

THIS DOCUMENT IS FOR YOU

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The time and care put into this document by so many established theatre makers reflects their hope that young theatre makers will enter creative spaces with confidence, ready to create, communicate and be a part of our community. Please feel free to share this document with anyone who wants it. It is for you. To make your arts practice safer, happier and more communicative.

OBJECTIVE OF DOCUMENT FOR MONASH STUDENTS

This booklet is intended as a supplementary resource for students undertaking a production at Monash University as part of Production Investigation or Music Theatre.

Please note that these guidelines are an informal working document and do not in any way constitute the framework for your assessment. Assessment guidelines for all units will be circulated separately and may be discussed with your Unit Coordinator.

Productions are a unique learning environment with specific roles, rules and guidelines. Whilst all Monash productions are designed as learning experiences, there is a degree of assumed knowledge in these situations. It is always okay to ask if you don't understand something but this booklet aims to fill some of those gaps and give you an idea of what to expect. It is an attempt to do away with assumed knowledge.

In addition to these notes, your director, stage manager, unit coordinator (Stuart or Misha) and artistic director (Fleur) are wonderful resources. At all times, students are encouraged to seek help from the appropriate person however, maintain an awareness of the constraints all staff members are operating within, provide as much notice as possible in setting up meetings and engage in respectful communication.

CHAPTER 1. ROLES WITHIN THEATRE

There are many roles within a production team, all equally important and all interconnected. Having a working knowledge of what each member of your team does will help foster productive and respectful working relationships.

Crucially:

- 1) All members of a production team work towards a common goal: to make the production as strong as possible. When an actor or crewmember says 'yes' to a show they commit to being part of a team.
- 2) Communication is key. From day one, ensure that everyone knows how to reach the people they need to reach and who to talk to if they have questions or concerns. When working in a learning environment, remember that students are not expected to know everything but they are expected to communicate when they need additional support.
- 3) When working as part of a team, it is your job to look after yourself; to ensure that you are in a position to fulfil your duties. This means eating, sleeping and drinking sensibly, taking breaks when needed and asking for help.

DIRECTOR

The director is the person who has overall responsibility for the production and its artistic vision. Their key tasks include interpreting the work, rehearsing the actors and coordinating the efforts of the cast, designers, technicians and marketing into one unified production.

No two directors have the same methodology or vision: some directors might work very democratically, seeing their role as being the final say in a shared creative process, while others might leave less room for collaboration. Likewise, some directors arrive with a clear vision and interpretation of the text whilst others discover it with their cast and crew, unearthing meanings and undercurrents as they go.

Given that there are so many ways of being a director, it can be beneficial to discuss methodology at the first rehearsal or even before. Open discussions about key techniques or processes that the director uses, schedules and when actors will be expected to learn their lines can help make the process more transparent.

The role of the director is big and, at times, coordinating the efforts of so many people will result in the director having to make big decisions with little room for discussion. This is because it is their job to create a cohesive production. It also means that at times they will need to focus on one element of the production (for example, lighting and sound during a tech run) so be respectful of their time, energy and artistic decisions.

For more, see *Communication with the Director and Taking Notes* in chapter 2.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

The assistant director works with the director in service of the director's artistic vision. The role of the assistant director (AD) can look very different in each production depending on the methodologies of their director, the experience level of the AD and the relationship between the director and the AD.

In some rooms, the AD may be a very observational role, in others they may be given researching tasks, run lines or run warm ups while in others, a very trusted AD might find themselves workshopping scenes, particularly in productions with large casts.

If the director and the AD have not worked together before, the nature of the role will evolve as they get to know each other but it is good to meet before rehearsals to discuss the relationship and what both expect from each other. A particularly important question is how much does the director want to hear from the AD in rehearsals: some directors want their AD's voice to be very present in the room whilst others believe that all direction should come from one source (the director herself). These directors prefer to discuss ideas without cast or crew present and chose whether or not the AD's ideas become part of the production's directions. When possible, regular meetings between the director and AD will help keep the AD aware of the director's goals and illuminate why they are making the decisions they are making.

PRODUCTION MANAGER

The production manager (PM) oversees many of the technical elements of the production. They are not always in the rehearsal room and do not oversee rehearsals so they rely on communication from the stage manager, rehearsal/show reports and regular production meetings to do their job.

Their duties include managing the production budget and petty cash, risk assessments, advising designers and directors of the safety implications design elements or *blocking*, overseeing the ordering of materials and building work, chairing design and production meetings, scheduling and overseeing the work in production week and, in cases where there is not a producer, hiring and supervising staff.

STAGE MANAGER

The stage manager (SM) is responsible for communication between the various departments, time management and scheduling, ensuring that the rehearsal complies with Health and Safety policy and runs the technical rehearsal with the director and production manager. The role is so large that many professional companies have teams of stage managers, breaking the roles up into deputy and assistant stage managers. Their role is not creative; it is to create a safe, productive, happy and communicative space in which the creativity of others can flourish.

Before the rehearsals begin, the SM's duties include, compiling a preliminary props list, coordinating auditions, preparing the *prompt copy*, gathering and distributing the contact details of all cast and crew, liaising with the director regarding their requirements for the rehearsal room and ensuring that everything is ready for that first rehearsal.

During the rehearsal period, the SM's duties include ensuring that the cast and crew are familiar with the rehearsal and production schedule, setting props or furniture required for the rehearsal, *marking up the space*, taking notes of *blocking*, writing and sending out rehearsal reports so that company members can be made aware of pertinent information arising from rehearsals, ensuring rehearsals meet health and safety requirements, taking minutes during production or design meetings, calling for breaks and ensure that rehearsals run to time, updating the *props list* and researching and sourcing some of these props.

During production week, the SM's duties include organising the most efficient storage of set and props, marking up the position of furniture, ensuring that backstage is clear, safe and set up to facilitate a smooth performance, ensure that cables are taped down and tripping hazards

are minimised, updating or recording technical cues in the prompt copy and running the technical rehearsal (see chapter 4).

During performance the SM will *call the show*. This means they will be on *cans* (radio communication) with all operators and backstage crew. They will tell operators when to activate all lighting, sound, AV and mechanical cues. They will keep pre-show preparation to time and ensure props are set in their correct place.

The stage manager is usually a first aider and, as the person responsible for health and safety in the room, will be the person to communicate with the production manager about incident reports or hazards.

Understanding the scope of the stage manager's duties is very important. Listen to and respect the stage manager. They should never have to tell a performer or crew member anything twice.

WRITER

The writer is responsible for the script. In many productions, the writer is absent (Shakespeare hasn't visited a rehearsal room in years) but in the rare cases where a playwright is a part of the production, involvement will vary.

If the play is new, the writer will be in the rehearsal room more frequently than if it is a remount. Similarly, in a *development* (see chapter 2) the writer may be very active in the room but more often than not, the writer will communicate with the director without the cast present.

While it is a privilege to have the writer in the room, it is important to remember that the director is still the project leader. However, the director does need the writer's permission before changing a line.

For more on the nature of developing a work in the room see *Chapter 2: Rehearsal Vs Development*.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

The musical director (MD) is responsible for the musical elements of the music theatre production. Their key tasks include interpreting the score and teaching the music to the singers and rehearsing the band to perform this interpretation. In addition to this, unlike most directors or choreographers, during the production the MD also performs the show, conducting and sometime playing in the band.

During rehearsal, the MD will determine how the music will serve the story, including tempi (how fast or slow the music is), dynamics (volume) and style of songs, dance numbers and underscore. These decisions will be made through discussion with the director and choreographer but ultimately, all the MD will have the final say on all musical decisions.

They will teach the music (both notes and interpretation) to the actors and rehearse the band. They may accompany rehearsals on piano, although many companies employ a separate pianist to perform this task.

During the performance, the MD will conduct the orchestra and singers. This means that the actors, musicians and the stage manager calling the show will take their cues from the MD's

conducting. They will also maintain the musical integrity of a piece by giving feedback to actors and musicians after performances.

For actors, the section entitled 'Communicating with the Director and Taking Notes' applies to the MD as well: their time is valuable but you are a valued part of their team. Find the right moment to ask your question and remember that musical offers of ideas or interpretations are appreciated but the MD's no is final. Before asking the MD a question, take time to consider if they are the right person to ask. If it is a question about the music and your performance of the music, you've come to the right place.

SET DESIGNER

The set designer is responsible for the design and delivery of the production's set. They communicate with the director and other designers to ensure that they are creating a set that serves the dramaturgical concept and technical requirements of the production. Regular production and design meetings will ensure that everyone is kept abreast of all decisions and changes.

At the beginning of the design process, the designer will ask the director a lot of practical as well as creative questions: How is the space to be masked? Does the director want black drapes, masking flats or bare walls? How are entrances and exits going to be achieved?

They will also need to know the exact dimensions of the space they are designing for. These are supplied in the *technical specifications* (tech specs) for the theatre. Tech specs should include floor plans for the venue, a grid plan (where the bars are in the lighting grid) and a list of any equipment that comes with the venue hire. Depending on the size of the space, these plans will be either 1:25 scale or 1:50. 1:25 is considered industry standard.

The set designer usually begins with a rough idea/collection of images/concept that can be discussed with the team. These ideas will evolve as the requirements and vision of the production come into focus.

To present their ideas, a set designer can make scale drawings or even a 3D model either digital or an old fashioned *white card* model. However they chose to present their ideas, they will need to be accurate and detailed - ideally, someone could build straight off this plan.

Some set designers are responsible for set construction but, depending on the size and budget of the production, some companies have this work completed by a workshop. When handing construction to a team or purchasing to a producer, the designer must be very precise with their instructions, supplying sample swatches of materials, paint colours, finishes, etc.

The design must source and cost materials and labour involved in the design. If they are having difficulty staying below budget, they speak to the producer or production manager, who may have cost cutting solutions or be able to redistribute budget from other departments.

Set designers need to be mindful of OH&S issues with anything they design. Is it going to be human weight bearing, for instance? Anything that requires to be hung from the grid will need to be rigged by professional licensed riggers.

LIGHTING DESIGNER

The Lighting (LX) Designer will be responsible for creating a lighting plan, colour plan, focus notes and *plot* the cues, including fade times up and down. They also brief the SM as to when the cues happen so that they can notate them into the prompt copy.

The LX Designer usually has to wait for a draft of the set design before they can present their LX plan. Their creative concept will evolve during rehearsals in close consultation with your director and other designers.

Their early preparation will consist of appraising themselves with *tech specs* and lighting inventory of the venue. Tech specs should include floor plans for the venue and a grid plan (where the bars are in the lighting grid). Plans will be presented in 1:25 scale.

If equipment needs to be hired, bought or sourced from outside the company or venue, the lighting designer must communicate with the Production Manager at production meetings.

LX designer will need to draw a lighting plan (1:25), focus notes and colour lists. Things to consider include how many light sources there will be and their placement – i.e. floor lamps, types of lanterns hung, etc. If working with side or floor lights, do they need side booms or floor stands or will they drop bars from the rig.

Once the designers has an idea of what colour palette they will be using, they will need to put in an order for colour gels, gobos etc. Before an order is placed the LX designer will look through the company and venue's existing colour stock. When the purchase order is ready, it will go through the Production Manager who will source and budgets for these purchases.

The lighting designer must keep in mind who will to operate the LX board and whether any LX changes on the floor such as colour changes, movement of lights or hazer operation may occur. Their instructions must be clear and communication with the stage manager and director prior to production week is vital. It is crucial to that these three come together prior to plot to complete a *paper plot*, notating exactly where LX cues will fall and up and down times.

COSTUME DESIGNER

The Costume Designer is responsible for creating a design and for sourcing, creating or assembling the costumes for the cast.

Like other designers, the costume designer will usually come to the first meeting with preliminary reference images: colours, textures, shapes and silhouettes that the script prompted the designer to think of. As discussions with the director and fellow designers continue, these initial ideas will evolve and come into focus.

Once a design has been settled on, technical drawings and fabric swatches will convey the design in greater detail. Clarity is essential if the costumes are to be made by someone else.

From a practical standpoint, the costume designer must consider things like ease of movement, does a character require pockets or a way to conceal a prop and the amount of time actors have for costume changes. On a conceptual level, the costume designer considers symbolism, silhouettes, character definition and a potential colour palette. Hair and makeup are also an integral part of costume design and will be presented along with costume at the design presentation.

The costume designer will take actors' measurements as soon as possible to give them plenty of time to accumulate costumes. They should also check for visible tattoos and piercings and enquire about silhouettes and personal preferences that work for them. Everyone's body is different, and a good designer creates costumes that respond to each actor's body type.

The work of the costume designer can have a massive impact and influence on the actors' performances. Because of this, costume elements that may potentially inhibit or alter the actors' movements, are brought into the rehearsal room early. Things such as shoes, long skirts or corsets should be acquired in time for the cast to rehearse with them.

The costume designer knows their design will must exist in conjunction with the other design elements. They must consider how the fabrics, materials and colours they have chosen will be affected by the stage lighting and the colours and textures of the set.

SOUND DESIGNER

The sound (SND) designer is responsible for composing the music or sound for the production, supplying the sound files, setting the levels, ensuring that the mix is right and briefing the SM as to when the cues happen so that they can notate them into the prompt copy.

If the production is a musical, the role of the sound designer is quite different to that of a sound designer on a different production: they are responsible for the audio mix, speaker placement, ordering and checking mics, plotting any mic sharing throughout the show, training a mic tech to deliver their mic plot and ensuring that the band have all the equipment they will need including music stands and conductor cam.

In text- or image-based theatre, a SND designer might begin by creating a playlist of music based on their initial thoughts and ideas to share with the director. Not all creatives share a language when it comes to music and some will find it difficult to articulate what they have in their heads but playlists are excellent ways to start the conversation and come to shared understanding.

Many sound designers will bring examples or potential tracks to the rehearsal room. For the sound designer, this is a chance to try their ideas in the world of the play and for the cast. The addition of music can substantially change an actor's performances so trials like this early in the process help prepare the cast for this.

If a sound designer is planning to use pre-existing tracks, the company will need to obtain permission from APRA. Allow at least two weeks to get an answer. The longer the designers can allow, the easier their job will be as having to rush to find and approve a new track is immensely stressful. When completing the APRA application, the designer will use the *Works Search* facility at the top left corner of www.apraamcos.com.au and then provide the website information including song title, composer/songwriter and APRA Song ID (GW Code). If works are not listed, tracks can still be found but it may take more time. Sometimes a sound designer will need to go directly to the publisher or composer if they are a less well known artist.

The SND designer will arrive at production week with their tracks loaded into a cue-ing program and a working knowledge of that program. At Monash we use QLab. QLab enables a designer to program levels, fades, cross-fades and cue multiple tracks over each other. It allows

a design to be much more responsive and dynamic than tracks played and paused on itunes or a CD.

ACTOR/PERFORMER

The actor is responsible for performing the production. Their role will include coming to understand the play and their role within it, learning lines, blocking and making lines and blocking coherent with their understanding of the play.

Within any production, an actor's journey might be quite different. This will depend on the nature of the work and the director: perhaps the play does not have 'characters' but rather an ensemble. Perhaps the actor will be given their blocking and it will be their job to make this predetermined series of movements make sense or maybe they will find their blocking as the rehearsal process unfolds.

There are so many ways to make a play and so many genres of theatre, so it can be beneficial to discuss methodology, goals and expectations at the audition or first rehearsal. Open discussions about key techniques or processes that the director uses, schedules and when actors will be expected to learn their lines can help make the process more transparent.

Given the variability in rehearsal processes and production goals, actors are encouraged to be adaptable and brave. What is consistent across genres and processes is that acting requires courage, a strong work ethics, self-sufficiency and that an actor should begin each rehearsal with body, voice and mind ready to work.

As an actor's practice develops, they will come to know what they need to do in order to enter a rehearsal room ready to work. Professionals regularly arrive early and begin their own warm up process: vocal exercises to prepare the voice and stretches to prepare the body. Preparing the mind for work is often the hardest part. Actors will need to adapt their process to the needs of their mind and body on a given day: meditation or relaxation may be helpful for focus but on a lethargic day perhaps a more active warm up will be called for.

Sometimes it may be impossible for an actor to leave their problems and stresses at the rehearsal room door. If this is the case, it is important for them to let colleagues know what is going on. This could be as simple as text messaging the SM to let them know that they are have a sore throat and will need to speak quietly. In some circumstances, the team will need to discuss together how best to proceed: perhaps blocking needs to be reconsidered or the rehearsing of a particularly demanding scene might be rescheduled. As always, good and prompt communication will help overcome these difficulties.

In most processes, actors will be expected to do their own work outside of rehearsal time. Taking notes in the down time of rehearsals will help ensure that this independent work is in tune with what is happening in the room. Outside of rehearsal an actor might learn lines, look up words in the dictionary to ensure that they really understand what they are saying, do research into aspects of the world of the play or gather images or texts to aid in their investigation of the play. Above all, it is important not to have forgotten the work done in the previous rehearsal.

UNDERSTUDY

The role of the understudy is a difficult one. They must be ready to perform the role they are understudying at short notice and with less rehearsal than the principle actor. In many

professional companies, the understudy must learn multiple roles, all of which need to be ready to go at a moment's notice.

An understudy must be able to learn by watching the principal work and have a well-developed, self-sufficient practice. It is likely that they won't have the opportunity to make the organic discoveries that the principle will make in rehearsal so they must be watching, thinking and *realising* as the principle uncovers the secrets of the role. The understudy must also be willing to advocate for themselves: perhaps they know they need to run a particular scene so they might approach their scene mate and ask to find a time to work.

Above all, it is the duty of the understudy to be ready, even if they are also performing other roles within the production. They should come to each rehearsal and each performance under the presumption that they will be onstage. With this in mind, warm-ups – mental, physical and vocal – are equally as important for the understudy as the principles.

CHAPTER 2. THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The rehearsal process is where the work is discovered, uncovered, refined, confirmed and made repeatable. As discussed in Section 1, no two rehearsal rooms will work in the same way, however there are elements of the process that remain consistent:

- 1) The rehearsal room is a creative space, it is an exciting space, it is a generous space and it is an exhausting space.
- 2) A rehearsal room is not always fun; it is work and sometimes that work is very fun.
- 3) It is a privilege to be in a rehearsal room. Not many adults get to play, take risks and make art like you do.
- 4) Everyone has the right to feel safe in a rehearsal room. No play is worth emotional or physical trauma.
- 5) Communication is always the key.

REHEARSAL VS DEVELOPMENT

There is a difference between rehearsing and developing (or workshopping) a scene.

The goal of a rehearsal is to create, refine and make repeatable a performance. The focus is production and the experience of the eventual audience whereas a development might operate with little regard for the final performance. A development is about finding things out, experimenting, seeing if particular elements of tech or design are even possible, being bold and taking risks. Often, the writer or designers might be a part of the development. What happens in the room will change how they approach the play.

Perhaps the biggest difference between a development and a rehearsal is the role of the actors: in a rehearsal actors work to deepen their own understanding of the play and create a repeatable performance. In a way, the rehearsal is about providing the actors with what they need in order to be able to do their job. Conversely, in a development, the actors are there to serve the play and give the creative team what they need in order to do *their* jobs.

For example, in a development an actor might be asked to deliver a monologue in a particular way: this does not mean that this is how it should be delivered in the final performance, rather someone wanted to hone in on an element of the text in order to illuminate it. It is important for an actor to work without ego in a development. Perhaps after they perform that monologue, the monologue is cut. This does not mean that the actor delivered it poorly: it means that the development revealed to the writer that the monologue was not necessary.

In new works where rehearsal and development take place in the same period, it can be useful to differentiate between the two. A director might explain that in the first two weeks they will be workshopping the text and then they will shift into rehearsal mode. Or perhaps the director might invite the writer into the rehearsal room and announce to the cast 'today we are workshopping scene 2'. When this happens, the actors should be prepared to serve the needs of the workshop and be ready for this scene to change as a result of their work.

REHEARSAL ROOM BASICS

Be **punctual**. In theatre, if you're early you're on time. If you're on time you're late. Cast are expected to arrive before their call time so that they will be ready to work, physically, vocally and mentally as soon as the time arrives. In professional contexts, arriving late to rehearsal can result in being removed from the project. However, if running late, let the stage manager know.

There are no **phones** in the rehearsal room. If there is an emergency that requires an actor to leave their phone on, they should explain the situation to the director and stage manager and ask if the stage manager can look after their phone for the day. The rehearsal space needs to be a focused, energised space. A phone going off is distracting and an actor spending all their spare time on their phones is disrespectful to those working around them.

Bring **script and pencil** to every rehearsal. Take notes. A forgotten rehearsal is a wasted rehearsal.

In any production, cast and crew alike will spend a lot of time **watching**. This is the nature of the work and it is not a bad thing: theatre makers learn their craft by watching others. Time spent in the world of this play is never wasted time; it is time to absorb the work you've been doing, come to a greater understanding of the production, study lines and reflect on the notes from the director.

Cast and crew **must not direct** other actors. That is the job of the director alone. If an actor asks a colleague for feedback, it is important to them to speak to the director.

Rehearsals leave room for **breaks**. Even when the production is close to opening, taking breaks is not a luxury but a necessity. Exhaustion leads to mistakes, which can lead to injury. It is the responsibility of the company, the stage manager and director to schedule appropriate breaks but, in turn, it is the responsibility of the cast and crew to be back and ready to work as soon as the break is over.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE DIRECTOR AND TAKING NOTES

A director's time is valuable but every cast and crew member is a valued member of the team whose thoughts and questions are important.

However, it is important to operate with an awareness of the other elements of the production that the director is holding together. Logistical questions should be directed to the stage manager (for example, 'where do I enter from in scene 2?' or 'what time am I called tomorrow?') but the director is the first port of call for questions, thoughts or concerns regarding character or the artistic vision of the production.

When speaking to the director, find a time when they appear less busy and ask if they have a moment to talk. Before rehearsals begin or at the end of the day are the best times but be ready for the director to ask if they can schedule another time, as they may be preparing or processing something that happened in the room. Alternatively, if you think you have a difficult question, you could email, giving the director time to consider their answer.

Most rooms create space for *offers*. These are things actor/creative try out on the floor or suggest as the team is discussing a scene. Being brave and making offers is the job of the actor and creative but they must be prepared for a 'no'. If this happens, they should accept it, remembering that the director is sitting outside the scene and has a broader understanding of the play as a whole. Remember that a 'no' should not stop an artist from making offers in the future: they may lead to other ideas.

At the end of runs, the director may call the company together to give notes. When given a note, write it down and accept it. Protesting ('I thought I was doing that') or asking too many

questions will make the notes session drag on for a long time. If confused by a note, best practice is to write it down and approach the director at the end of the notes to clarify.

From the director's point of view, it is important to schedule time to speak with performers and creatives. If you know someone is struggling, schedule a phone call outside of rehearsal time.

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO FEEL SAFE

Theatres can be dangerous places: theatre works with physically and emotionally demanding material, uses dangerous equipment and can involve working at great height. In addition to this a culture of 'yes, and' has taught actors to take risks with their wellbeing and take pride in pushing themselves to physical and mental extremes. Because of these factors, safety must be of the utmost concern. This includes physical and mental safety.

It is the job of the production manager to carry out a risk assessment for any physically or emotionally demanding action to ensure that it can be performed in a safe and repeatable manner and to suggest additional precautions that can be taken. The director and stage manager are also responsible for safety: they ensure that scenes are well rehearsed and actors are not being asked to take personal risks for the sake of the production.

The best way to ensure that everyone, performers, designers and crew stay safe is to listen to the production manager and stage manager and to follow procedures in that have been put in place for demanding scenes and tasks. Even if you have performed the scene one hundred times, never cut corners.

Mental health and emotional safety is just as important as physical safety. All rehearsal rooms must have procedures in place to ensure that everyone is supported and protected. Some of the protocols used to protect physical health are also important tools for protecting mental health: completing risk assessments for emotionally challenging material and carefully choreographing the action so that it is repeatable will help ensure the well-being of the performers and crew.

In every risk assessment a production manager asks what precautions are in place to ensure that the risk is mitigated. Some helpful precautions to help protect the mental health of cast members might include:

1. Discuss problematic content with auditionees prior to casting. Ensure there are no surprises.
2. Make space for discussion of the material prior to rehearsing that scene.
3. Let performers know in advance when these scenes will be rehearsed.
4. Clear the room of unnecessary personnel during these rehearsals. The stage manager or production manager should always be present.
5. Just because someone offers something in an improvisation (such as taking off their clothes or being intimate with another actor) does not mean that they want to do this in the show. Ensure that discussions around boundaries and safety are ongoing and fluid.
6. Create a space for cast members to discuss costumes with their designer to ensure they feel comfortable in what they are wearing.
7. Ensuring that cast members never improvise when a fellow actor is performing a role which makes them feel vulnerable. Respect their process and support them.
8. Keep the discussion of these scenes professional.
9. Debrief after the first rehearsals of this content.

10. Have a good warm down that allows the performers to leave the content in the rehearsal room at the end of the day.

If a scene requires physical intimacy or violence it is advisable to have a detailed discussion with those involved about boundaries. Setting clear boundaries ('I'd like not to be touched on thighs, but I'm happy for my arms to be grabbed really hard') can make a room feel safer and an action feel stronger. If the director is new to directing, it is always good to get advice from more experienced directors on how set boundaries and develop strategies if problems occur.

If you as a company member have doubts about action, task or safety in the rehearsal room communication is always the key. If you ever feel unsafe in a rehearsal room report it. Don't worry about making a fuss or whether your concern is valid. If you report it, then things can change, action can be taken. If you don't and you wait for people to notice you might end up putting yourself or others in danger. Ideally, speak to the director or stage manager but if this is not possible, find someone on the production team you feel comfortable with: this might be the production manager, designer or teaching staff.

The best way to look after yourself in the rehearsal room is to look after yourself outside of the rehearsal room: get a good amount of sleep, eat well, exercise and know who you can talk to when things get difficult.

WORKING IN DIVERSE REHEARSAL ROOMS

After years of theatre in Australia being dominated by white, able-bodied, hetero-normative makers, theatre is finally starting to reflect some of the diversity of Australian communities. Some. There is still a long way to go.

However, because of our history of anglo Australian makers dominating creative practices, many rooms still operate without an awareness of the needs of others. Open conversations early in the rehearsal process can help create space for diversity and remove some of the emotional labour from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), neurodiverse or disabled collaborators. Don't wait for things to get to the point where someone must speak out; anticipate that everyone in your rehearsal room may have different needs and discuss them early.

Here are some things for project leaders to consider:

1. Be careful not to ask one person to speak on behalf of entire cultural groups. This is particularly true of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders: remember that Australia is made up of hundreds of Aboriginal nations.
2. If the play does include content about other cultures, ensure that the company has engaged in discussions with community and has permission to present this content. This can be particularly important in regards to the use of Indigenous cultural practices and languages.
3. When casting, ensure that the type of roles CALD performers are asked to perform are not reflective of unconscious bias: productions that cast people of colour in the roles of the villains or servants must consider why they are doing this. If you are concerned about casting choices, have a conversation with the director about their decisions.
4. Create space for an open discussion about the needs of those in the room. This may include time and space for prayer, access to the building, types of lighting that cannot be

used, extra time or assistance learning lines and things that may be triggering for neurodiverse cast members such as loud sounds or many people talking at once.

5. Particularly when working with disabled or neurodiverse company members, have a discussion of support systems or practices needed to ensure a happy and safe rehearsal room. This may mean allowing time for people to remove themselves from the room if necessary and having support workers on hand. Everyone has different needs and no one system can support everyone.

Jess Thom (Tourettes Hero, disability activist and award-winning theatre maker) talks about a social model of disability: 'I am not disabled, society makes me disabled' It makes her disabled by creating spaces she cannot access both because of her wheelchair and because her vocal and physical tics are considered socially unacceptable. Think about this in relation to your rehearsal room: are there physical, social or cultural barriers that prevent people from accessing your work as collaborators or audience members?

More information of creating safe work spaces for all participants and on working with Indigenous Artists can be found here:

Australia Council's protocols for working with Indigenous Artists:

<http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/about/protocols-for-working-with-indigenous-artists/>

A reading list on racism and white supremacy compiled by Roj Amedi and Linh Thùy Nguyễn:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xBvwhPn-EllJj9xph4MGfw0j8PU0oUXRp9DXF2t0w18/edit>

DESIGN PRESENTATIONS

Design presentation are when the set, costume, lighting, sound and AV designers present their plans for the production design.

When these presentations happen can differ depending on the nature of the production and company. Professional companies working from an existing script will incorporate the set and costume presentations into the first rehearsal so that actors can understand the world they are working in. In a longer process of a devised or student designed work, the presentation may come later but should happen at least four weeks before production week.

If all elements of design are presented on the same day, some elements may be less developed than others. Lighting cannot develop a plan separate from the Set Design, for instance. This means that at the presentation, the lighting designer may present gels (colours they will use) and used the set designer's model to explain the direction of lights and where key lighting fixtures will be placed but they may not have a full grid plan.

SITZPROBE

Sitzprobe is a part of the rehearsal process specific to musicals and operas. It is the rehearsal when the cast and orchestra/band comes together. It literally means 'seated rehearsal': the blocking and movement are not the purpose of the sitzprobe. This is a rehearsal wholly focused on the music and integrating these two groups that have been rehearsing separately: vocalists and instrumentalist. This usually happens right before production week.

CHAPTER 3. PRODUCTION WEEK AND PERFORMANCE

Production week is the week prior to the show opening. It is when all the technical elements – lighting, sound, set, props, costume, AV – are added to the action, cues are *plotted* and the show has its technical and dress runs.

Key things to remember:

1. These weeks are hard work. Look after yourself: clear your schedule, cook meals in advance, stay hydrated, eat healthy and get as much sleep as possible.
2. They are time consuming. The director, stage manager, designers and techs will be there all day and often well into the night. Actors will usually not be present for the *rig* but should approach production week assuming long days and working into the evening. Getting a production week schedule to all involved early is very useful so that the team can prepare for their workload.
3. The director's attention is now split between cast and crew. Text that the cast had weeks to work on, operators and mechs now have days to perfect. At these times it is important to be patient, supportive of those working hard and to serve the production as a whole.
4. The team just got larger. Refresh your memory of the complexity of your collaborator's roles and welcome new members of the team who have joined for this week (such as follow spot operators and mic techs). Support each other: you are working towards a shared goal.
5. Prioritise safe working practices.
6. If you are unsure of how to do something, ask your director or stage manager (see *Chapter 2, Communicating with the director*)
7. If you break something, report it.
8. Listen to the stage manager.

SAFETY

Safety is always important in theatre but in production week the company will be working with new and sometimes dangerous equipment, they will be tired and stressed so it is important to take extra steps.

For companies moving into the theatre for the first time, the production, stage or venue manager should induct everyone into the space, detailing evacuation procedure, the placement of first aid kits and reminding the company of who their first aiders are.

In production week, the space is a place of work and construction and thus, many hazards are present. Basic precautions that should be taken include:

1. Wearing closed-toed shoes until the stage manager says the space is clear and safe.
2. Taping down cables and pointing out trip hazards to cast and crew who may be working in low light.
3. Where possible, mark trip hazards and edges of stairs and elevated platforms with glow tape.
4. Listen to the people who know what they are doing: stage managers, venue techs and mechs.
5. Before turning off house lights, let people know that the space is about to go dark.
6. If you don't know how to do something, ask for help.
7. Take regular breaks in which the company leaves the theatre.

8. If rigging, do not leave equipment at the top of ladders and double check that lights are hung the correct way up so gel frames or barn doors won't fall off.
9. Report all injuries or near accidents to the stage manager. Even if you didn't hurt yourself, the company may be able to learn from your incident and find a way to make the space safer for all.

PARTS OF A PRODUCTION WEEK

In a production week, multiple things may be happening at once: the set is being built, lights are going up and speakers are being tested.

This means that scheduling is a complicated and production-specific thing. For instance, maybe the seating bank needs to be built. If the seating will make rigging difficult, this will need to be built after the rigging. Does the floor need to be painted? This should be done at the end of the day so it can dry overnight. Will ladders damage this painting? Perhaps it needs to be done after rigging or time needs to be left for patch ups. During focusing, most of the lights will be off in the theatre so the set designer will need to finish building before this.

Actors are usually absent for the bump in, perhaps coming in as *walkers* for the focus or plot or perhaps just rejoining the process at the cue-to-cue. However, even if you are an actor, it is helpful to know the complexity of what goes into making a show.

GEL

Gels are used to change the colour of lights (although LED lights can be programmed to desired colours without the use of gels. Gelling involves putting the desired colours into the correct lanterns. This is also when gobos and barn doors are added to lanterns. It is easiest to do this before the lanterns are rigged but changes can be made once they are up.

RIG

The rig is when the crew hang lights and speakers in place. In addition to the existing bars in the venue, rigging may involve putting in additional bars or stands so as to have lights or speakers in other places.

Speaker placement is a big part of the sound designer's job. In many shows there will be both speakers for the audience and smaller fold back speakers that ensure that the cast can hear the sound. This is particularly important for musicals. Speakers may be placed in the rig but can also be put to the side of the stage, behind or under the audience.

CABLING

Cables need to be run for all electrical elements. If they are running along the ground, they should be taped down for safety and if in the rig they should be taped to avoid sitting against the hot lanterns and so they do not hang down into the space.

PATCHING

Patching is the process of connecting the lanterns to power and to a lighting board. Lights are run through a dimmer rack, which regulates the amount of electricity going into a light and, consequently, their brightness. The dimmer is then connected to a lighting desk for easy operation. Each dimmer has a number which will be programmed into a corresponding channel on the board. So when the operator fades up a channel on the desk, it will be programmed to fade up a particular dimmer number.

Most lighting designers or operators will try to patch in a way that is memorable and pairs lights with similar functions together. For example, channels 1 and 2 might be the lights that make up your warm *wash* and 3 and 4 might be your cool wash.

A key thing to consider in patching is how much power can be run through a dimmer. This is called the power load and is important for working safely in the theatre. The safe load will depend on dimmer and also how the venue is wired. This information maybe in the venue guide but if it is not, the designer will need to speak to venue managers, technicians or other designers who may have knowledge of the venue in order to ensure that they are working safely.

FOCUS

Focusing is pointing the lights in the right direction and ensuring they have the right beam spread and edge. A beam can be narrow or wide, lighting either a small or big space, and the edge can be soft or hard. When you imagine a spotlight that is a hard-edged beam: a clearly defined circle on the stage as opposed to a fuzzy pool of light.

LEVELS

When the volume of different music tracks is set. This should be done remembering that audience in the venue do change the acoustic of the room and make some things a little softer.

PLOT

When cues are programmed into the board.

Keeping a careful record of your plot is crucial. For modern desks this means saving the plot regularly on two different devices (the board itself and a USB). For older boards, this means keeping notes of what each cue is made up of. For example:

LX Q4: 1 @ 40%, 3 & 4 @ 80%

This means the lights plugged into channels 1, 3 and 4 are on, with the percentage telling us how bright each light will be. For modern desks.

The stage manager will record where in the script each cue will go and any additional information they need to call the show well. For example: LX 13 - Visual cue when Sam touches DSL (down stage left) light switch.

SOUND CHECK

While levels may be set before the cast comes in, it is important to do a sound check with cast present, particularly in a musical. This will involve any mics used by cast or band and levels will be affected by the volume of the individual performers. This is also an opportunity to test out foldback and ensure that the cast/band can hear themselves.

CUE TO CUE

Also called a ‘top and tail’, this is a run of the cues in the show. Working chronologically through the script, actors perform parts of the play leading up to technical cues and out of technical cues. This is a time when problems are discovered and solved so patience is crucial.

For actors, it is important to keep acting until told to stop. Perhaps you think there isn’t a cue happening but maybe lighting is testing out a gradual fade so your accurate timing will be important. Listening to the stage manager will be crucial for a smooth cue to cue.

This will be the first time the cast have worked with much of the tech so it will be process of discovery: with sound you might need to project more than you have been and a small step to the left will ensure that you stay in your light.

TECH HOLD

A tech hold is time reserved before the start of a run for designers and technicians to fix any problems that have become apparent and directors to touch up anything that needs to be touched up.

TECH RUN

Technical Rehearsal is the first time the show is run in the venue with all lighting, set, sound, av, costume and mechanical elements. It includes difficult technical moves the actors might have to make such as working on a wet surface, climbing a set piece or working in the dark. It is run by the stage manager. Depending on the amount of tech in a show, this can be time consuming and difficult; an exercise in both patience and endurance. At times things will come to a stop completely while a problem is solved. At these times, those not involved in fixing the problem should conserve energy and remain quiet.

DRESS REHEARSAL

The dress rehearsal is a full run of the show with all technical and costume elements. Ideally, it is best to push through problems where possible rather than stopping to work them out but this may be unavoidable.

COMMS AND CALLING

'Cans' or 'comms' is radio communication within the theatre, used by the crew. There is some basic protocol for using comms that make it more efficient:

1. Always say when you're on and off cans so people know who is listening.
2. Don't swear, chit chat or bitch. Cans are for work communication. This is especially true when the stage manager is calling the show
3. When given an instruction or standby, acknowledge that you've heard.
4. When not talking, mics should stay off so that a cough or sneeze doesn't deafen everyone but check that it is off when you take your comms off in particular.

Throughout the performance, the stage manager tells operators when to activate all lighting, sound, AV and mechanical cues. This might sound something like this:

Stage Manager: Standing by for LX 11 through 13 and Sound 7.

LX: LX standing by.

SND: Sound standing by.

At this point any other dialogue should cease until these cues are called.

Stage Manager: LX 11... Go.

LX 11 is fired.

Stage Manager: LX 12 ... Go.

LX 13 ... Go.

SND 7 ... Go.

Standing by for Sound 8.

SND: Standing by.

SEASON

Your hard work comes together in the performance season. Plays change when seen and so do companies. It is important to stay in control of these changes: enjoy them and discover new things but don't forget the control and discoveries made in rehearsal.

PREPARATION

Respect for the performance space and process is crucial. The theatre has been a workspace and maybe even a building zone until mere hours ago but now it becomes something else. There still the work but it is also important to create space for the actors' preparation. Just as actors need to respect the concentration and hard work of the crew throughout production week, it is important for the crew to respect the journey the cast are on. Quiet voices, communication through comms rather than shouts and leaving communication with the cast to the stage manager and director will help greatly.

Pre-show checklists incredibly helpful for ensuring that everything is where it needs to be and everyone is ready for performance.

PREVIEW AND OPENING

A preview is a performance with an audience prior to opening night. These audiences are usually paying less than those who attend the subsequent performances and at times the director might make an announcement before the show reserving the right to call a halt to the show if necessary.

The opening night is the first official night of the show. It is usually when VIPs and reviewers are invited and often culminates with an opening night event.

THE RUN AND REVIEWS

Your job is to be ready to work. As with rehearsals, look after yourself throughout the run. Get sleep, avoid excessive alcohol, eat well and listen to your body. Arrive for your call with plenty of time to do the personal preparation you need to do in order to work well.

Not all shows are reviewed but, if yours is going to be, it can be helpful to discuss this beforehand. It is important to keep reviews in perspective: good or bad they are just one person's opinion.

Many people advise actors not to read reviews until the run is over. Even if the review is good, it may change things about an actor's performance. If you do chose to read the reviews, do not discuss them in the theatre out of respect for those who have chosen not to read them.

BUMP OUT

Bump out is when the company returns the theatre to its original state: clean, rig stripped and all equipment and costumes from the show removed. Theatres will have instructions for how they want their venue to be left. It important to follow these carefully and not to leave the space until everything on their checklist has been completed satisfactorily.

It is important to discuss the schedule and plan prior to the final show: allocate jobs, plan vehicles for the transportation of set and costumes and have cleaning equipment ready to go. Usually when the last show finishes, cast are given a small amount of time to get changed and speak to family or friends who were in the audience before returning to the theatre to get to work.

As with bump in, there are specialist jobs that specific people need to do. Things untrained cast/crew can do include:

1. Sorting costumes
2. Cleaning the dressing room
3. Sweeping, vacuuming and mopping the space
4. Removing tape from cables and steps
5. Stacking chairs
6. Driving sets or costumes to wherever they are being stored

CHAPTER 4. GLOSSARY OF THEATRE TERMS

AD Assistant Director

Amplifiers A piece of equipment which amplifies or increases the sound captured by a microphone or replayed from CD or computer. Each loudspeaker needs a separate amplifier.

Apron The part of the stage that projects in front of the curtain in a proscenium arch theatre.

AV Projection or video elements

Bar An aluminium pipe suspended over the stage on which lanterns are hung.

Barn doors (Also called shutters) An arrangement of two or four metal plates placed in front of the lens of a profile lantern to control the shape of the light beam

Black A blackout or going to black is switching all lights out at once, leaving the stage in complete darkness.

Blocking The rehearsed movements the actor will make on stage

Board Another name for a control desk, either lighting or sound.

Call the show Throughout the performance, the stage manager tells operators when to activate all lighting, sound, AV and mechanical cues

Cans/Comms Radio communication within the theatre

Cheat To make an action on stage look realistic without actually doing what you seem to be doing; e.g. an actor looking towards the audience in the general direction of the person she is talking to, is cheating.

Cue 1) An instruction given by the Stage Manager to one of the technical departments to take some action; e.g. LX Cue 7 is the seventh instruction in the play to the lighting department

2) The point at which an actor must enter or speak

Curtain call Bows at the end of a play

Crossfade A light or lighting state coming up as another one is going down

Cyclorama (cyc) A very large piece of white fabric, tensioned on two or more sides, which covers the entire back wall of the stage. It can be lit in various colours and have slides or gobos projected onto it.

Doubling When an actor plays more than one role within a production

Down stage The front of the stage

Flats An oblong frame of timber, covered with either canvas or hardboard and painted, which forms part of the set

Fly To raise into the roof (fly in) or lower onto the stage (fly out) scenery or lighting bars. This can only be done in theatres with fly towers. People who operate these are fliers or flymen.

Floods A floodlight: a lantern that gives a wide-spreading, unfocused beam of light.

Focus To direct the beam of a light in the desired direction and set the beam to the desired spread and edge

FoH Front of House 1) The team who look after the audience including ushers and ticketing
2) Anything that happens in front of the curtain

Follow spot (Also called domes) A type of profile spotlight with iris adjustor and a handle so that it can be used to follow a performer around the stage in a beam of light of exactly the right size.

Gel A transparent coloured filter used to alter the colour the light projected through it

Gobo A piece of metal or glass, which fits into the gate of a profile spot and projects a pattern onto the set

Go up When the show opens

Greenroom Dressing room – where the cast can prepare before the show and relax when not on stage

House The part of the theatre in which the audience sits. ‘House is live’ means the doors have been opened and the audience are now entering the space.

Legs Curtains that cover the wings

LX Lighting

LXQ A lighting cue

Marking Up Marking the rehearsal room floor with tape to give cast/crew an accurate visual representation of the size and shape of the set and prominent set features

Mixer Mixing Desk or sound desk mixes together and modifying sounds from a variety of sources: microphones, computers and CDs

Notes The directors comments on the performance and instructions for alterations

Offers Things an actor/creative tries out on the floor or suggests as the team is discussing a scene

OP Opposite prompt side – the right of the stage if you are looking towards the audience

Open white The colour of a lantern without any gel in it

Paper the house Give out free tickets (comps) to fill the house

Plotting Setting and recording technical cues into a lighting or sound board

PM Production Manager

Prac A prac (or practical) set piece or light must work when used in real life eg: the actor switches on a desk lamp or record player and it works

Prompt Copy A folder in which all elements of the performance are recorded against the script.

Prompt Side The left of the stage if you are looking towards the audience

Props An object used by an actor on stage, generally considered to be a moveable object as opposed to scenery or electrical equipment

Props List A list of required props

Rake The angle at which a seating bank or stage rises

Rig 1) The bars in the theatre from which lanterns and speakers are hung 2) To hang lanterns and speakers in place

Revolve A stage or part of a stage, which can revolve

Rostra Movable (but heavy) platforms

SM Stage Manager

SND Sound

SNDQ A sound cue

Special A lighting fixture used for a very specific moment in the play

Stage left The left of the stage if you are looking towards the audience

Stage right The right of the stage if you are looking towards the audience

State Lighting settings for a particular cue

Strike To remove something from stage

Strobe A lantern that emits a regular, controllable series of high power flashes rather than continuous light and can induce seizures in people with epilepsy

Thrust Part of the stage that protrudes into auditorium with audience on three sides

Upstage 1) The back of the stage furthest from the audience 2) to pull attention from another actor or moment

Walkers People standing and moving where the actors will move on stage to aid with the focusing and plotting of lights

Wash A state that lights the whole stage with an even and uniform coverage of light

Wings The sides of the stage out of sight of the audience