someone will miss paging a curtain or something minor like that but I have to say we've been lucky in that we've never had a situation where a crew person being out caused a big problem, because they really do look out for each other. And if someone new is covering a track they haven't done before the carpenters come out and watch them very closely, tell them what they're doing, all that sort of stuff, so it's in general not something we have to worry about too much, they're all very conscientious.

JANET: And you'll see the same sub, someone will work right and then two days later work left, so --

TRIPP: They know the show.

JANET: All of our subs know the show. But you know what, it's a question I don't know and maybe you do; does LA provide for them, do they get paid when they train to run the show?

ARTURO: Yes.

MAN: I think they do. I'm not sure if they do or not. Normally it might...again I mean to my knowledge normally people don't come in as crew and sub. I mean, to train they just come in and do it and then the guys give them notes and tell them what performances they're doing. I'm not sure if they actually pay for them to do that or not.

Backstage tour of 42nd Street

ZOYA: We had a day stage right where we had an extra guy, we had two prop guys training, extra bodies.

ARTURO: Pinks get paid train, presuming they're doing it above board; they cut a contract for the training. The local guys a lot of times I think it depends on their relationship with the head.

TRIPP: Yeah, I've never known the local guys to come in at night for training.

ARTURO: Getting back to learning the show. I came in on August 1st, understanding that the PSM was leaving. She had given adequate notice, like 4 or 5 weeks, but she was leaving in 10 days when I walked in. So it was a little shocking to have to absorb this show before she was out the door, along with the fact that she was leaving with an assistant, along with the fact that one of the assistants in house, Zoya, had only been there for a week and the only assistant staying, Tripp, was out on the road with the tour. Imagine his face when he walked in on that Tuesday and there are 3 of us. "Hi." (LAUGHTER)

MAN: Mom and Dad redecorated. (LAUGHTER)

ARTURO: Yeah! Decoration! The interesting thing about learning the show and learning it quickly and this you should remember when you have a big production or even a small production, how you teach the show to others is important. As I said, you know, one cue light switch can do an awful lot of damage. Believe me, I've done it. But to understand what those switches do in relationship to other things is important. Just because, "Well, this moves here and this moves here" doesn't mean anything unless. It's really important that you understand if you don't move that, this is going to screw up and the show stops. That is the sort of teaching you really have to understand, maybe you can train a monkey just to call the show, that's great, monkey does that, monkeys does this, great. Really understand what the cue light switches will do at different times. There is a rather dicey cue in our show. Not until I really threw the

switches badly did I really understand what the situation was and came close to having an accident. That could have been explained to me better the first day and it wasn't. It's how you teach that is very, very important. I then knew how to teach my assistants so it wouldn't happen to them. You have to trust that once the knowledge is given that knowledge can be shared and the learning process will be better.

I have to say it was a very, very hectic 10 days with 3 of us in there. Tripp was not there, dealing with the daily work, the other 2 stage managers were Karen and Adam at the time were working hard to train us keep the show going and answer our many, many questions. I was trying to learn the established routine of paper work. It was difficult thing for them, but we absorbed it to a great degree. I think we have a better understanding of how, if we had to replace one or two other stage managers at any point, if Tripp for example had to leave to take on something grander... (LAUGHTER)...we know now how to make that work a lot simpler. I mean with anything, if you have created it, you have nurtured it along, it's easier to impart. When you come in and take it over from somebody, you want to know how "something" came to be this. If they don't give you all of that information, it's harder for you to understand. You know, I was here for I don't know how long before I found out that the downstage really isn't masonite, it's wood. They're tapping on wood. Rare African wood made by blind nuns ... (LAUGHTER)

TRIPP: It really is.

ARTURO: It looks like masonite, I thought it was masonite, it wasn't until the paint was chipping I noticed that it was wood. But little things like that, a little knowledge helps you understand why you have a certain problem that you're having. You know people are slipping, the paint's not gripping, the surface is denting in an unusual way for masonite, it usually crumbles but it's denting. Interesting things like that.

TRIPP: With a long running show it reminds me of making a photocopy of a photocopy, each generation gets a little fainter so you have to fight against that with the performances, with the stage managers, with the music, whatever it is,

and I will look at something sometimes, either onstage or backstage or whatever, and say, "Well, it used to be this and now it's changed, does that matter or does it need to go back to what it used to be?" I think that's one of the values of having some continuity, because out of our 48 people, I think we've had 18 or 19 who have changed in the 18 months that we've been playing, so it's coming up to 50%, we're not there yet, but it's coming close to half the cast that's changed, not to mention the understudies, the replacements, all that, and the conductor has gone to be on another show, he'll be back later, so there are a lot of different things going on, so you want to try to keep ... I always try to remind myself, it's very obvious but -- the audience is seeing the show for the one time they're going to see it and their one impression of the production is going to be based on that one day when I have a bunch of people out and a sub operator on the board, and there are certain things that are beyond your control, obviously, that you cannot do anything about, but you can at least try to keep that Xerox copy that you made as sharp as possible.

MAN: How often do you paint the deck?

TRIPP: I'll tell you a little story about that. (LAUGHTER) When we first opened, we painted the deck twice a week, we painted the stairs, we had paint calls 3 nights a week and it was vastly expensive and the reason they were doing that was because they had auburon over the entire deck.

WOMAN: What is that?

TRIPP: Auburon, it's a heavy wood, I don't know exactly what it weighs, it's a type of wood, I don't know exactly, maybe someone knows better than I do what it is exactly, I just know that's what they put down on the deck, and the kids were slipping a lot and they were falling. What we found is that by the third show without painting it they were slipping badly and there were injury elements, so the producers sucked it up and they paid for it to be painted 3 times a week, the set of stairs one time a week and the deck two times. Each time they did that I think it was like a \$3,000 call, because it's done after the show, it's done at 11:00 PM it takes the guys 45 minutes. so it's a 4 hour call and you know, it's a

lot of money involved, and it was just over time that they gradually came up with identical solutions. The wood on the stairs was replaced by this exotic African oak, I swear that's what it is, I don't know where they found it but they brought in all these samples over the first 3 months of the run and they would paint them and put them up left and Kelli, the dance captain, and a couple of the dancers would come and tap on them to see how the traction was and would they slip and it would get scarred up and all that and then they finally...they first replaced the wood on the stairs. At work calls they did two steps a week on Wednesdays until the whole thing was done. And then they discovered that the bottom half, the downstage and the turntable where most of the heavy tapping is done could be a different type of weight because none of the heavy, heavy scenery would have to track in over that, so that was done. And now we are in an ideal situation, they paint about every 6 weeks now.

ARTURO: The interesting thing is it's not a new problem; this is not the first tap show. This problem happened with the original 42nd Street and we were swapping out different types of masonite, the Benelex, the Bucalux, the Bonolux, whatever, you name the "-lux," it was up there...(LAUGHTER)...with paint, with a gloss or a semi-gloss, maybe with flat paint, maybe something with a little noslip, whatever no-slip was at that time. The problem is okay now. This works now. We like it. This is an old topic. Same thing happened on Singing in the Rain. What can Don Correa dance on that's wet without slipping? They tried all those things. They put it all there. It rains. Then after a couple of weeks you're like, "You know, this isn't working so well anymore." So even a test is not conclusive. If they're going to really do it right, they're going to have a deck in the rehearsal hall. They really get to work with it over time so they understand the traffic were on the piece of board or masonite or whatever substance that they're planning to have on the deck.

TRIPP: And they tried...in our case they tried not only the wood but they tried different paints, all sorts of ways to paint it. There was one paint that had a horrible foul smell to it. The dancers

could dance on it but it had a horrible odor, so there are all kinds of things, not just the wood, it's the paint as well.

ARTURO: Were they dancing like this all the time? (HOLDS HIS NOSE. LAUGHTER)

MAN: Nothing will boost your chemistry education like a paint call and an interested prop man explaining the molecules and the gloss and the semigloss and the flat and the pigment and...it's fascinating.

TRIPP: Really. I did a show called Dream that did not last very long but they literally...in the second week of previews the dancers were slipping and sliding, they went in on a Sunday night and all day Monday they pulled out the entire deck, the automation track deck, they replaced the whole deck at a great expense because the dancers were definitely not able to dance on this particular deck. It's always a problem. And the thing that's frustrating is that you always know that it's going to be a problem but you're never going to really solve it until you get to the theater.

WOMAN: Now, is it the carpenters who - I mean going from painting 3 times a week to once every 6 weeks, that's just gigantic.

TRIPP: Props did the paint calls.
WOMAN: I mean but who did the research...

TRIPP: Well, Peter Fulbright, who's the technical supervisor, that's his office, plus the production carpenter, their associates do that. When they replace pieces of the deck, and they do that from time to time because a chunk gets knocked out of it, the carpenters do that but the props are always there.

MAN: So the person you just mentioned, he's the one who makes the call, this floor isn't working, we need to replace it?

TRIPP: Well you know, actually the actors will be letting you know.

(LAUGHTER) There were many meetings during previews with the managers and the tech supervisor, the stage manager and the dance captain and choreographer, there are a lot of different departments that are involved. The technical supervisor, Peter Fulbright, of Tech Production Services, the majority of their work is done at the beginning of the first scene on opening night. That's not to say that they're done, they're on

call when we need them, when there's a problem. For example, a few months ago we decided that the big dime that David had been dancing on for a year, it needed to be changed, so we approached Peter's office and asked them to replace that, then the general manager's office has to say yea or nay to that, so it's an ongoing talk, an ongoing relationship with that office.

WOMAN: How often does the choreographer or director come around?

TRIPP: Mark Bramble is the director and co-writer, he's on vacation right now for a few weeks but ...

ARTURO: He was just here early September, late August?

TRIPP: September 5th, something like

ARTURO: We had started rehearsals for the new understudies.

TRIPP: That's what it was. He normally would come by every 3 to 4 weeks, it would be a rare month when he didn't come by and if someone - he's come to a few understudy rehearsals, he's come to a few first performances to see people. Randy Skinner is available to us when we need him. He doesn't see the show as much but if we ask him to he will. He's been really great; Randy's been great about coming in to choreograph special events. They're both here and both accessible, I can get Randy on the phone or by email, and Mark checks in with us all the time. I took some time off this summer to work with them mounting the tour. They're very accessible to us when we have questions or need them for anything.

WOMAN: Have you developed a relationship dealing with these people, for the stage managers who have come in "new?"

ARTURO: Dealing with which people?

WOMAN: The director, the choreographer.

ARTURO: Well as I said, I haven't worked with Mark Bramble as a director, I knew him as the writer's assistant 23 years ago, so basically he walked into the room and I saw him and went, "Boy, we've changed, haven't we?" (LAUGHTER) It's a very interesting situation from the standpoint that there are things that in the show I personally didn't like the first time. A lot of the blocking is the same blocking; a lot of direction is the same

direction. There are performances too, that I don't care for. But my job is to maintain the show. When I questioned this or that with the director, he says, "No, this is what I want. It's what I like." Then, I say, "Okay, I like it too." (LAUGHTER) You know, with Tripp, having just worked with Mark, I would check with Tripp on everything, "What do you think of this? What do you think of that? What is Mark's intention here? Tripp's a great sounding board because he does have that history. Our relationship has been quite open and I am able to express my opinion; and with Mark Bramble too, Mark would say, "Well, I'd like to do this and this and this, what do you think?" ...it's been a nice, nice relationship, open. Again I have the advantage of Tripp as a sounding board, and it's been very, very comfortable, quite frankly. Kelli, who's the dance captain, is so honest and just so observant. It's just like, "Ah, ah, I saw that, yeah, you know what I'm talking about." "Did you see what was happening on that last row there?" I'm saying, "I didn't even get past the second row, you're all the way six rows back about somebody?" But she sees it. She has such a good eye, she catches everything. She's very sharp and quick. It's wonderful to have your dance captain be right there with you. Your dance captain, your swings, they are your main tools. They keep that show going with you. They are out there. They really know the ins and outs of the show, about the choreography, not just the dancing choreography but some of the stage choreography, the scenery and costumes they'll tell you, "You know, it would be better if it does this and it goes that way because then this can happen..." They actually walk it in performance. You can walk it as the stage manager but you know you're not going to get in the costume; you're not dodging scenery to get someplace. So they're like your other stage managers, yet they perform.

Backstage tour of 42nd Street

WOMAN: How often does your dance captain have to perform?

ARTURO: The dance captain goes on only when we really need her. As Tripp said earlier, we have the 3 lady swings who have been terrific, but she's been thrown on herself. She'll do certain stuff.

TRIPP: A kind of unofficial rule is that we have 4...we have 5 women out, she definitely goes on. If we have four women out, we'll do some cutting and pasting, but if we have five women out, she goes on. And there are a number of reasons for that. Kelli is wonderful, she's great, she knows the show backwards and forwards and she gets thrown in whenever she needs to and does a great job, but she's more valuable to us when she's not onstage.

WOMAN: Where does she watch the show from?

TRIPP: Different places. Sometimes the back of the house, sometimes that box up there.

ARTURO: I think last night she watched from the follow spot booth all the way up there.

TRIPP: It gives her different perspectives.

MEMBER: Does she watch every show?

TRIPP: No, but she watches parts of eight shows a week. She doesn't watch the entire show every night. Mark Bramble and I talked about that once. You can't do that.

ARTURO: Nobody should. (LAUGHTER)

TRIPP: It's too much, you stop being

ARTURO: You have to walk away. TRIPP: But she'll come out and watch a number here and a number there, parts of eight shows a week.

WOMAN: I have a question about your run sheets for stage left and stage right. What amount of info are you working with?

ZOYA: Originally too much. What we were handed was the original stage right run sheets that had every single carpenter, electrician, anything that happens on the deck was there and that's what I was given with a highlighter, and it was just too much for me to highlight and be able to read with a flashlight, it made my eyes cross. So I e-mailed it to myself and started cutting and pasting into cards and I have not run a deck in nine years so I was really going back, now how do I do this. So I did a whole thing with them. Now, when Patty would come on, Patty's done this more often, she's subbed on shows, and she has a much neater, cleaner way of doing it, so I'm going to steal from her. And we had

another sub, Bart; his book was just little slips saying "look upstage." So there's an art to that. There was stuff there, but it was almost too much info. So, handing it down and creating your own book, is almost more critical offstage than in the book that you know has to have all the things in it.

ARTURO: Again I think the note here is just enough pertinent information will get somebody up on the show quicker. You don't have to belabor the information to show what all of stage right is about. Really, get it down to what is the job that has to get done. Take in the rest of it a little bit later, but let's get the job done first. Get where do I need to stand, who needs a flashlight. who do I have to watch for and what's the problem say with scenery being brought in at certain times if someone stands there rather than here. Or if you really want to get rid of someone, where do you want to put them so they can hit them? (LAUGHTER) You know, these are the important things, okay? Sometimes too much information can make you blind.

TRIPP: When I first...I didn't run stage right until four or five months into the show, I first set up stage left and then I called the show shortly after we opened so I didn't go stage right for a long time and when I did go, my run sheet was one sheet of paper that I created myself, which was about all that I needed because I already knew the show well, obviously. I hadn't been stage right but I didn't have any big, elaborate notes. I had one piece of paper to remind me of what I needed to do which I carried for the first few shows.

ZOYA: It helped to understand the "why," like the flashlight is not always because the person can't see but it shines in a slightly different way to warn people that that person is coming. It's that little bit of knowledge that helps.

JANET: That was something else I wanted to mention, because we've been talking about stage managers on the deck and calling the show but there's another whole part to stage managing that didn't exist back when I was a girl and that's all the extra that comes with it. We have a physical therapy company on call, they do physical therapy 4 days a week, that requires scheduling, that was handed to me. We have C-2 forms that have to be

filled out for worker's comp and that is if anybody breaks a nail it has to be documented, which I also do. Ordering supplies, believe it or not, is a stage manager's job. Zoya does house seats, which we never used to do back in the old days.

TRIPP: The Dodgers always give a seat to the stage manager on every show.

ZOYA: But it wasn't always.

JANET: A lot of other shows do it now. The LION KING does it. And Ira can do it, right?

IRA MONT: Yeah.

JANET: But anyway, besides running the actual performance there's all this other stuff that we have to do now that we never did.

TRIPP: Yeah. A few of the things that I do as far as administrative stuff goes; I do all the sign-in sheets. When we have new people coming into the cast there's a lot of paperwork we have to do, all the Equity stuff, all the health forms, giving them all the paperwork they need. I order the sliders that get put in the lobby; I do all the stuffers that go into the Playbill. There's a lot of paper work that Arturo and I handle among ourselves, there's a lot of reports, a lot of calendar, a lot of other things away from the actual stage that have to be done.

ARTURO: It's not just aspirin in the first aid kit anymore. (LAUGHER) No. even with a vacation. When someone passes their vacation request in, I have to look it up. Are they due a vacation? How many weeks have they? That's what has been established here. I have never had to do it before. I had been able to take it and pass it up to the company manager. This person has requested a vacation. Then they come back having said yea or nay. Then I work with it. Now it's more like, how many weeks has this person worked? Are they due the vacation? When was the last vacation? Are they asking for this vacation too soon? The same thing with personal days as well,

TRIPP: And then if they're entitled to it, can we afford to have that person out that day?

ARTURO: That, too.

TRIPP: If it's a female ensemble member, is there another female ensemble member out, all that has to be gone through, and at the end of the week, every Sunday, we figure out the

rehearsal schedule for the week, do the sign-in sheets and the vacation schedules, all that stuff gets updated.

ZOYA: These two guys have their backs to us most of the time in the office. They're hunched over computers, I mean, it's crazy the amount of work they have to do,

ARTURO: Move on, (LAUGHTER) TRIPP: None of that stuff...I mean, your job is to do what the job is and the job on every show is a little bit different, and the producers and the actors have different needs. Sometimes the producers and the managers are more hands on or less hands on, and all of those things to a large extent will define what the job is.

JANET: And we come in earlier and earlier. Used to be in the old days we'd come in an hour before the show. Now it's almost two hours.

TRIPP: Just so you know, what has to happen here - at 6:30 on an evening show, an hour and a half before the show, there are people ... who need to know what the show is going to be that night, how many people are out, that has to be posted, that has to go to wardrobe and the sound department, especially if it's going to be a split show, the sound department is going to have to be retracking their microphones to people, repatch certain cues. That all has to go out and all the swing and understudies have to be called and told they're on, the inserts have to get to front of house by 6:30 so they can put them in the programs by 7:30, the sliders have to go in the boards out front, all that stuff has to be done at 6:30 and if we have a complicated show, we have 4 people out and we're cutting and pasting and taking people and filling in, a half hour just isn't enough time to get the paperwork on that done, it has to be copied and distributed. So there are lots of things you don't think may be part of your job but they are absolutely essential.

ZOYA: The set-up of this show doesn't take a long time, but it's all of the departments knowing in advance, that helps.

ARTURO: Shall we do a tour? We've been out here forever.

MARCI: Let's do a tour.

[This is the end of Part 1 of the transcription. Part 2 has many unintelligible sections we'll try our best to get it to you as soon as possible.]