



# STAGE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

This Career Guide has been written, compiled and edited by members of the Stage Management Association .

We are indebted to **Marian Spon** for the cartoons.

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# ***Stage Management – a Career Guide***

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# Stage Management as a Career

## 1. Introduction

This is essentially a “people management” job. A Stage Manager must have the temperament and ability to get along with people in both the artistic and technical sides of theatre, and to understand what they do. It is part of the attraction of the work that each new job will introduce new and different challenges. However, the work is never glamorous, often involving long hours and fairly boring, repetitive tasks as well as being physically demanding.

During the initial rehearsal period, the stage management team is responsible for:

- Marking out the set on the floor of the rehearsal room with coloured mark-up tape, based on the designer’s ground plan.
- Arranging for basic catering facilities.
- Arranging substitute or rehearsal furniture and props.
- Scheduling rehearsals, and ensuring that all artistes and creative departments are aware of these calls.
- Collecting information about the production – e.g. details of sets and costumes, sound and lighting requirements, props, and prop-making and ensuring these are copied to the relevant departments.
- Making sure that the director’s wishes are passed on to the appropriate departments.
- Liaising with the Production Manager on costings and production schedules.
- Supervising the gradual introduction of the actual playing furniture and props.
- Making prop and furniture setting and running lists as the production develops.
- Removing the entire remaining physical production including furniture, props and costumes - both rehearsal and playing - from the rehearsal room and into the base or first theatre.



*'Work is never glamorous.'*

In addition to this, the welfare of the actors is of paramount importance. Making sure that they and the director have the optimum conditions with the best atmosphere and least distractions in which to work is the ultimate goal.

When the show has opened and is running, the stage management is responsible for the management of each evening’s performance. This involves setting up the stage and wings with the furniture and props required for the production; checking that all artistes are in the building by their allotted times; giving ‘calls’ to the actors before and during the show, and other cues to all departments, enabling the changing of scenery, lighting and sound to be co-ordinated. During the run, maintaining and replacing props as necessary.

In summary, the SM takes an overview to keep the show as the director directed and both the actors and technicians happy.

In smaller scale theatre or on tour, the stage management may also be required to 'roadie'; that is drive, load and unload trucks, put up the set, and design and/or operate both sound and lighting.

This brief description gives some idea of the variety and responsibility of the job. The acting company must trust their stage management team – in a crisis it must always be the stage management that remain cool, keep their heads and cope with it – in a confrontation situation stage management must calm, soothe and mediate.



*'in a confrontation situation stage management must calm, soothe and mediate.'*

## 2. The Stage Management Team

'Stage Management' is the generic term for a team usually consisting of, in order of authority:

- (i) Stage Manager
- (ii) Deputy Stage Manager
- (iii) One or more Assistant Stage Managers

On larger productions, a separate Company Manager, who is usually from a stage management background, will act on behalf of the producers in a financial and administrative capacity. He/she will also have many additional duties such as co-ordination of press and publicity; liaising calls with the permanent creative team; ensuring a dialogue with the front-of-house and theatre managers, concerning the smooth interaction of the production requirements with the theatre management and staff. His/her knowledge of the relevant union regulations (Equity, BECTU, the MU and the Working Time Regulations and Health and Safety) is needed for smooth and economical scheduling of staff and company calls. He/she will also be responsible for rostering the theatre stage and electrics staff as well as stage management. However, in less complex or relatively smaller scale productions, these other and extra duties are often taken on by the stage manager, who is then known as a Company & Stage Manager. The tendency is then to allow the DSM more stage oriented responsibilities.

It is rare on most tours - excepting the largest productions - to have more than one CSM, one DSM and one technical ASM, possibly supplemented with one or two understudy ASMs, who although often willing (and sometimes not!) can only be given the minimum of regular or vital duties as they may be called upon to perform a role at any moment. In that event, the CSM is also expected to cover these duties.

The size of the team varies from show to show and theatre to theatre – on small scale and fringe tours there may be a 'team' of one (the Stage Manager).

The team must work together as a unit and so, although the stage manager has ultimate authority, each position has its own responsibilities. To some extent, duties will vary, but commonly, job descriptions are as follows:

1. STAGE MANAGER (OR CSM OR C&SM)

- a. Overall responsibility for the team.
- b. During rehearsal and production period co-ordinates technical departments and makes sure all elements of the production are in the right place at the right time and correct according to the director's and designer's requirements.
- c. During the run the SM has overall responsibility for keeping every performance in line with the director's original production.
- d. The SM should avoid having specific performance duties, so as to remain free to watch scenes from in front, liaise with the Front-of-House staff and deal with emergencies.
- e. Most SMs have access to a computer and many are computer-literate. Most producing managements, directors and others on the creative team now expect show information, such as nightly performance reports, via fax, or more usually email. Box Office figures to the management, if part of the duties, are transmitted in the same fashion.

2. DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER

- a. During rehearsals one member of the team must be present whenever the director is working with the cast. This is usually the DSM, whose duties naturally arise from knowledge of the director's intentions. Duties therefore include:
- b. Preparing and keeping the Prompt Script (or 'Book') up to date. It will contain not only actors' moves, but details of set and furniture replacement in scene and act changes, lighting, sound and any special effects cues, such as winch, hydraulic and lift cues. Keeping the Book continually updated is *vital*, not only to remind the director and artistes of their positions as rehearsals progress, but also as a starting reference for any subsequent changes that may be tried out. During the production period in the theatre it will serve as the blueprint for all technical movements and changes during the show and will be used as the final authority for all cues throughout the performance and used to run the show on a day to day basis. It should never be allowed out of the theatre during the production run and wherever possible a copy should be made up. It is truly the show's 'Bible' and without it a proper performance is well nigh impossible. Lastly, it will be often be used by the management as a starting point for any subsequent revival it may mount of the same production.
- c. Prompting. Although rare in performance nowadays, help is always appreciated during the middle section of the rehearsal period, when actors are 'off the script' but still fumbling with difficult or unusual passages of text.
- d. Calling artists for rehearsals and costume fittings.

- e. Passing on the director's requirements to the SM, designer, and all other creative and technical departments through daily rehearsal notes.
- f. Liaising with lighting, sound and other specialist designers before and during technical rehearsals.
- g. During performances, the DSM, having been responsible for the Prompt Script in rehearsal, is the natural person to run the show from the prompt corner or SM control point in technical dress rehearsals and performances.
- h. The ability to read a score is essential in Opera and Ballet and often useful in Musical Theatre.

### 3. ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

- a. Should be present in rehearsal room as much as possible in order to back up the DSM by taking messages, phone calls etc. and assisting in general, including taking over the DSM's duties when required.
- b. Helping director and artists with errands etc. when they cannot spare their own time, (but avoid becoming a dogsbody for all and sundry).
- c. Checking props, furniture etc. Depending on the degree of staffing and union organisation in the particular theatre, this can mean anything from checking the work of the staff without actually touching anything, to doing it all yourself.
- d. Operating sound and other technical equipment is sometimes part of the stage management's duties and is usually done by an ASM, although as sound systems become smaller, more sophisticated and integral to the prompt desk, this is now often achieved by the DSM.
- e. It is usual for at least one ASM on the team to also learn the Book, with a view to running the show in the absence of the DSM. While learning the cues, which necessitates shadowing the DSM throughout the show (as well as extra tuition during the day), the CSM will cover their cues, although it may be possible to share the extra duties around the remaining staff.



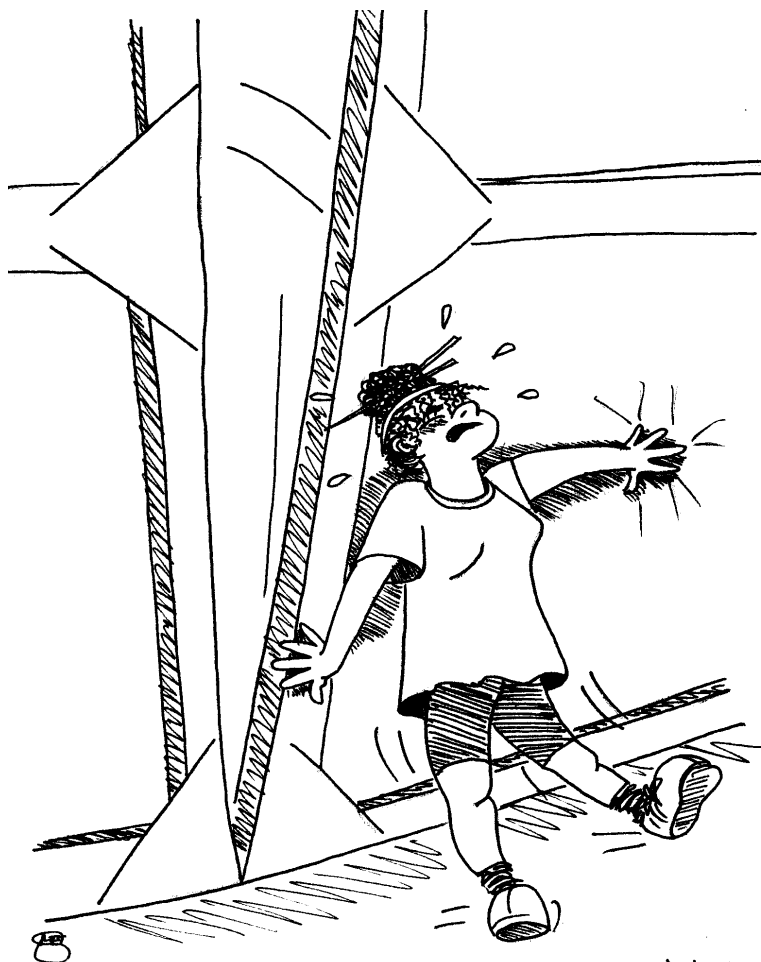
*'...avoid becoming a dogsbody...'*

The foregoing is in no way an exclusive list of stage management duties. The basic duty of the stage management is to prevent *anything* from adversely affecting the production and to facilitate the best possible conditions for the production to be realised according to its full potential.

Having distributed the duties within the team, the members should make themselves familiar with one another's duties in order to cover each other if need be.

## TOURING OR ONE HOME

There is a radical difference between taking a show from venue to venue on tour and a West End or producing theatre show which is static, and the duties are very different for both. With the ever tightening budgets of producing managements, the total team for any but the largest touring shows are usually three - or four at the most - plus wardrobe. This means an ever-expanding multiplicity of duties, encompassing the whole spectrum of theatre, is needed to cope with the weekly move and set-up of the show.



'The basic duty of the stage management is to prevent anything from adversely affecting the production.'

On tour, the stage management team are expected to arrive at the venue, usually on a Monday morning, put up the set (CSM), organise and set furniture and props and 'dress' the production (DSM, ASM) with the accessories specified by the designer.

The CSM often then has to rig, focus and relight the show working from plans and notes supplied by the Lighting Designer, which is time consuming and can take up most of the day.

The other stage management, working with the resident staff, are also expected to set up and specify areas for extra scenery and furniture storage if necessary, e.g. if used in another act; show cuelight and practical light positions for the resident electrics staff, arrange for the offstage areas to be cleaned and carpeted etc., and sometimes to organise and rehearse key scene and act changes with the show staff, in addition to any prop setting, sound checks and other stage management chores they may have. It can be a very busy day!

On larger scale touring productions there may be a production carpenter and sometimes also a production electrician (or either one singly) to put the set up and light the show. This relieves some of this burden from the CSM and allows the other jobs to be shared out more proportionally with the rest of the team.

On the largest shows - predominantly musicals - the stage management usually need only to focus their efforts on 'pure' stage management.

It stands to reason that the stage management have to rapidly build up a strong relationship with the resident staff, especially if the show is to open the same night. This sounds daunting, but one must bear in mind that this occurs nearly every Monday in theatres around the country and the resident crew are hardened to it, as you will become. Many teams have a great rapport with the theatre crew and it becomes a social as well as a professional pleasure to work at the venue. Equally, any shortcomings usually only have to be borne for a week - or two - at the most, as another town beckons on the tour.

In the West End, the Production Manager, Designer and at least one Production Carpenter are always present on the fit up to work with the resident Master Carpenter and his staff while lighting is overseen by the Lighting Designer and his production electrician in tandem with the theatre's Chief Electrician and his staff, so most of the carpentry and electrical chores will be handled exclusively by them.

The stage management will, however, need to view the theatre as their home for at least the next few months and so prop table placement, prop and furniture storage and setting will need to be carefully thought out and permanently marked up. All technical requirements such as sound, cameras and monitors for the prompt desk, and communications equipment will be hired in specifically for the venue and so will need to be carefully positioned and tested as they won't have had the 'bedding-in' in that touring affords. There has to be much greater liaison between the theatre staff and the stage management as whatever is decided, be it equipment positions, settings or scene changes will, once set, usually be the standard for the run.

Again, as with touring, an early solid relationship with the theatre staff is helpful and even more important than on tour as you may be there for several months, if not years. While it is important to gently but firmly exhibit and impose your standards and work practices upon the staff, remember that they have been there a lot longer than you and with countless productions and may take time to adjust.



In producing theatres, the fit up would also be undertaken by the resident Master Carpenter or Technical Stage Manager and his staff, and the lighting would be rigged and focussed by the resident electrics crew under the instruction of the Lighting Designer; those and any other technical departments (automation, AV, sound, etc.) would be overseen by the Production Manager at this stage.

The stage management will probably still be busy in the rehearsal room whilst this is going on and will have one or two days at most to set up the backstage areas as required. It is at the technical rehearsal that they will assume responsibility for the show, taking over from the Production Manager.

Runs of shows in such producing theatres are often for about 3-4 weeks, but can be shorter or longer. If the show is a co-production, stage management will have to plan the handover to another team at the end of their run; but most shows will simply end after their run and stage management's duties are to dispose of or return any props and furniture and other equipment which had been borrowed or hired or made specifically for the production, unless it is to be stored for future use.

Your relationship with the resident staff will already have been established during the rehearsal period as you will have been, most likely, rehearsing in or near the building where you will ultimately run the show. It is no less important for that, especially as they may know the building much better than you if you are just working freelance on one show, and can be very helpful whilst you learn to find your way around.

Then there are the local authorities to satisfy. You will need to prepare a full risk assessment on the production particularly in respect of safety in all aspects of the show. Particular attention should be taken with naked flame, smoke or mist, special effects, pyrotechnics, firearms, light fittings and even set construction. Good control methods must be in place and observed by everyone.

With unusual sets, extension to the stage into the auditorium, performer flying etc. the local council may send a representative to check all constructions from a Buildings and Safety perspective.

The Production Manager will have all of these areas under his control and with the CSM will take the various agencies for a tour of the production, indicating areas that might be of interest or concern, and indicating the measures that have been taken to deal with any potential problem. He will also supply related paperwork for the production, such as certification for rigging sets and fire retardant timber. These will be needed not only by the authorities, but by the technical managers for the theatre.

The DSM and ASM may be needed to have on hand any special, flame or other effects that the authorities may require to be demonstrated, in order to include them on the licence.

### **3. Career Structure**

There is often, or for most people, a progression through the roles, starting as ASM, later moving into being a DSM, and later again into SM and/or CSM.

However, as the roles are quite different and require quite different skills and temperaments, most people will find a particular liking or talent for one of the roles, spending years as ASM, for example, because they enjoy propping and prop-making; or the bulk of their career as DSM because they love being in rehearsals and cueing the show; or considerable time as SM/CSM because they are good at, and like, being in charge.

For many – by no means all – stage managers there comes a time, too, when they feel they need to move on from stage management, for a variety of reasons. Often this point occurs around 10 to 15 years into their career. Within the industry, there are many roles they can move into, depending on their individual skills, interests and wishes.

Frequently, stage managers become production managers (building based or freelance) or company managers; they can also become administrators, producers or general managers; they might take up directing; or work for a supplier or manufacturer; or set up their own business, for example as prop maker or buyer. Stage managers also become lighting designers, agents, trade unionists, trainers, teachers, theatre consultants, venue managers and journalists – to name just a few recent examples.

Many at the latter end of their stage management career work extensively in conference/corporate and public events of all kinds (e.g. Queen's Golden Jubilee, Olympic opening ceremonies, large festivals etc.), but only very few are able to turn this into a full-time career as there are limited amounts of opportunities.

Some, but not many, stage managers move into television and film. Most stage managers, unless they leave the industry altogether, prefer to stick with the live arts.

Historically, there has always been about an equal number of men and women working in stage management and the ideal team is usually considered to be one in which both sexes are represented. This balance is about to be restored after recent decades saw a shift towards more women in stage management - the last five to ten years have seen an increase in the numbers of men applying and taking up courses in stage management.

### **4. What Do You Do Now?**

Go and talk to a stage manager at your nearest producing theatre or if there is a touring company visiting your area, talk to the stage manager about their job and how they gained entry into the profession.

Experience gained through school productions, youth theatre or amateur groups is invaluable. You may even be able to get casual work from time to time at your local professional theatre. In the last instance make an appointment to see the Production/Stage Manager to talk about the possibilities.

## 5. Training

Vocational training for stage management is available at many drama schools and these courses are mainly, but not exclusively, at degree level (see pages 12/13).

Selection is by interview and most courses require GCSE and A level/BTEC qualifications or previous experience in the industry. Although you may not be required to have A-levels or a BTEC (and they don't have to be in 'drama'), they are important and may help the school to decide if you will be able to undertake the study involved. Practical experience, such as with your local theatre, amateur theatre group or on school productions is highly valued by drama schools.

Funding for courses is extremely limited but you should always check with your Local Education Authority as to what is available from your council. Each individual drama school's admissions officer will also be able to give you funding information. The funding situation for degree courses is the same as for any university degree.

Some colleges, universities and drama schools have scholarships or bursaries so contact them directly as these tend to change from year to year.

If you have A-Levels or a BTEC, you may like to take a degree or diploma course in drama or drama related subjects, before going into vocational training at postgraduate level. This would give you a deeper appreciation of the history of the theatre and how it is related to its social, historical and geographical contexts, as well as giving you an introduction to the skills required for working in professional theatre.

However, there is virtually no funding at postgraduate level.

While people can and do enter the profession without training, the chances of getting a job are vastly improved if you have trained on a vocational course (particularly one at a college which is a member of the Council of Drama Schools).

Recently, new creative apprenticeships have been introduced by CCSkills, the sector skills council for the creative and cultural industries. Whilst they don't offer a dedicated stage management apprenticeship, it is possible to use the Technical Theatre apprenticeship as a springboard and specialise in stage management further down the road ([www.creative-choices.co.uk/knowledge/creative-apprenticeships](http://www.creative-choices.co.uk/knowledge/creative-apprenticeships) )

A number of theatres also offer local apprenticeship schemes and the on-the-job training can be complemented with short courses from the Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) ([www.abtt.org.uk](http://www.abtt.org.uk) ) or the Stage Management Association (SMA) ([www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk](http://www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk) ) and work placements with other employers.

## 6. Drama Schools

Many Drama Schools offer Stage Management courses. These are run in conjunction with acting courses and a considerable part of the course is devoted to work on the mounting of college productions. Stage Management students usually provide the various technical services such as Scenic Design, Stage Carpentry, Lighting, Sound, Electrics, Stage Management and Props Making for these productions, and have the opportunity to devote time and attention to the activities of their choice. Some schools also offer specialist diploma courses in these subjects. Several courses incorporate secondment to professional theatres.

All of the colleges listed are members of the DramaUK (<http://www.dramauk.co.uk/>) and therefore provide vocational training.

You can access all the courses and colleges from these two websites which also contain a lot of useful information on training at a drama school, the qualifications you can obtain and the funding available or needed.

### ALRA

Studio One, RVP Building, John Archer Way, London SW18 3SX  
(020 8870 6475)  
[www.alra.co.uk](http://www.alra.co.uk)

### BRISTOL OLD VIC THEATRE SCHOOL

1/2 Downside Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2XF  
(0117-9733 3535)  
[www.oldvic.ac.uk](http://www.oldvic.ac.uk)

### BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL of ACTING (BCU)

Birmingham City University City Centre Campus  
Millennium Point Birmingham B4 7XG  
☐ +44 (0)121 331 7563  
[bsaadmissions@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:bsaadmissions@bcu.ac.uk)  
<http://www.bcu.ac.uk/acting/about-us>

### CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH AND DRAMA

Embassy Theatre, Eton Avenue, London NW3 3HY  
(020-7722 8183)  
[www.cssd.ac.uk](http://www.cssd.ac.uk)

### GSA

Millmead Terrace, Guildford, Surrey GU2 5AT  
(01483-560 701)  
[www.conservatoire.org](http://www.conservatoire.org)

### GUILDHALL SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DRAMA

Barbican, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DT  
(020-7628 2571)  
[www.gsmd.ac.uk](http://www.gsmd.ac.uk)

### LIPA

Mount Street, Liverpool, L1 9HF  
(0151-330 3000)  
[www.lipa.ac.uk](http://www.lipa.ac.uk)

LONDON ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DRAMATIC ART  
155 Talgarth Road, London W14 9DA  
(020-8834 0500)  
[www.lamda.org.uk](http://www.lamda.org.uk)

MOUNTVIEW ACADEMY OF THEATRE ARTS  
104 Crouch Hill, London N8 9EA)  
(020-8340 5885)  
[www.mountview.org.uk](http://www.mountview.org.uk)

ROSE BRUFORD COLLEGE OF SPEECH AND DRAMA  
Lamorby Park, Burnt Oak Lane, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9DF  
(020-8300 3024)  
[www.bruford.ac.uk](http://www.bruford.ac.uk)

ROYAL ACADEMY OF DRAMATIC ART  
62-64 Gower Street, London WC1E 6ED  
(020-7636 7076)  
[www.rada.org](http://www.rada.org)

ROYAL SCOTTISH ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DRAMA  
100 Renfrew Street, Glasgow G2 3DB  
(0141-332 4101)  
[www.rsamd.ac.uk](http://www.rsamd.ac.uk)

ROYAL WELSH COLLEGE OF MUSIC AND DRAMA  
Castle Grounds, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3ER  
(029-20342 854)  
[www.rwcmd.ac.uk](http://www.rwcmd.ac.uk)

Most of the above offer two or three year full-time courses and most of them are accredited by the National Council for Drama Training. There are also some postgraduate courses lasting a year or less, some shorter specialist courses (e.g. props making), and some taster courses (e.g. 2 week stage management summer course). Other courses, such as those at Derby (<http://www.derby.ac.uk/courses/technical-theatre-ba-hons/>) and BathSpa (<http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/music-and-performing-arts/courses/undergraduate/Theatre-Production>) Universities, Northbrook College(<http://www.northbrook.ac.uk/courses/universitylevel/technicaltheatre>) Edinburgh School of Stage Management (<http://www.edinburghstagemanagementschool.co.uk/courses/>) Canterbury Christ Church University([Canterbury Christ Church University](http://www.canterburychristchurch.ac.uk/)) and Backstage Academy (<http://www.backstage-academy.co.uk/degree-courses/stage-management-3/>) are also available.

Check individual schools' websites for full details of their courses.

Accreditation is important as it can affect the availability of grants and how easy you will find it to enter the job market. DramaUK and Stage Management Association will give you information on the current accreditation situation of courses.

## 7. A Career as a Stage Manager

Apart from the specific elements of work in this business, there are other practical and personal requirements. You will need to be a good self-motivator, and will need to manage most of your business affairs yourself. One-off projects and team working can provide a great sense of achievement over short periods of time. You can choose when and for whom you work. You will need to consider the effect of a peripatetic and irregular work pattern on your social and family life. Ill health can mean you cannot earn or get benefits.

**Income tax:** Ignorance is no defence, you need to be aware of and understand the tax categories of PAYE (Pay as you earn) or Self-Assessment/UTR. You can be both employed and self-employed in this business. Some employments are classed as PAYE, some freelance patterns of work can qualify for UTR status, but in most of their contracts stage managers, like actors, will – since April 2014 – not have PAYE or class 1 NIC deducted from their wages at source, but will be responsible for paying tax and Class 2 & (where applicable) Class 4 NIC at the end of the year.

Self-employment means you have to register with HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs), keep your own records of income and expenses, make your returns by the January 31<sup>st</sup> that follows the end of each tax year (April 5<sup>th</sup>), and pay the bill in two instalments as demanded. It mainly means you should not spend all the money you earn – keep about 25% aside for tax and nasty surprises and you might have a little to spare at the end of the year when you have paid your tax. Tax Officers are obliged to help – though some peace of mind can be bought in the form of an accountant to guide and advise.

**National Insurance Contributions:** Class 1, or 2 and 4, depending on your tax status, can affect your eligibility for benefits. If you have been paying Class 1 NI, you are entitled to apply for jobseeker's allowance; if you pay Class 2 or 4, you cannot do this. Individual offices often do not have the correct information with regard to stage managers' dual tax status, in line with that of actors. Equity is very much involved in this area, and the best source of advice.

**Personal Pension / Private Health Insurance / Unemployment Insurance:** decisions made now can affect your future. How much can you afford to spend? You need to take advice from someone you can trust. Equity and BECTU have good schemes with some employers to set up pension contributions during engagements. You will probably need your own scheme as well.

**Health and Safety:** It is essential for all to be aware of the law, and of the personal responsibility for one's own safety and the potential to affect the safety of others. This is a dangerous industry, we use products in ways they are not normally used, we work in bad light, and there is a lot of adrenaline flowing around when we work. The Health and Safety Executive produces free and priced information on H&S issues and legislation. You should get their leaflet Facts for Freelances in Broadcasting and the Performing Arts. The ABTT and SMA publish regular information about safe practice.

**Public Liability Insurance:** A grey area. This covers you against injuring a member of the public by your activities. Not legally required, but sometimes needed. Equity and BECTU offer Public Liability Insurance as part of the benefits of membership. SMA can provide PLI on request.

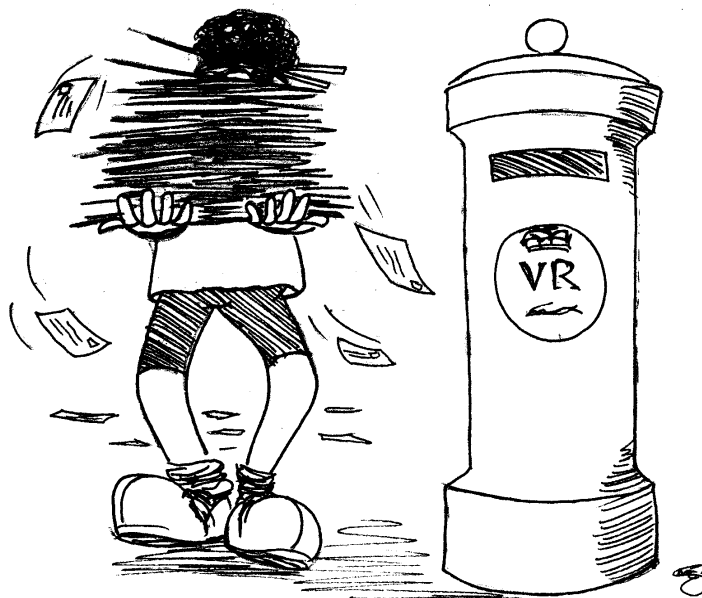
## 8. Getting a Job

A full driving licence is invaluable and the importance of trying to obtain one and keeping it “clean” cannot be overestimated, as the job often entails collecting props or scenery, or driving a fringe company between venues.

The ability to read a musical score enhances one’s job prospects.

### Methods of finding work:

If you graduate from a course at a affiliate college of DramaUK or some others, or when you have some experience of working in stage management, you will become eligible to join the Stage Management Association, and one of their services for members is circulating a monthly list of members looking for work to about 900 potential employers. This Freelist is the main way for stage managers to find work. SMA members are also entitled to a free listing on the *Spotlight* website. The SMA also lists job adverts on the members’ area of its own website, as well as offering support with CVs, letter writing, mentors etc..



‘Write to all the theatre groups and companies you might be interested in working with.’

Tell everyone you know who works in the business that you are looking for a job, so network as much as you can, in the virtual and the real world, to get your name and face known. This always pays off sooner or later.

Buy *The Stage*, which is published weekly every Thursday and in which companies, irrespective of size, advertise their staffing requirements. (SMA have a discount on subscription)

Be wary of online job directories – will employers actually use them? What do they want your money for? Will they keep your data safe?

Join SMA Equity or BECTU (unions) which have online jobs resources and assistance.

Write to and/or email all the theatre groups and companies you might be interested in working with. They are listed in *Contacts* (see page 20). Send a short letter and attach a CV, together with a stamped addressed envelope. Some will not bother to reply and most of the replies will be non-committal offers to put your name on the files, but do not be discouraged. People have found jobs in this way.

Ensure you are always able to give your contact details to anyone you meet (business cards, LinkedIn or other social media information) that you have a personalised message on your mobile phone, that your CV is up to date and that you check your emails/Facebook, LinkedIn page / other networking sites regularly and be sure that they are professionally presented with suitable content for your work applications.

Keep up to date with your own profession and the wider industry. Always be informed – it shows prospective employers that you take a real interest in your job and the sector in general. Oh yes, and go and see shows, as many as you can afford.

## 9. T.V. and Trade Shows

Once you have gained sufficient experience and have a proven track-record in stage management, there may be other areas of freelance employment open to you in Television or the Trade Show/ Conference/ Events Industry.

There are three groups of employers in television, very few employ permanent SMs:

- a. ITV (Commercial) broadcast franchise companies.
- b. The B.B.C.
- c. Independent Producers, who make programmes for sale to the broadcasting companies, including the B.B.C. This has become the largest field of employment for stage managers.

Television has a sometimes confusing variety of titles in the general area of stage management. The Floor Manager (in studio)/1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Director (on location) is usually in charge of running the 'set' and making the schedule of work happen. The AFM/2<sup>nd</sup> A.D. will manage the calls for artistes and 'walk-ons' for transport, make-up, wardrobe and on to the set. The Stage Manager will manage any rehearsal process and the communication of 'action' requirements with other departments. [The BBC, confusingly, call the FM running an Outside Broadcast a Stage Manager – they will call you an AFM, though you are not actually assistant to the floor manager!] The SM/BBC-AFM will work closely with the Buyer and Designer to specify and schedule the props (this term includes vehicles and animals) required for each scene. Detailed and accurate paperwork is required, often needing regular and organised last-minute updating. Scenes are almost always shot out of story sequence and the schedule can get changed for many reasons. Forward and reverse continuity of props is of great importance.

Many dramas are now shot in the manner of the movies. Floor Managers are called Assistant Directors, and Property Masters from the movie industry manage the arrival of props. This often leaves Stage Managers only to manage the rehearsal process on studio-based work.

Trade Show/Conference work is really only to be recommended for those with a fairly wide technical and theatre experience, who also have the ability to think on their feet and the confidence to take responsibility without immediate direction.

Stage Managers usually manage people, presenters, performers, crew. The Showcaller is essentially similar to a theatre DSM, cueing lighting, sound, video, graphics, cameras, stage machinery, crew, performers, etc. You may often have the only Running Order, as there may be no opportunity to rehearse in 'show' sequence – sometimes simply no rehearsal. The crew, while highly skilled, are usually freelance, rarely have a script to follow and may not have worked together. The event is very often a one-off – it's got to be right.

The pay can be good, but there is no union organisation or agreements about conditions of work. It is an almost entirely freelance world. An agreed daily rate can represent a 12 or a 20-hour day and a lot of pressure. Work is normally only found by word-of-mouth and personal recommendation. Successful 'networking' is an important skill to develop.



## 10. Organisations

### STAGE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (SMA)

The SMA is the membership association supporting, representing and promoting stage management in the UK. It offers Professional, Graduate, Student and Associate Memberships for individuals as well as FE College, Drama School, Producing Theatre and other types of corporate membership.

Services to members are in four main areas::

- \* **HELP FINDING WORK**, including the famous Freelist
- \* **TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**, with many short practical courses
- \* **INFORMATION**, including membership magazine, CUELINE, and the members' website
- \* **EVENTS**, with many networking opportunities, socials, visits and topical discussions

The SMA is overseen by a Board of Directors elected from the membership and run by a small staff.

**Contact details:**

89 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL

Tel.: 020 7403 7999

e-mail: [admin@stagemanagementassociation.co.uk](mailto:admin@stagemanagementassociation.co.uk)

website: [www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk](http://www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk)

### ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH THEATRE TECHNICIANS (ABTT)

The ABTT is for all those engaged in, or who are interested in, technical aspects of the theatre. It offers much to technicians at every level and its membership includes both professional and amateur sound, lighting and stage technicians, designers, stage and production managers, architects, theatre consultants and local government officers. Formed in 1961, the ABTT is a registered charity with an elected council responsible for policy.

The ABTT serves its members by informing, advising and stimulating them through meetings and publications. The ABTT keeps in touch with members – regularly and directly – through its quarterly magazine *Sightline*. The ABTT organises an annual trade fair, the ABTT Theatre Show in London, regular seminars and occasional conferences.

**Contact details:**

55 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3JB

Tel.: 020 7242 9200

e-mail: [office@abtt.org.uk](mailto:office@abtt.org.uk)

website: [www.abtt.org.uk](http://www.abtt.org.uk)

### BECTU

The Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU) is the independent trade union for those working in broadcasting, film, theatre, entertainment, leisure, interactive media and allied areas. They offer insurance, such as public liability, training and other resources. They do not negotiate standard contracts for stage management.

**Contact details:**

373-377 Clapham Road, London SW9 9BT

Tel.: 020-7346 0900

Email: [info@bectu.org.uk](mailto:info@bectu.org.uk)

Website: [www.bectu.org.uk](http://www.bectu.org.uk)

## **DRAMA UK**

Providing a unique link between the theatre, media and broadcast industries and drama training providers in the UK. <http://www.dramauk.co.uk/>

Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HQ

[info@dramauk.co.uk](mailto:info@dramauk.co.uk) Tel: 020 3393 6141

## **CREATIVE AND CULTURAL SKILLS (CCSKILLS) AND THE SKILLS ACADEMY (NSA)**

The sector skills council for the creative and cultural industries. They have a useful website, Creative Choices, with case studies, careers advice, training opportunities and much more.

The National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural Skills (NSA) is a network of creative and cultural employers and organisations, freelancers, training providers and industry trade associations working together to develop, improve and recognise the skills of people working in the sector. It will greatly improve skills development opportunities for those entering the sector as well as those already employed within it, and provide a single, collective standard for skills development in the sector.

### **Contact details:**

High House Production Park Vellacott Close Off Purfleet Bypass Purfleet Essex RM19 1AS

Tel: 020 7015 1800 / 020 3668 5753 <http://ccskills.org.uk/activities/contact> for regional details.

Email: [info@ccskills.org.uk](mailto:info@ccskills.org.uk) - See more at:

<http://ccskills.org.uk/activities/contact#sthash.15WiAoW9.dpuf>

[www.creative-choices.co.uk](http://www.creative-choices.co.uk)

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## **EQUITY**

The union negotiates standard contracts (including for stage management) with the main management associations. Offers public liability and other insurance as well as legal cover, advice on tax and National Insurance and contractual problems, inclusive in membership.

It publishes a quarterly magazine and also has an online job service and a discount scheme for a range of organisations and services.

The Stage Management Committee represents stage managers within Equity and there is one Stage Management Councillor on the Equity Council, which is the management and policy making body.

### **Contact details:**

Guild House, Upper St. Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9EG

Tel.: 020 7379 6000

1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF1 9SD, Tel. 01222 397 971

114 Union Street, Glasgow G1 3QQ, Tel. 0141 248 2472

12 Blackfriars Street, Salford M3 5BQ, Tel. 0161832 3183

[www.equity.org.uk](http://www.equity.org.uk)

**GET INTO THEATRE WEBSITE:** [www.getintotheatre.org](http://www.getintotheatre.org)

# 11. Resources Listing

## **Stage Management books**

STAGE MANAGEMENT and THEATRE ADMINISTRATION  
Pauline Meneer & Terry Hawkins  
Phaidon, Oxford

THE STAGING HANDBOOK  
Francis Reid  
A&C Black, London

STAGE MANAGEMENT and THEATRECRAFT  
Hendrik Baker  
Theatre Arts Books / Routledge, New York

STAGE MANAGEMENT: A Practical Guide  
Soozie Copley and Philippa Killner  
The Crowood Press

STAGECRAFT  
Ed. Trevor R. Griffiths  
Phaidon, Oxford

ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO STAGE MANAGEMENT, LIGHTING AND SOUND  
Scott Palmer  
Hodder & Stoughton, London

STAGE MANAGEMENT: THE ESSENTIAL HANDBOOK  
Gail Pallin  
Nick Hern Books

STAGE MANAGEMENT NOTES  
Edited and published by the Stage Management Association. Other titles available.

*French's Theatre Bookshop stocks a number of American publications, but it should be noted that American stage management terminology often differs from that used in the UK.*

## **Specialist**

STAGING EVENTS  
Carolyn Soutar  
Crowood Press, Marlborough

TECHNICAL THEATRE: A Practical Introduction  
Christine A. White  
Arnold, London

## **Directories**

### CONTACTS

*Listings include potential employers in all fields of theatre and television.*

The Spotlight, 7 Leicester Place, London WC2H 7BP

Tel. 020-7437 7631, [www.spotlight.com](http://www.spotlight.com)

BRITISH THEATRE DIRECTORY (The Original)

And

THE COMMUNITY ARTS DIRECTORY

Richmond House Publishing Co. Ltd., 1 Richmond Mews, London W1V 5AG

Tel.: 020- 7224 9666

Email: [sales@rhpc.co.uk](mailto:sales@rhpc.co.uk)

Website: [www.rhpc.co.uk](http://www.rhpc.co.uk)

## **Journals**

### THE STAGE AND TELEVISION TODAY

*Weekly trade newspaper, carries advertisements for many job opportunities.*

47 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XT

Tel. 020-7403 1818

## **Useful Bookshops**

### FRENCH'S THEATRE BOOKSHOP (Samuel French Ltd.)

*Issues lists of books on Stage Management and allied subjects currently available.*

53 Fitzroy Street, London W1P 6JR

Tel: 020 7387 9373

[www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk](http://www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk)

### ROYAL NATIONAL THEATRE BOOKSHOP

The Royal National Theatre, London SE1

Tel: 020 7928 2033

### FOYLES

113-119 Charing Cross Road

London WC2H 0EB

Tel: 020 7437 5660

[www.foyles.co.uk](http://www.foyles.co.uk)