STANDBY PROGRESS, PROGRESS GO:

AN ORAL HISTORY OF STAGE MANAGEMENT

AND THE DIGITAL AGE

By

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Abstract: Traditionally, the study of theatre history has been primarily concerned with the more "glamorous," or at least the more visible aspects and occupations of theatre, namely plays, playwrights, and actors. Comparatively little attention has been given to theatre design and technology, and even less to theatre technicians. As a stage manager myself, the history of the profession is of particular interest, especially since it has not been comprehensively explored in academic writing. Stage management, although a young profession, has evolved considerably over its lifetime. Perhaps the most drastic changes to the profession have occurred in the last few decades as a result of advances in technology. Stage management as I learned it—complete with email, smartphones, file-sharing, and a myriad of sophisticated technologies now considered industry standard—was never practiced by many experienced stage managers tasked with teaching the discipline to others. In the interest of preserving the history of stage management, this thesis is a qualitative assessment of a specific sampling of the stage management profession. I have interviewed four current and former professional stage managers whose careers spanned the advent of digital technology, in the style of an oral history. Through these interviews, I examine the evolution of stage management profession in the digital age, and how these changes affected the practitioners. This research helps to fill an important gap in the living history of theatre, chronicling the development of one of the most essential aspects of modern American theatrical production.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Most everybody's asleep in Grover's Corners. There are a few lights on:
> Shorty Hawkins, down at the depot, has just watched the Albany train go
> by. And at the livery stable somebody's setting up late and talking. Yes,
> it's clearing up. There are the stars doing their old, old crisscross journeys
> in the sky. Scholars haven't settled the matter yet, but they seem to think
> there are no living beings up there. Just chalk . . . or fire. Only this one is
> straining away, straining away all the time to make something of itself.
> The strain's so bad that every sixteen hours everybody lies down and gets
> a rest. He winds his watch. Hm. . . . Eleven o'clock in Grover's Corners.
> You get a good rest, too. Good night. (Wilder 103)

The narrator of the iconic last lines of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*—who began

the play by setting up tables on the previously bare stage—remains onstage for the entire

show. Alternately he provides exposition, moves furniture, steps into the action in various

bit parts, or simply maintains a presence on the sidelines, watching the action unfold.

When questions arise, he is the one who answers them. When problems occur, he solves

them for the characters and the audience alike. He helps guide the action, sheds light on

what is important, and maintains the show's sense of theatricality throughout. Wilder

gave this narrator a name familiar to anyone with a degree of experience in the theatre:

He is called the Stage Manager. Although the character's representation is not a literal depiction of the theatrical Stage Manager, his defining traits—problem-solving, communication, seeing ahead, doing what needs done—cannot help but resonate with anyone who has worked with a good one.

Wilder's choice of name was no accident; indeed, his fascination with this particular character was part of a trend. *Our Town* was his third play to feature an omniscient narrator called the Stage Manager who is able to manipulate the action onstage, and Wilder himself portrayed the role in multiple productions of *Our Town* (Gottlieb). While *Our Town*'s Stage Manager may be the most famous example of a theatrical character by that name, he was certainly not the last. Other successful plays including *Noises Off*, *Moon Over Buffalo*, *The Actor's Nightmare*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *Room Service*, *The Torch Bearers*, *Jitters*, *Anton in Show Business*, *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told*, and *42nd Street* have featured a Stage Manager in the dramatic action.

Not all dramatizations of a stage manager character are as conceptual as Wilder's in *Our Town*. While he chose to highlight some of the more abstract qualities that lie at the core of a good stage manager—helpfulness, wisdom, and quiet efficiency—many of the above examples opt for a more cartoonish depiction. Oftentimes, the stage manager is employed in show business comedies as a parody of the job—a tyrannical loudmouth with a clipboard, or a mother hen fretting and clucking over her actor/chicks. Regardless of what form these depictions of the stage manager take, they show that the role of the stage manager is ubiquitous enough in modern theatrical practice to warrant inclusion in meta-theatrical stories.

Unfortunately, the fascination that the figure of the stage manager holds for writers of fictitious plays has yet to manifest itself among theatrical scholars. The study of theatre history is still a recent development in Western society, and thus far theatre historiography has taken a surprisingly homogenous approach when it comes to deciding which aspects of production receive scholarly attention. The study of theatre history has been primarily concerned with the more "glamorous," or at least the more visible aspects and occupations of theatre—namely plays, playwrights, and actors. Narrowing the scope of theatre history in this way leaves out important elements of an art form so multi-faceted and collaborative in nature.

In the opening paragraph of his renowned directing book, *The Empty Space*, Peter Brook writes: "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" (Brook 9). Brook asserts that the only essential ingredients of a theatrical performance are a performer and an audience in a space, and some sort of story to be performed—perhaps in the form of traditional scripted drama, or something far more abstract. While it may be true that these are the only elements required for a theatrical performance to take place, in the Western theatrical tradition these are rarely the only features of a given performance. Other more or less standard facets of modern productions include sets, costumes, lights, sound, spectacle, and a bevy of theatre technicians to oversee all these moving parts. Historians have given comparatively little attention to theatre design and technology, and even less to theatre technicians like stage managers. This presents a major opportunity for future scholarly research to fill the gaps in the history.

The stage management profession—which developed largely parallel to that of the director—is still one of the least documented in historical records (to the point that it is difficult to say precisely when stage management as it is currently practiced came to exist). Ironically, even though these individuals were often responsible for creating the archival materials that give scholars invaluable insights into past theatre productions, early stage managers—who they were, and what precisely they did—are largely lost to history. As a stage manager myself, the history of my profession is of particular interest, especially since it has not been comprehensively explored in academic writing.

Although a young profession, stage management has evolved considerably over its lifetime. In the opening pages of his book *Stage Management*, a favorite introductory volume in university curriculums, Lawrence Stern defines a stage manager as follows: "The person who has responsibility for making the entire production run smoothly, on stage and backstage, in pre-rehearsal, rehearsal, performance, and post-performance phases, is the stage manager" (Stern 2). To take this definition one step further, I would add that the stage manager employs the tools of careful observation, prompt action, and clear communication in pursuit of a smooth production process.

Stage managers are involved in every stage of production—they begin working before the actors, and continue after the director and designers move on. As a constant presence in the production, the stage manager is able to serve as an open line of communication between the director, designers, cast, crew, and administration. By observing potential challenges that others are not present to observe, the stage manager is able to take prompt action to remedy the situation as much as possible in the moment, and follow up their immediate action by communicating challenges to the appropriate

members of the production team so that they may be promptly (or even preemptively) solved. By so doing, the smooth running of the production is ensured.

The core responsibility of the stage manager as identified by Stern, to make the show run smoothly, is carried out in every successful theatre production, whether or not that task is bestowed upon a single individual identified as the stage manager. Indeed, for the majority of Western theatre history, in some of the most fruitful periods of theatrical innovation—the theatre of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Lope De Vega, and Molière—there was no such thing as a stage manager, at least not in name. Around the nineteenth century, by combining a myriad of roles that had traditionally been filled by actor-managers, prompters, call boys, and others into a position meant for a single person or a small team, stage management became a highly specialized, codified, and respected profession:

> In the nineteenth-century theatre the term "stage management" implied the organizing and instructing of the actors in their roles and the overall control of such matters as setting and design; in other words it meant more or less what we mean nowadays by "direction." When and how the term 'stage management changed its meaning is a subject deserving further investigation, but it seems to have been a gradual process . . . . Productions were becoming more complex and it was becoming more and more difficult for an actor to be both director and star player. The first response to this problem was to give the actor-director an assistant. (Henson 98-100)

For the most part, the essential function of a stage manager has not changed much since the nineteenth century: run rehearsals and meetings, facilitate communication between

members of the production team and cast, enforce rules and schedules, create and maintain the prompt book, call the show, and take overall responsibility for a seamless production from start to finish.

Though the essence of stage management has remained fairly constant for more than a century now, the execution of the job has not. In his article "'Distract Parcels in Combined Sums': The Stratford Festival Archives' Stage-Managerial Collections," Toby Malone examines the stage manager's most tangible contribution to the production process: the prompt book. Using the Stratford Festival's considerable collection of prompt books as his sample, Malone cites the formatting of these comprehensive archival accounts of theatrical productions as an excellent tool for observing the evolution of the stage management profession:

> Despite the breadth of approaches throughout the Festival's history, there is a noticeable chronological thread that links to stage managers' central endowment of knowledge through mentorship. Young stage managers may learn their profession at theatre school, but the true learning is passed on as they toil as assistant stage managers or prompters . . . we see approaches that span the development of stage management as a professional industry, as each generation learns from its predecessors and layers in lessons from the past. (Malone 68)

The Toronto company's collection of prompt books spans sixty-one seasons, making it easy to observe how apprentices build on the tricks and innovations of their mentors as they graduate into full-fledged stage managers, so that each generation has a larger toolkit than the one prior. As the stage management profession solidified and prompt books grew

more sophisticated, their utility during the production process and their value as archival resources also increased.

By comparing earlier prompt books with later ones, one can see how the development of stage management as a separate, codified profession led to a more coherent production record. This allows for production conventions to be more easily reproduced or studied at a later date. "Beyond an archival video, prompt-books are the best possible entry into recreating a production, both for researchers and for possible remounts" (Malone 67). Here, Malone reiterates the unique nature of the prompt book as an archival artifact. With their detailed documentation of individual productions, prompt books offer the closest glimpse of what the original production was like after everyone involved (perhaps including the theatre itself) is long gone. The value of prompt books as archival materials illustrates the essential part that stage managers now play in the continuation of theatre history. The work of the stage manager contributes directly to theatre history as well as to theatre practice—a fact that marks its near-absence from history texts as an academic deficit.

Perhaps the most extensive changes to the stage management profession have occurred in the last few decades as a result of advances in technology. Although technological advances specific to stage management are not nearly as prevalent as those specific to theatre design, stage managers have nonetheless embraced a number of technologies and adapted them to their unique purpose. Stage management is largely an art of communication, and thanks to the Internet, the way humans communicate has been fundamentally changed. Stage management as I learned it—complete with email, laptops, smartphones, software programs for scheduling and file sharing, and a myriad of

sophisticated technologies now considered industry standards—was never practiced by most of my professors!

In the interest of preserving and further developing the history of stage management, I determined to examine the emergence of major technological advances in the profession. The relevant lines of inquiry include how new technologies reshaped stage management practice, and whether or not practitioners reshaped themselves in turn as these changes took place (and to what extent). In order to document major shifts in the stage management profession that have taken place in the 20th and 21st centuries—which remain largely undocumented—I rely on firsthand accounts from stage managers who were working in theatre as these shifts took place. Not only did these individuals shape stage management as it is currently practiced, many of them continue to shape the profession to this day as both practitioners and educators.

This thesis offers a qualitative assessment of a specific sampling of the stage management profession, in the style of an oral history. I interviewed current and former professional stage managers whose careers spanned the advent of digital technology (primarily 1980-2010). Through these interviews, I trace the evolution of the stage management profession in the digital age, and explore how technological advances affected practitioners in the field in all stages of a typical production process—specifically in the realm of communication—as well as in the training process. I believe this research will help fill an important gap in the living history of theatre, chronicling the development of one of the essential aspects of modern American theatrical production.

Review of Literature

The body of literature on the history of stage management, and stage management generally, is quite limited. This comes as no shock, really. If a non-stage manager broaches the topic, it is usually only to offer basic definitions of the job in relation to other aspects of technical theatre or theatre administration. Often this will encompass a paragraph or two of a theatre book. These authors are generally quick to point out that the role of the stage manager is a very important one, but their job description is vague at best.

The longest work I was able to find devoted solely to the topic of stage management history was a 1988 article in *Theatre Notebook*. The article, written by Iris Henson and titled "Stage Management Then and Now," offers an account of how the modern concept of stage manager developed in 19th century theatres. Confining the discussion of stage management to a span of approximately forty years, the article is all of five pages in length. Within it, Henson states that the subject warrants further consideration by academics (99). However, in the two decades since, her call for more research on stage managers appears to have gone largely unanswered.

Another informative albeit brief article on stage management, entitled "The Dramaturgy of Stage Management: A Constructed Conversation", appeared in a 2004 issue of *Canadian Theatre Review*. This article, which explores the possible ways in which stage managers contribute to production dramaturgy throughout rehearsals, was of particular interest due to its structure. Author Brian Quirt interviewed three Toronto stage managers and constructed the article from these conversations, similarly to my own approach in this study. The four-page article gives a fascinating glimpse into the diversity

of experience that makes up the career of a seasoned stage manager. This article, along with Toby Malone's article referenced earlier in this introduction, offer a perspective of stage management practice in Canada—while the participants in this study all had careers based in the United States.

A few examples of works on stage management can be found in theses and dissertations of theatre enthusiasts who have settled into other disciplines, but have stage management experience at the amateur or college level. One is Robin Leigh Billings' thesis entitled *Stage Management: Interpersonal Communication Skills for the Stage Manager*, completed at Texas A & M University-Commerce in 2012. Though written for a Communication program, the project revolves around communication strategies specific to the theatrical stage manager. This topic proves especially appropriate, as the role of a stage manager is that of an open line of communication among all individuals and entities involved in a given production—cast, designers, director, and theatre/producer.

This study offers a detailed analysis of the communication component of stage management, and is unique in its clinical, theory-based approach to the topic. The author explores many facets of communication that are of particular interest to stage management, including group communication, nonverbal communication, and conflict management. However, Billings focuses on only one aspect of the practice, and does not delve into specific information about the history of stage management or individual stage managers at all. The study is also limited by the scope of the author's experience; Billings served as a university stage manager, but lacks experience at the professional level. Though similar in many regards, the latter involves many additional challenges. For

example, within a university environment a production team is typically aided in communication by physical proximity. In professional theatre this is often not the case.

Renee Janette Sokol's 2006 dissertation, *Staging and Production: A Proposal to Develop a Software Program for Opera and Theatre Directors* provides another distinctive study of stage management practices from an outside discipline. Sokol wrote her dissertation as part of the Doctor of Musical Arts program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Although not a stage manager herself, Sokol's study offers perhaps the best scholarly discussion of 21st century technology as it relates to stage management practice. This study seems almost prophetic in its discussion of what amounts to a virtual prompt book—a technology that has come into being since the time of her writing and is now being embraced by some producing organizations (including my current academic institution).

In her dissertation, Sokol addresses the issue of stage management practice and technology head-on, noting that while stage managers have adapted many different technologies to their purposes, little energy has been spent on custom developing technologies specifically for them: "Why has a computer software program not been developed to coordinate and organize the theatrical production process? . . . . No computer-based tools for rehearsal or blocking in theatre are available, while sound, design and lighting technologies are on the cutting edge" (2). In response to this lack, she outlines her plan for a software program she names "Artisterené," which bears a remarkable resemblance to present day programs such as Virtual Stage Manager, Virtual Callboard, and The Show Hub.

Sokol outlines the benefits such a program would offer to theatrical stage managers, directors, and producers as a means of streamlining the production process. Her exploration of one specific technological opportunity as it applies to stage management is excellent, albeit limited in scope. In her introduction, Sokol frankly states, "This study is not an in-depth historical paper" (6). And while stage management is addressed in the dissertation, the focus is more on directing—and how such a software could save directors time in their process of planning and running rehearsals (Sokol 79).

While non-stage managers may lack the intimate knowledge of the profession necessary for in-depth analysis, those who do possess this knowledge often have a different focus. Most stage managers, if they pursue an advanced degree at all, obtain a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in stage management—a highly specialized practitioners' degree, in which little formal writing is typically required. Students of some MFA programs are still required to write a thesis-length document as part of their degree completion. The MFA in Stage Management at the University of California-San Diego, for example, takes this approach.

A cursory glance at the titles of recent graduate projects from UC San Diego would suggest that there is plenty being written about stage management, particularly at this institution! However, these projects befit a practitioner's approach—as these individual case studies focus on one stage manager's personal experiences at the university level. The authors each provide an analysis of their individual performances and processes as stage managers for a single production, with little to no external scholarship required. This is a reflection of a larger trend; most of the writing generated by current or former stage managers consists of practitioners' texts, such as how-to

manuals, rather than formal historical writing. Some, but not all, of these how-to

manuals include a brief, very broad summary of stage management history (again,

typically a paragraph or two).

There are dozens of these how-to-stage-manage books available, but three have

become standard texts in college-level stage management classes: *Stage Management* by

Laurence Stern, *The Backstage Guide to Stage Management* by Thomas A. Kelly, and

The Stage Management Handbook by Daniel A. Ionazzi. These three books are of

particular interest to this study because the authors belong to the generation of stage

managers I am targeting, and their original dates of publication predate many

technologies now considered commonplace in stage management practice (Stern

published his first edition in 1974, Kelly in 1991, Ionazzi his first and only edition in

1992). All three of these books organize themselves roughly according to the chronology

of a theatrical production, beginning with pre-production responsibilities, then working

through rehearsals, performances, and finally strike.

There is considerable overlap among the three books, but each author's focus is

slightly different, and their content reflects this. Where Kelly and Ionazzi cater their

information more specifically to work in professional theatres, Laurence Stern states at

the very beginning of *Stage Management*:

 The target audience for this book is *all potential stage managers in all staging

environments*. This includes amateur theater, community theater, educational

theater, showcase theater, and professional theater, as well as stage managers of

dinner theaters, children's theater, dance theater, ballet, opera, ice shows,

circuses, and trade shows. (Stern 1)

13

Stern's focus on educational theatre is especially apparent; the book is peppered with insights from professors of stage management as well as practicing stage managers, and each chapter concludes with a suggested classroom exercise. These inclusions make this text a particular favorite for introductory courses on stage management.

Ionazzi's *Stage Management Handbook*—the only one of the three books which has never been updated—does not address stage management's relationship to technology in any meaningful way. On the other hand, subsequent editions of Stern and Kelly's books have addressed the changing technologies in the field of stage management to varying degrees. As such, they provide a glimpse of how three successful stage managers of the generation I am investigating responded (or did not) to technological advances in their field. The three texts also hint at the authors' personal familiarity and level of comfort with those advances. By studying the evolution of stage management manuals, one can begin to understand the evolution of stage management.

Stern's *Stage Management*—now in its tenth edition, and co-authored by Alice R. O'Grady as of the ninth edition —was originally published in 1974. This raises an interesting question: how much of the updated information came from the second (younger) author? The careful reader will notice that the newer editions of the book contain a juxtaposition of website recommendations and paperwork templates clearly created on a typewriter. In addition to references scattered throughout the book, Stern and O'Grady offer a two-page section entitled "Keeping Current with the Technology of Theater" which includes suggestions like "Join USITT [United States Institute for Theatre Technology]" and "Research software that can be applied to stage management" (Stern 273). Despite these updates, however, the book remains largely the same. In their

effort to provide useful information to stage managers at any career level, Stern and

O'Grady focus more on the universal human aspects of the job than the nuts and bolts.

In the third edition of *The Backstage Guide to Stage Management*, Thomas A.

Kelly acknowledges the changes that have occurred in the industry since the book was

first written to a much greater extent than Stern did. His stance on the subject is most

explicitly conveyed in the chapter entitled "Stage Managers and Computers." Kelly

highlights the benefits of having a laptop in rehearsals and meetings, as well as the

freedom of customization available with an electronic copy of the prompt script. He goes

a notable step further than Stern, by mentioning specific software programs he uses

himself.

Kelly ultimately determines that the fundamental job requirements of stage

management are unchanged by technological advances: "Computers have taken a lot of

the tedium out of stage management paperwork by making it simpler. But the truth is still

that (a) *the paperwork must still be done*, and (b) *it must be accurate*" (Kelly 62). He

goes on to caution against an over-reliance on technology—good looking paperwork is

meaningless if the information needed is not included (Kelly 62). He concludes that not

only is the stage manager's primary function unchanged by technology, at times it is

unaided by technology as well.

While Kelly acknowledges that technology is here to stay, and can be a valuable

tool, he still views stage management as a hands-on job dependent on personal

connection. If given the choice, he would still rather have a face-to-face conversation

than send a long chain of emails (Kelly 64). Kelly's words ring true, and indicate why a

book on stage management may continue to be useful even if it does not cover the latest

technologies in much depth. Stage management is a job learned by doing, and these books are meant to provide helpful guidelines and things to think about rather than a comprehensive how-to.

In 2013, stage management professor Laurie Kincman introduced a new and notable contender for inclusion in the canon of introductory stage management texts: *The Stage Manager's Toolkit*. Because it is so new, it has not yet achieved the prominence or staying power of Stern, Kelly, or Ionazzi's books, though I suspect it will in due time. Kincman's book serves as a fine complement to the older texts, with added emphasis on current technologies and elements of document design. From the onset, she emphasizes the pivotal role that communication plays in effective stage management, and presents technology as one medium through which communication can flow (Kincman 1).

The book includes pages of detailed, helpful paperwork templates—reminiscent of a pared-down version of Barbara Dilker's once indispensible, now-dated *Stage Management Forms and Formats*. Both Kincman's text and templates are more immediately recognizable for a generation raised with Microsoft Office instead of a notepad. However, at times Kincman touts a narrower view than Stern or Kelly, offering only one way to go about a task when in fact there are several. For this reason, Kincman's book is a very welcome addition, but seems more likely to coexist with the three current favorites than to replace them.

Methodology

Because this subject matter has not made any significant appearance in history texts, in order to document the changes to the stage management profession that took place with the introduction of various new technologies in the late 20th and early 21st

centuries, I determined that this living history would best be chronicled in an oral history format. I found myself fascinated with the idea of interviewing professional stage managers who had experienced such massive changes to the practice within the span of their careers. Additionally, my chosen subject fits well within the type of population that oral histories typically cover. As Patricia Leavy explains in the introduction to her book, *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research*:

> Oral history has anthropological roots, with field researchers long having used this method (or what is now called oral history) to access the experiential knowledge of people living in field sites. Many of the cultures anthropologists have studied have themselves been based on oral traditions of knowledge transmission—the "passing down" of family or community knowledge from generation to generation. (3)

The tradition of passing down knowledge to subsequent generations is an integral aspect of the stage management profession, as described by Toby Malone earlier in this chapter. In light of this, an oral history approach seemed all the more fitting.

Later in the introduction, Leavy further elaborates on the process of collaboration inherent in an oral history interview process:

> Oral history is based in an oral tradition of transmitting knowledge. In essence, this method presupposes that individual actors have valuable knowledge to share based on their life experiences, including their behaviors, rituals, attitudes, values, and beliefs. It is during an open-ended, highly unstructured series of interviews that the researcher and participant engage in a process whereby these experiences are unearthed, reflected on, interlinked, and knowledge is collaboratively created.

Therefore, data are generated from this perspective of the research participants who work jointly with the researcher. Meaning develops out of this collaborative process. (11)

The collaborative nature of oral history mirrors the collaborative nature of theatrical production, which further cemented the choice to pursue this form of study. However, due to the time constraints of this project and the specific facet of stage management experience I wished to examine, the methods employed had to be modified from the open-ended interviews described by Leavy.

The first step in designing the study was to identify the population from which participants could potentially be drawn. I crafted the parameters in order to ensure that the interview subjects had sufficient experience working in the stage management profession with and without extensive use of technology—as well as to provide sufficient data for a lengthy study from a limited number of interviews. I initially determined that my target population would be current and former professional stage managers who began their careers no later than the year 1980, and who worked professionally as stage managers for at least ten years. Individuals meeting these criteria have extensive knowledge of the stage management profession over a number of years when technology was advancing rapidly, and a variety of professional experience from which to extract knowledge. I later revised these parameters slightly to allow more participants with significant experience to qualify—the start date of their stage management careers was changed to the year 1990, which I determined to still be well within the range of a number of significant technological developments in the stage management profession.

Most of my potential interviewee population lives in large theatre cities like New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago. As such, I determined that interviews would be conducted over the phone, via Skype, or via email, as the interviewee preferred. In order to recruit participants, I employed a snowball method, as described by Leavy: "Whether you're interested in a particular event or broader topical area, personal and professional networks are frequently used to locate potential participants. Often "snowball sampling" occurs, and each participant may lead the researcher to other potential participants" (34). Once my study was designed and approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB,) I reached out to professional contacts in the theatre community, requesting that they pass the information about my study along to any of their own contacts who either qualified or knew others who might qualify. I found all of my eventual participants in this way, with the help of networking; none of the stage managers who responded were personal acquaintances.

In order to produce the desired information within the span of one hour-long interview per participant, the interviews were designed to be more structured than a typical oral history. I wrote out a list of seventeen journalistic questions (printed in the appendices). These questions targeted the stage managers' experiences with technology during their stage management careers, how the job has and has not changed as a result of technology, the pros and cons of technology as it relates to stage management, and their views on the profession then and now. After completing the initial set of questions, I asked a few follow-up questions to supplement the answers as needed.

While preparing the questions, I aimed to target specific information about the changes to the stage management profession and the interviewees' relevant experiences

in relation to that topic. I found Stephen Everett's approach to designing questions outlined in *Oral History: Techniques and Procedures* to be a helpful guide in this process:

> A well-prepared interviewer will be aware of gaps and inconsistencies in the available source materials and will ask questions to clarify or, in some instances, to confirm the record. Interviewers may occasionally ask questions even if they suspect that they already have the answers. An interviewee's response to these queries may shed new light on an issue; if not, their answers may serve as yardsticks to judge the accuracy of other information provided by the interviewee. (Everett 18)

Though some of the questions seemed repetitive or obvious as I was initially writing them, they often yielded varying helpful responses during the interview process. As a result, fewer follow-up questions were needed and interviews were kept within a time frame that was workable for the participants and myself.

Because of the nature of an oral history, the participants are cited throughout my study by name and answered interview questions with many details unique to their individual careers—citing specific individuals and theatre organizations in the process. As such, the process of obtaining consent was of particular concern to the IRB and myself, and posed a notable challenge in designing this study. In order to ensure that the participants only shared information they were comfortable sharing in the final study, participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to participation (available in the appendices). After conducting and transcribing the interviews, the participants were sent

a copy of the transcripts for approval, allowing them to edit the transcript as necessary. None of the eventual participants requested to remain anonymous.

The interview process was both enjoyable and full of surprises. I anticipated that the majority of the interviews would be conducted over the phone, but all save one participant requested that the interview be conducted via email. This proved a blessing in disguise, as it expedited the transcription of the interviews immensely. However, the sole interview conducted verbally was also by far the longest and most detailed, with a final transcript of eighteen pages compared to the four or five pages of the other interviews. I originally conceived of conducting between ten and twenty interviews, but had underestimated the difficulty of scheduling interviews with busy professionals. Ultimately, seven stage managers contacted me about participating, six stage managers agreed to participate, and four interviews were conducted. Fortunately, that number of participants provided an adequate sampling for a study of this size.

The Interviewees

The four former and current stage managers who participated in this study present a broad spectrum of theatrical experience, both within and without stage management. They boast approximately one hundred sixty nine years of combined professional stage management experience, primarily spanning the years 1980-2000. Though one has left the stage management profession, all continue to work in theatre or theatre education in some capacity (two of the participants are employed full-time on university faculties). A brief overview of each participant's career follows.

The first participant to respond to me for the study was Thomas Kelly. The careful reader will remember him from the Review of Literature above, as the author of *The Backstage Guide To Stage Management*. When it comes to professional stage management, Kelly literally wrote the book—drawing from more than fifty years (and counting) of experience as a professional stage manager. After developing an interest in stage management while working in a summer stock theatre in 1962, Kelly quickly made the shift that would define his career. He joined Actors' Equity in 1966, and soon found regular work as a stage manager and assistant stage manager (ASM) in New York. He worked his way up to Broadway, where he served as stage manager on over a dozen shows. His Broadway credits include "*Cyrano* with Christopher Plummer, *Hair*, *The Wiz*, *Two Gents*, *Pippin* . . . and others" (Kelly interview 1). Beyond Broadway, Kelly's longest New York engagement was his seven years as the production stage manager (PSM) at New York City Opera.

Kelly also worked frequently in Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Boston, and Chicago. He also toured extensively both nationally and internationally, and has managed events ranging from MTV productions to a Papal Mass in Central Park. Kelly currently teaches stage management at Rutgers University and accepts ". . . any short-term production management, stage supervision, or stage management [job] that is lucrative . . . or hopelessly fabulous" (Kelly interview 1). He has enjoyed by far the longest career of those interviewed for this study, and as such, has witnessed the most changes to the industry first-hand. To have both the book and the man himself as sources for this study was truly enlightening.

Bill Christie and I had never met prior to our interview, which is surprising considering the amount of overlap in our professional connections. Christie has made Kansas City his artistic home, as I did for five years. He has thrived there as a stage manager, director, and props artisan for nearly three decades, since completing his Master of Arts at Emporia State University. He became the Production Stage Manager of the American Heartland Theatre during its inaugural season in 1988, and continued on in that position until the theatre closed in 2013 (Christie 1).

Fortunately, Christie did not have to travel far to seek employment. Less than a year later, he was named the Production Stage Manager for the Coterie Theatre—the nationally recognized theatre for young audiences. The Coterie is located on the first floor of the building whose third floor had previously housed the American Heartland Theatre; this coincidence explains the multiple references to "upstairs" and "downstairs" throughout his interview (2). In addition to the American Heartland and the Coterie, Christie has served as a freelance stage manager in theatres across Kansas City, including the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, the Unicorn Theatre, and The Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre (7). His experiences in Equity theatres on a smaller scale, and intimate knowledge of the workings of one particular theatre community were a fascinating contrast to the other stage managers who divided their careers between multiple cities.

Jenny Lang began her stage management career at Dallas Theatre Center in 1994, and joined AEA in 2001. Since then, she has made a career for herself all over the country. Lang has worked regularly in opera as well as theatre, having served as the PSM at Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma for twelve years (Lang 1). In addition to AEA, Lang is a

member of the American Guild of Music Artists (AGMA), the union for professional opera singers and stage managers.

Lang has also frequently ventured into the world of event management, having helped to coordinate events such as the People's Choice Awards, Academy Awards, and Primetime Emmy Awards. She continues to work as a freelance stage manager, and also serves as the Production Manager for the University of Arizona's School of Theatre, Film, and Television (1). As the youngest of the interviewees, her relationship to technology was at times markedly different than that of the others. Her increased familiarity with the digital world has led to a very positive view of technological developments as a whole, which she endeavors to share with her students.

Jane Page attributes her introduction to stage management to the influence of "a wonderful Equity SM, who taught a class at the University of Missouri-Kansas City" (Page 1). She began stage-managing professionally in 1976 and joined AEA four years later. She traveled around the country, working stints at theatres in Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Virginia, Tennessee, Nebraska, and Ohio (1). In 1993, Page stage-managed her last show, starring television actress Dixie Carter.

After that, she transitioned into a career in directing, which had always been her goal: "I think when I was stage managing it was the natural road for a director. Stage managing was not very often a career goal, but rather an "on-ramp" to directing" (Page 3). Indeed, her time spent as a stage manager enabled and enriched her eventual career path: "As a trained director, I so appreciated the years I stage managed in rolling rep with remarkable variety of directors" (2). Page's perspective was unique among the interviewees—while she left the stage management profession before many of the

technologies examined in this study had been adopted, she works closely with stage managers in her role as director. As such, she has witnessed major changes to the stage management profession as both an insider and an outsider.

The information gathered from the interviews has been divided into three chapters that address the three major topics covered in my discussions with the stage managers who participated in the project: production, communication, and training. The experiences of these four stage managers, and indeed most stage managers, is largely encompassed by these three topics, which manifest in surprisingly different ways for each individual in the study. By documenting the experiences of a diverse group of stage management professionals whose careers spanned a pivotal time in the profession's development, the aim of this thesis is three-fold. The first aim is to document changes to the stage management profession. The second aim is to enrich the body of knowledge about stage management practices, increasing the visibility and representation of this profession within the Academy. The third aim is to offer recommendations for the training of future generations based on the lessons learned by and from their predecessors.

Chapter 2 examines stage managers throughout the production process, largely consisting of rehearsals and performances. This is where a majority of the time devoted to a particular show will be spent for stage managers. I discuss the forces at play in a rehearsal room and a stage manager's booth, informed by the interviewee's descriptions of a typical day in rehearsal and performance at the beginning of their careers, contrasted with the same at the end of their careers or in the present day. This chapter also includes

some of the differences experienced by union and non-union stage managers during production, and how this might inform technological requirements of the stage manager.

Chapter 3 delves deeper into one of the central tenets of stage management: communication. Though certainly an integral part of the rehearsal and performance processes described in the previous chapter, communication is a large enough concern to demand further examination in its own right. Virtually everything a stage manager does in service of a production outside of the rehearsal hall can be identified as a form of communication, and every stage manager agrees on the paramount importance of strong communication skills for successful participation within the field. Incidentally, the methods of communication are among the most-changed aspects of the stage management profession in the previous two decades. However, whether or not these changes can be construed as "progress" was among the most contested topics by the participants of this study, and warrants careful consideration.

Chapter 4 covers various approaches to stage management training—chief among them being professional apprenticeships and training programs within academic institutions. The interview subjects come from both backgrounds, and most of the participants now hold some level of university position themselves. The interviewees' personal backgrounds are examined within the larger context of the mentor/mentee relationship common to both forms of training. It is in this way that the stage management tradition is passed down from one generation to the next, with each generation building upon the knowledge and skills of their predecessors to continue to advance the profession. This dynamic is very much still in play, but has also experienced a profound shift in the 21st century, as experienced practitioners become less familiar

with the industry's current technological standards than their own pupils. The

implications of this new development on current and future training methods are

addressed, and solutions to potential pitfalls in current training methods are discussed.

CHAPTER II

STAGE MANAGERS AND PRODUCTION

The lights go down, the curtain comes up, and the audience leans forward, rapt. Somewhere nearby, a stage manager sits hunched over a binder full of cues, muttering the word "Go" into a small microphone, making it all happen. Most of the audience is likely unaware of the stage manager's presence during this ritual, or the considerable amount of time and energy the stage manager has expended in order for the show unfolding in front of them to occur. As with the actors who grace the stage, the performance is the culmination of a complex process of production for the stage manager—a process that has expanded as technological capabilities have expanded. Many facets of the production process are unrecognizable from what they were earlier in the careers of many stage managers still working today.

Nearly every introductory book on the subject of stage management bears a similar structure—the four included here in the Review of Literature being no exceptions. They are organized in a roughly chronological order, guiding the novice reader step by step through the major stages of a typical theatrical production from pre-production through rehearsals, technical rehearsals, performances, all the way to closing the show or packing it up for touring. This structure is logical and helpful, as professional theatres rarely deviate from it. Although each producing organization is unique and will

have a different list of a stage manager's duties, most if not all can agree that the stage manager will begin work on the production before the first rehearsal (sometimes months before) and will continue work on the production until it closes, and sometimes beyond even that. This large-scale expectation for the stage manager's involvement throughout the duration of the project mirrors the small-scale expectation that in most cases, the stage manager is the first to arrive at rehearsals and performances, and the last to leave.

This chapter will examine stage managers in production—their "natural habitat," as it were. Although stage managers will spend many hours outside of rehearsals and performances, they will devote the most time working in these environs. As such, the rehearsal and performance process will witness the greatest number of changes that are attributable to technological developments. In the interviews, the stage managers were asked to describe their experiences in production, including what a typical day in rehearsal and performance would look like at the beginning of their careers—during or prior to the 1990s. They were then asked a series of questions about how the profession had changed for them since those initial experiences, and then were asked to describe a typical day in rehearsal and performance in the present day.

Some of the changes discussed were immediately apparent in the day-to-day operations of the companies where the participants have worked (like the presence of laptops in the rehearsal hall). Some more subtle changes, like the increased ease of finding and traveling to a stage management job out of town, were no less profoundly felt. Instead of being confined to one location, most of the interviewees have worked in theatres all over the country. Jenny Lang, who now serves as Production Manager for the University of Arizona, said this of the breadth of her career perambulations:

I have worked in several cities including Oklahoma City, Los Angeles, San

Francisco, New Orleans, Tulsa, Salt Lake City, Miami, Dallas, Minneapolis, and

New York City. The city I spent the most time in stage-managing was Oklahoma

City. I was the PSM [Production Stage Manager] at Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma

for 12 years. (Lang 1)

The diversity of Lang's resume reflects the increased networking opportunities in today's

globalized society. Unlike earlier generations of artists, who could be confined

geographically to one large city or a few cities that are close together, those interested in

making a living in theatre are no longer limited in this fashion.

Like Lang, Thomas Kelly has taken full advantage of the opportunity to travel

that a stage management career can afford. These experiences add a whole new

dimension to his resume, and a diversity of experiences that Kelly embraced fully:

On the road, I went to Washington DC and LA the most, but I did long stints in

Boston and Chicago also. My favorite roadhouses were Boston's Shubert, The

Eisenhower at Kennedy Center and the Blackstone in Chicago. I counted up once

and found I had loaded in and out of over 100 theatres, performing art centers, etc.

in 28 states and 3 foreign countries . . . loved all of it! (Kelly interview 1)

The fact that such a career is possible, let alone commonplace, for theatre artists today is

remarkable. It might easily be taken for granted by many in the profession today, but

Kelly, with the longest career of any of the stage managers interviewed, belonged to the

first generation of stage managers for whom travelling to different parts of the country to

work, outside of a touring situation, was really a valid option.

Pre-Production

Following the chronology laid out by the standard introductory texts on stage management, once the stage manager has found a job and traveled to the appropriate part of the world, the next phase of the process is known as pre-production. According to the Equity contract that governs the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the stage manager's obligation begins the week before the first rehearsal (LORT Rulebook). During this pre-production phase, the stage manager will complete tasks such as preparing a prompt book, creating initial lists and breakdowns, meeting with the director, setting up the rehearsal space, and gathering materials to distribute at the first rehearsal.

During pre-production, the first flurry of paperwork and other documents necessary for the running of the show are created. Here, the observer will notice a number of the ways that changes of a technological nature manifest themselves in various pre-production tasks. When asked what the most demanding or time-consuming aspect of the job was when she first started stage-managing, Lang replied: "I would say creating and distributing paperwork" (2). In addition to the list of technologies the participants were asked to discuss in the interviews, she was quick to praise the copy machine as one of the great modern inventions that she uses everyday as a stage manager (2). Thanks to printers and copy machines, the number of resources made available to all members of the production team has gradually increased over time. It is difficult to picture a contemporary theatre company operating in the manner of Shakespeare's day, when actors would only be provided a copy of their individual lines in lieu of a complete script (and forget about a rehearsal schedule or character/scene breakdown!). Stage managers

today distribute a plethora of useful documents in addition to the script, prior to or during the first rehearsal.

Kelly echoes Lang's sentiments about the amount of time spent on creating documents during pre-production, and the positive effect technology has had in this regard. When asked about the most difficult or time-consuming aspect of stage management at the beginning of his career, he answered, "The prompter's script. Without computers and printers, etc., it was hard keeping up on changes, cuts, etc. On the road, we travelled with a Gestetner . . . a sort of mini printing press that printed from stencils that we typed! LONG PROCESS, and the ink smell was notoriously heady. . ." (Kelly interview 2). This illustrates just how quickly technology has evolved—this once-essential machine has become obsolete during the career of one stage manager, who still works in the field today. Younger stage managers would not even know what a Gestetner is, let alone how to operate it. When he mentioned it in the interview, I had to look it up. No doubt technologies that are considered essential to many theatres today will also be viewed as obsolete three decades from now.

Though these rapid advances in technology have ultimately simplified many aspects of paperwork creation and streamlined the pre-production process, they have also created quite a steep learning curve for many stage managers who were already well established in their careers when these innovations were introduced. When asked about the most demanding or time-consuming aspect of his job as a stage manager currently, Bill Christie reflected on the challenges he has faced in transitioning from a long-term job that had few demands entailing technological acumen, into a new position with different demands:

It's what I keep calling the administrative, the extra things: do I know how to do

this? Being new to this job, what has been done in the past? Like the first time I

had to plot—when they decided on the new season—and then into the computer,

into Outlook goes the formation of a calendar, a performance/rehearsal calendar

for each one, and in certain places. And I'd never done it before, and so I had to

learn . . . So that's to me the most psychologically demanding, is just trying to

become as effective as possible. (Christie 18)

Stage managers like Christie are already impressive simply in terms of their amount of

professional experience and the longevity of their careers. The extent to which they have

proven themselves adaptable in that time, learning about technologies that newer stage

managers do not give a second thought to, shines a new light on their achievements.

Christie admitted that he is beginning to embrace the computer programs he once

struggled with: "I find it beneficial as I learn more and more how to use it . . . so you

embrace the technology" (14). Even veteran stage managers widely acknowledge

computer-generated paperwork as easier and preferable to paperwork that is written by

hand or typed on a typewriter.

However, while copy machines, computers, and programs like Microsoft Office

have simplified the process of creating and updating paperwork, these technologies

cannot do the work for stage managers. When asked what the most demanding or time-

consuming aspect of stage management is now versus at the beginning of her career,

Lang's reply was largely unchanged:

Creating the running paperwork for each production is the most time-

consuming. I have a template that I use so I don't have to recreate that, but

gathering and inputting the information from what I have written in my script

takes time, as does making sure nothing gets missed. This is the hardest part of

paperwork. It must continually be updated and proofread because things change

sometimes all the way up to opening night. (Lang 3)

This is a perfect illustration of the point made by Thomas Kelly in *The Backstage Guide*

to Stage Management, quoted in the previous chapter, when he admonishes that

computers do not replace critical engagement on the part of the stage manager in the

creation of paperwork, and that accuracy should be valued over aesthetics in this regard

(Kelly 62). Computers are a helpful tool for a good stage manager, but are not a

substitute for one. The job continues to demand the same dedication, critical thinking,

and attention to detail that it always has. Without these qualities in a stage manager, the

pre-production phase and all subsequent phases of the process would suffer. Since the

stage manager's initial interactions with her team help to set the tone for the work to

come, the importance of a smooth pre-production is paramount.

Rehearsals

The busy week or more spent on pre-production occurs so that the stage manager

is well prepared when the rehearsal process begins. As Laurie Kincman puts it in *The*

Stage Manager's Toolkit: "Your work organizing initial details and establishing rapport

with actors and production team members will now pay off as the show comes to life"

(83). In an ideal situation, the rehearsal process will combine the creativity of the

director, designers, and actors into a strong, cohesive production that is aesthetically and

logistically sound. The stage manager's involvement in the realization of that goal is

profound; he or she will set the tone for rehearsals, for better or worse. In order to assist the director in realizing his vision, one of the stage manager's primary responsibilities during the rehearsal process is to assist in getting the most productive results possible within the available rehearsal time (Stern 113).

The stage manager's responsibilities will always vary depending on the theatre and the production, but many tasks can be pointed out as routine procedure. Thomas Kelly characterized a typical day in rehearsal earlier in his career as follows:

> One hour before rehearsal I'd set up the room, props, etc., make coffee, check schedule and post, put up the sign-in, check with all facility personnel and the show office, post the day's schedule and fitting schedule final copy, amend and update my book with blocking and changes from the day before. I'd also field early arrivals and phone calls. During rehearsal, take all blocking, prompt when called for, ride the breaks, etc. It'd usually be 5 hours, then lunch hour, then 3 hours, end of day. Then time to finalize, post and disseminate the schedule and notes, confirm final fitting schedules and any press appointments for the cast, then meet with the PSM for end of day catch up. (Kelly interview 2)

Much of what he describes is still standard operating procedure in many theatres today. Stage managers are responsible for taking down blocking, disseminating rehearsal schedules and notes, generally keep things progressing throughout the day. The tasks themselves have not changed, even if the way the tasks are carried out has.

Jenny Lang concurs with the view that the function of the stage manager remains essentially unchanged despite evolving methodology. She responded to the same question about a typical day in rehearsal as follows:

A typical day in rehearsal at the beginning of my career is similar to now, I just now have more experience. As an ASM I was responsible for tracking all prop and costume presets, making sure the actors and singers have their props and are entering at the correct place and time, and resetting furniture, props and costumes during the rehearsals process. As SM, I am responsible for running the rehearsal, keeping track of time, making sure the director and choreographer stays on track, taking notes, and foreseeing potential problems before they arise. (Lang 1)

Again, she refers to the constancy of the stage manager's basic role in the rehearsal hall. This is particularly interesting because of the number of cities in which she has worked, and the fact that she spent seven years as a stage manager before she joined AEA (Actors' Equity Association). For conditions to remain so constant across multiple states and between union and non-union houses suggests that this list of tasks is as close to a standard as possible among theatres in the United States.

Jane Page echoes the other interviewees' responses as she outlines a typical day in rehearsal at the beginning of her career: "Arrive 2 hours prior to rehearsal, prep, set up, run rehearsals, type and distribute notes and attend meetings. Generally 10-12 hour days *before* tech" (Page 1). Page's recollections demonstrate the magnitude of the time commitment that the job entails. I have noted previously that the stage manager works longer hours than most members of a theatre company, and the work is not always done once they lock up for the night. Reports, schedules, and paperwork updates all must be dealt with at the end of the day. It is important for a stage manager to embrace this level of commitment and responsibility in order to be effective.

Bill Christie brought up an important point in his interview about the variety of tasks that will be required of a stage manager depending on the institution. While some stage managers are hired as freelance employees, others are hired as staff and may be asked to carry out extra duties in that capacity. He described a typical day when he first started working at the American Heartland:

> You show up early enough to make sure that the heating and the air conditioning was on early for climate control, then setting the props or whatever. Making the coffee and the tea because they provided that, and hot water, whatever. Elevators unlocked, bathrooms unlocked, dressing rooms etc. Did the janitors do their job? So just housekeeping. So that was always at least an hour before. But since I was on staff there, you know, it's like you're there and you're working on your breaks, you work on your lunch hour. I was never one of those that took the lunch hour, or just stopped working and sat and socialized with everybody else on the required break. (Christie 6)

I had originally predicted that a theatre's status as a union or non-union house would have the biggest impact on the stage manager's required duties, but after Bill's interview, this opinion may well need to be revised. Lang agrees that a theatre's union or non-union status is an unreliable method of predicting the theatre's level of technological sophistication, as union status is not a determining factor of a theatre's budget or scale of operations, pointing out that some AEA theatres can barely afford to rent a rehearsal hall, while some community theatres boast multi-million dollar operation budgets (Lang 5).

As with the pre-production phase, new technologies have facilitated some of the tasks that stage managers carry out during this part of the process. With their laptops in

front of them, rehearsal reports can be completed and distributed as soon as the rehearsal is over, paperwork can be updated constantly, and revised backing tracks can be sent by the music director via Dropbox and used the same day: "Stage managers and directors can store in one place all their information (and, with the use of such tools as scanners and email, information from others), allowing for easy access and quick generation" (Schrum 10). Technologies such as email, file-sharing programs, and various useful software helps save time in rehearsal—which is of major concern in professional rehearsal processes, which are typically brief. With limited time devoted to rehearsals, stage managers work alongside their directors to ensure that rehearsal time is used as efficiently as possible.

Jane Page indicates just how rapidly these technologies have asserted their presence in the rehearsal hall. Page, who left stage management in 1993 to pursue a career in directing, has experienced the stage manager's relationship to technology from both sides. When asked about changes to technology within her stage management career, she recalls "Not much different between 1976-1993. As a director, stage managers I have worked with utilize email, text, drop box, Office, Google, Doodle Poll" (Page 2). In just twenty years, stage managers have armed themselves with an impressive arsenal of technologies that their predecessors had no equivalent for. In another twenty years, there will be very few, if any, stage managers for whom it has not always been this way.

One of the technologies that Bill Christie is the most comfortable with is also one of the most prevalent in society today. Christie, like so many Americans, has embraced the smartphone. Christie finds his smartphone useful in the rehearsal process primarily as a hands-free tool for instant communication. Due to the ubiquity that mobile devices now

enjoy, his smartphone has become the most reliable way for Christie to communicate with his cast:

> I find it beneficial as I learn more and more how to use it and read it, and I'm now learning how to send pictures and stuff. It is a tool that seems like… when actors need to communicate that they're late, or what's going on, right now that's the primary use. And that keeps you up, rather than being tied to a phone, because you know if somebody's going to be late, instantly they can text you or call you and you know not to worry, or to cover this part. So I embrace that. (Christie 14)

It was refreshing to hear this perspective of technology allowing him to be more mobile during the rehearsal process. Whereas in my experience, many young stage managers have a tendency to shackle themselves to their table and their laptops in rehearsal, and neglect to get up when they should, stage managers like Christie manage to achieve the opposite effect.

Kelly affirms this view, that younger stage managers may intuitively understand how to operate new technologies, but that does not necessarily mean they are using them to the fullest extent: "Paperwork *looks* great these days, but the content is often misguided gibberish. There seems to be a new focus on style and programs, not content, and things seem to get rolled out just to fit a deadline and look good or get posted, but if there are mistakes or omissions, then what's the point?" (Kelly interview 4). Once again, this proves that while technology can help a good stage manager be great, it cannot help a bad stage manager be good. As Lang pointed out in her interview, "A good stage manager does not necessarily get noticed, but a bad one certainly does" (Lang 4). Hopefully the younger generation of stage managers will take a page from the prompt

books of those that came before, and use their laptops in service of this quiet efficiency that makes such a difference to rehearsals.

Performances

Theatrical innovation rooted in technology is never more visible than in the culmination of all the work of pre-production and rehearsals: the actual performance. As theatre is forced to compete with other forms of entertainment for the ever-decreasing attention spans of audiences, producers constantly seek out new ways to entice audiences with the element of spectacle that patrons have craved since theatre's earliest origins. Theatregoers attending a high-priced show may encounter that sought-after spectacle in massive sets that vanish and completely transform in seconds, seemingly impossible quick changes, larger-than-life projections, or out-of-this-world sound and lights.

According to Jenny Lang, one of the biggest changes to the stage management profession during the span of her career has been "the introduction of more and more automation in scenic transitions" (2). This has directly impacted the stage manager's role during the performance process. Kelly agrees, stating: "Automation and computers have totally changed the running of shows" (Kelly interview 4). Automation allows for fast, flawless scene changes and effects that are identical in execution every night (as long as everything operates as it should). As a result, productions have become increasingly complex.

These complex elements of production have a profound impact on the stage manager, whose primary function during the run of the show is to "call the show," a sort of conducting of the myriad technical elements: "As SM, I am responsible for calling all

technical cues (scenic, lights, sound, rail, follow-spots, automation, pyro, and special effects). I am responsible for making sure the performance runs smoothly and on time" (Lang 2). Today, even theatres with modest budgets are likely to boast a few programmable LED lighting instruments. It is practically inevitable that the stage manager's task of ensuring a smooth performance will involve smooth operation of technological equipment.

Calling the show is an exciting part of the stage management process, requiring immense focus, preciseness, and a certain musicality to time everything correctly. The added elements of modern productions resulting from heightened technology have made calling the show more exciting than ever. When productions were limited to manual sliders to control lights and sound, there were naturally fewer cues. The more theatrical production values increase, the more the stage manager has to do during the performance itself. As such, it is no surprise that stage managers of all ages and levels of technological savvy frequently cite calling the show as a highlight of the production process.

Thomas Kelly did not need much time to consider when asked about his favorite part of stage-managing: "Tech! There is no time I feel more alive. To make magic happen and be at the center of its execution the first time…I know I am functioning at and where I want to be, in the center of the action. It is why I loved concerts, TV and industrial shows: fast, furious and full of cues!" (Kelly interview 2). Kelly also brings up a whole new aspect of technological advances that impacts stage managers: theatre is not the only corner of the entertainment industry to be affected. Just as theatrical productions add new elements, so do other types of live events, like concerts, television programs, award shows, and more.

While some of these newer forms of entertainment may not have traditionally included a stage manager, increasingly they find themselves needing someone to call the show as well. Watch the credits of any modern awards show like the Emmys or Academy Awards, and there will likely be a list of ten or more stage managers who made that event happen. Of the four stage managers interviewed, three have worked regularly as stage managers for non-theatrical events, like awards shows. The appeal of these types of jobs is evident in Kelly's statement, and offers increased opportunities for employment that any freelancer is happy to have.

Despite benefits like the aforementioned variety of available jobs that has resulted from technological possibilities, not all advancements in technology are necessarily regarded as advancements in artistic creation. In *Performance of the Century: 100 Years of Actors' Equity Association and the Rise of Professional American Theater*, the author summarizes the changes that have taken place in the calling of a show as the result of better technology: "Then computers came in and made things a lot easier . . .but also a little harder . . . because computerized cues have taken a measure of control out of the stage manager's hands. It's difficult to invade a set or lighting cue that has been preset into the computer" (Simonson 143). Newer and better equipment has allowed for higher production values with elaborate lights, sound, and effects. However, more advanced effects often mean bigger problems when things do not work as they should. Advanced technological malfunctions may be beyond the stage manager's power to immediately fix.

Kelly is particularly bothered by one element of production that has come to be relied on by not just audience members, but performers as well: "…And the sound!

Inhuman reproduction of voices and music, total reliance on batteries and amplifiers instead of projection, etc., etc., etc. It has become far less human" (Kelly interview 4). Indeed, as Kelly hinted, modern professional actors have lost something in their training as a result of this particular technology: "For most of the twentieth century, one of an actor's most vital tools was projection; actors had to be able to project their voices with nothing but their God-given lung power" (Simonson 183). This is no longer the case.

As the American musical developed and began to require more strenuous styles of singing, the use of microphones became commonplace for certain stage shows like rock musicals (Simonson 182). However, the new convenience of amplification quickly changed from a convenience to a self-affirming necessity:

> As audiences grew used to amplification, the practice began to feed on itself. Theatregoers came to expect their entertainment to be louder, forcing producers to equip shows with even more mikes. Soon straight plays followed musicals into the world of miking. The frequent visits of film stars unused to projecting their voice also made mikes a necessary tool in modern theatre. It allowed people with very modest vocal training or no vocal training to have a career in the theatre. (Simonson 183)

While some, like Kelly, disapprove of the altered sound resulting from reliance on microphones and "sweetened" tracks, citing a lack of artistry and human authenticity behind it, others recognize the benefits. As previously mentioned, the practice allows for demanding music to be performed at eight shows a week without exhausting the performers' voices. Simonson also goes on to point out that newer systems allow for a more inclusive theatrical experience for the hard of hearing (183). As with so many of the

technologies employed in theatre and in society today, it is not necessarily better or worse, just different.

One particular audio technology has affected stage managers specifically: headset communication. Headsets allow the stage manager to communicate with their board operators, ASMs, fly-rail technicians, follow-spot operators, and any other technicians who need to be cued by the stage manager during a performance (or in some cases, the house manager and box office). When asked if there was any sort of industry standard in theatre where technology was concerned, Jenny Lang replied, "All theatres use computers, email, and headsets" (Lang 3). Indeed they have become so commonplace, if one is asked to visualize the modern stage manager, that image will likely include a headset over one ear (as a Google image search is quick to confirm).

Conversely, as Bill Christie can attest from his experiences working in small professional theatres (which have their own set of Equity rules), headsets are not entirely as universal as Lang implied:

> You know, that's what we had at the Heartland, and that just seems the norm. But then at the [Kansas City] Rep it was all wireless, and here [at the Coterie Theatre] it's walkie-talkies . . . Which seems necessary for here, not to be tied to a cord, and the fact that the house manager needs to be on it, which is a total foreign thing. Total foreign thing, in terms of having a house manager's conversation with the box office in your ear while you're trying to run a show. I'm going, "this is screwy." This is screwy. But it's not going to change, so you just try to tune them out or whatever. (Christie 15)

As referenced by both Christie and Lang, wireless headsets are largely considered the most desirable option, albeit also the most costly and the most prone to malfunction: "Wireless headsets make the job of the ASM much easier because you can be mobile. However, they are often less reliable" (Lang 4). In such situations, technology can prove to be a double-edged sword when a production has come to rely on it, and then must press forward without. These are the moments that truly test a stage manager, and require quick thinking and creative solutions.

Frequently, the end of a production's initial performance is not the end for the stage manager; many productions today transition into a touring run, which provides entirely new demands and challenges. The concept of touring productions is not a new one; traveling players have been roaming the land since the Middle Ages, and problems faced during touring productions, when actors were frequently stranded in distant cities when productions failed on the road, were among the original impetuses for the founding of Actors' Equity Association (Simonson 10). Touring productions offer an all-new set of challenges to the stage manager. As the performance conditions change at every stop, the same show might be performed in a drastically different manner from night to night to accommodate these changes. The special considerations of touring require very quick thinking and decisive action on the part of the stage manager.

Thomas Kelly attributes much of his early learning to his experiences on Broadway touring productions: "This was my introduction to the road and tryouts and load ins and load outs at a larger scale, as well as the learning of the demands of day to day rehearsal and performance on long runs and company relations, management interaction, design and construction, focusing and maintaining lighting designs, etc. etc."

(Kelly interview 1). Like theatre productions in general, many touring productions have become larger and more complex.

The fluidity of performance conditions encountered on the road often extends to technological possibilities. At each new venue, the touring production makes use of only what technology is available to them at the hosting venue, or what they can carry with them on the road—usually significantly less than what would be available to a stationary production by the same company. Depending on the scale of the tour, this could mean a small army of trucks packed with state-of-the-art equipment, or a single four-door vehicle holding the performers and little else. Jane Page's experiences touring on behalf of the Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival early in her career reflect this reality of theatrical touring:

> Our touring was pretty much one night stands in Ohio. We had three days in one city and it was like a vacation. It was very down to earth, load in, focus, cue the show without actors and then run, strike. Very tough going. Drive either very late at night or very very early. Technology was just what the theatre where we landed had in stock. No computers, no cell phones…if we had to be in touch with home base it was telephones only. All hands on deck. (Page 3)

Due to the changing conditions in each new performance venue, technology was even less of a presence on the road than in permanent houses. Despite the added challenges of touring, especially with limited technology involved, it can be a very rewarding experience for stage managers.

As Page implied in the above quote, the all-hands-on-deck nature of touring offers unparalleled opportunities for developing a sense of camaraderie as well as career

46

experience. The entire company must work as one to adapt to changing circumstances and carry out a successful production amidst new challenges, and learns to appreciate things that might otherwise be taken for granted (like performing in the same city for three nights in a row). While touring productions offer their share of challenges and frustrations, this possible epilogue to a typical production process also offers stage managers a very rewarding experience.

After reflecting on the changes technology has wrought on the production process through pre-production, rehearsals, and performances, the stage managers interviewed had divergent opinions when asked whether they viewed advances in technology as contributing to a positive development for the stage management profession overall. Lang was largely positive in her view:

> Overall, the use of technology has dramatically improved my job as a stage manager and has made it much easier to complete tasks in a timely and efficient manner. There are more elements to consider when calling a show with the introduction of more technology, but I don't see this as a negative thing. It makes calling the show that much more fun in my opinion. (Lang 3)

As the youngest of the interviewees, Lang's relationship to technology was at times markedly different than that of the others. Her increased familiarity with the digital world has led to a very positive view of technological developments as a whole. She can be viewed as a sort of "early adopter" from the generation of experienced stage managers transitioning into digital technology mid-career.

However, even Lang acknowledged that not every advance in technology is a benefit to everyone. Sometimes, more sophisticated equipment results in loss of opportunity for laborers, or even increased potential for danger:

> Automation is another technology that has allowed productions to become much more elaborate and scenic transitions to be more eloquently executed. However, this has cut down on the number of crew that is needed backstage on some productions, which is a negative aspect for stagehands. There have also been more accidents since automation has become more popular (Lang 3).

Safety is always one of the utmost concerns of a stage manager, so any new potential for danger will be regarded warily. And as the example of automation illustrates, the universal concern of outsourcing human labor to sophisticated machines extends into the theatrical world as well. While new technologies may create new opportunities, they also create new problems.

Thomas Kelly echoed Lang's concerns that automation can impact employment in the theatre industry, and took this concern even a step further: "Again, my fear is the dehumanizing effect of technology. Efficiency was equally attainable with people and person-to-person communication and operation. Too many of the technological advances have cut labor (crew, stagehands, etc.) at the cost of a spirit of many humans creating magic nightly" (Kelly interview 4). Here, Kelly calls attention to the collaborative spirit at the center of theatrical production that makes theatre special. While technology provides definite visual interest, human collaboration still lies at the heart of live theatre. The technology would be meaningless without human creativity guiding it.

Kelly displayed a wonderfully self-deprecating sense of humor when addressing a skeptical view as to whether changes in technology were positive overall: "I hope I haven't been too negative. I am a bit of a dinosaur, and my lack of understanding and facility with much of the new technologies makes me think they are the devil. But I love my snow blower! Best new equipment since the wireless headset!" (Kelly interview 3). Ultimately, his skepticism is still mixed with appreciation for the benefits offered by technologies like headsets.

Considering all the changes that have taken place in the last few decades makes one wonder what new innovations in technology might be the next to impact stage management practice. Bill Christie commented on one such possibility—the possibility of a completely digital production:

> I've heard somebody mention in a previous kind of a survey situation, maybe it was a survey through the union or something: how did stage managers feel about the role of an electronic prompt book? And I immediately went, "how could you possibly even consider that?" If suddenly it stopped… I mean, it's a power source that is not infallible. The book stays the same unless it goes up in flames overnight . . . but to have something electronic in a laptop or on a notebook and somehow, evidently, maybe there are some SMs out there doing it? I just can't see that that is remotely something that any stage manager would want to do, for fear of it going down in the middle of a show. I don't know. I'm not willing to put my faith in it. I don't need to. (Christie 15)

At least for the time being, it does not seem likely that a digital approach to a prompt book will catch on with Christie. However, the fact that Christie and others were

surveyed about them indicates that shifting opinions may one day render this change inevitable, like the switch from handwritten reports to email. The increasing popularity of programs like Virtual Stage Manager and Virtual Callboard, and the number of new apps and programs being introduced for stage management purposes, suggest that there is certainly a growing market that is interested in digital prompt books.

Professional development opportunities for stage managers are reflecting this shift as well: in recent years, professional conferences have begun to offer a number of workshops devoted to the subject of digital prompt books. The Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) offered a special training session entitled "Digital Prompt Book Blocking using StageWrite iAnnotate" at their 2015 conference (Master Classes). Even the advocates of this alternative approach to prompt books acknowledge the risks inherent in reliance on an electrical power source.

Just because technology has made something possible, does not necessarily mean it is ideal for theatrical use. In *The Stage Manager's Toolkit*, which was first published as recently as 2013, Laurie Kincman—whose overall relationship with current technology is by far the strongest of the primary stage management books being used today—still cautions against a blind over-reliance on digital platforms for theatrical purposes. She illustrates her point with the example of a production calendar:

> In today's age of technology, a wide variety of computer programs exist for creating and maintaining calendars. We can synchronize them across multiple computers or even with our phones, set up a series of reminders, and input recurring events by typing them once and clicking a series of boxes. But while these are all useful tools, it does not mean that calendar software is best for theatre

productions. The stage manager's primary concern is not how the calendar

functions within a computer, but how well it works in its printed-out form.

(Kincman 35)

Theatre remains a live event, as it has always been. And when dealing with a live event,

faced with actual people, there is still something to be said for a calendar that can be

placed in their hands. Similarly, while some theatres may embrace the practice of a

virtual prompt book, such a platform is still used with the intent of a live stage manager

calling the cues displayed on the computer screen.

The art of stage management throughout the production process—pre-production,

rehearsals, performances, and closing—has evolved in some theatres more than in others,

depending on budgetary concerns and scale of production more than any other factor.

While many added elements have resulted from the available technologies of the 20th and

21st centuries, the essential function of the stage manager remains to keep the show

running smoothly (Stern 2). Today, this essential function of the stage manager demands

an increased fluency with a myriad of technologies from the stage manager—computer

programs, automation, digital lighting and sound equipment, and many more. However,

technological know-how is not enough to make a stage manager effective. All technology

is fallible, and a good stage manager will be able to quickly adapt when technology fails

in order to keep the production moving forward.

CHAPTER III

STAGE MANAGERS AND COMMUNICATION

Through the stages of production detailed in the previous chapter, stage managers are called upon to utilize many skills in order to be as effective as possible during pre-production, rehearsals, performances, and beyond. While there are many concrete tasks that are typically assigned to stage managers, like taking down blocking or calling the show, some of the most essential skills of a good stage manager are also some of the most intangible. Throughout the production process, the stage manager interacts with the director, designers, actors, and crew, among others. Often the stage manager is the one responsible for keeping all of these groups of people working together toward a common goal. In order to accomplish this, the stage manager must practice effective communication. One point on which all stage managers seem to agree is that good communication skills are paramount to success as a stage manager.

In the introduction to *The Stage Manager's Toolkit*, Laurie Kincman offers the following list of different ways in which stage managers communicate: "in person, during meetings and rehearsals; in writing, through reports, lists, and other documents; and electronically, through emails and postings to show websites" (xiv). In addition, stage managers communicate with members of the team over the phone, via Skype, or through text messages. These media seem to fall somewhere between two or more of the

categories listed by Kincman—in person and electronically, or in writing and electronically, respectively. It is clear from this list that technological advances of the late 20th century have had a major impact on this important facet of stage management. Practitioners have had to adapt their practices to reflect the expectations created by the changing communication methods of society at large. However, it remains to be seen whether or not newer, faster means of communication are necessarily better ways—both for society and for stage managers specifically.

This chapter will examine the different ways in which stage managers communicate—in person, in writing, electronically, and various combinations of the aforementioned. Methods of communication are among the most-changed aspects of the stage management profession in the previous two decades, and the participants of this study highly contested whether or not these changes can be construed as "progress." The interviewees were asked to discuss methods of communication, and how these methods relate to successful stage management practice. They discussed changes in the way members of the theatrical production communicate with each other, and the ramifications of these changes.

Electronic Communication

In-person and written communication have always been important parts of the stage management profession, but the last two decades have seen electronic communication continually increase its presence in the rehearsal room. This represents a stark difference in stage management practice. Jenny Lang summarizes the primary modes of communicating with her cast, director, and designers as follows:

The primary mode of communicating with the cast and director is in person since

I work with them every day. With designers, it is more often via email until we

get closer to tech week. However, the primary mode for communicating the daily

schedule to the actors is via email as is the mode for communicating notes to the

designers in rehearsal reports. (Lang 4).

Daily electronic communication has become such an important facet of stage

management practice that even individuals the stage manager sees in person every day,

like the cast and director, receive multiple emails from the stage manager as well.

Whereas once the stage manager's daily duties would include copying and distributing

physical copies of daily reports and schedules, the "paper trail" of theatrical production

has largely shifted from a physical inbox to a digital one. For members of the production

team not present in the rehearsal room—like the theatre's administrative staff, and

increasingly, the design team—the importance of electronic communication is even more

keenly felt.

In his 1999 book *Theatre in Cyberspace: Issues of Teaching, Acting and*

Directing, Stephen Schrum outlines the extent to which electronic communication has

altered the theatrical landscape with the following scenario:

A scenic designer in New York puts the final touches on a CAD version of the

Act Two scenic design. He is ready then to bundle that with some paint elevations

that he has just scanned into his computer. With a couple of keystrokes, he sends

the whole package electronically to the costume designer in Florence, Italy, the

lighting designer in Sydney, Australia, the director in London, England, and the

stage manager in Chicago, Illinois. The costume designer examines the colors,

and emails comments to the production team, while sending out a couple of

revised renderings to the director . . .The stage manager emails everyone a

reminder of Friday's pre-production meeting via net-conferencing software. The

lighting designer receives her email right before she ducks into tech for another

show, the scenic designer receives it as he finishes teaching a course, and the

costume designer as he finishes another build. This form of communication

happens without flying people all over the world and without accumulating huge

phone bills, making the producers happy while achieving better levels of

communication. (Schrum 9)

Reading this book today is somewhat akin to reading science fiction from the 1960s that

describes the year 2000. When the book was first written, the technologies described

were cutting-edge, and met with resistance by many: "The role of computers, and

especially of the Internet, seems to be almost too much for the world of theatre to

confront. On the other hand, the rest of the world embraces the computer, and theatre has

always reflected—on one level or another—the contemporary state of the world"

(Schrum 11). Whereas the role of computers in theatre production was once in question,

they have now been embraced by the industry. Schrum's observation proved true, and

theatre's use of technology continues to reflect contemporary norms in a globalized

society.

The above scenario of a production team that physically spans the globe is

increasingly common, and technology has made collaborations like this not only possible

but also very feasible. Thanks to resources like Theatre Communications Group's

ARTSEARCH and offstagejobs.com, finding jobs across the country or even across an

ocean is just as easy, if not easier, than reading the help wanted section of a newspaper. Theatre Communications Group (or TCG) boasts hundreds of member organizations, and lists over 3,000 jobs in its searchable database annually (*ARTSEARCH*). Since the publication of Schrum's book, the trend of hiring out-of-town artists has only increased.

Actors' Equity Association praises this development of theatres across the country as mutually beneficial to theatregoers and those who choose theatre as a career: "Onetime dreams of a 'National Theatre' have for many been satisfied by the wonderful network of regional and small theatres throughout the country. Actors are living and working in cities that didn't have resident theatres 25 years ago" (AEA.Timeline). In response, AEA has evolved their methods of communicating with union members across the country. In the first issue of *Equity News* from 2015, the President of AEA remarked on the ways the union is now able to keep in contact with its membership:

> *Equity News* is now just one of the ways AEA communicates with its members. Membership meetings, our AEA website, snail mail, email blasts, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram all give the leadership and staff of Actors' Equity a variety of ways to inform the membership. Members use many of these same methods to communicate with AEA, and we are reaching out even more in 2015. We are surveying members, using focus groups and holding town-hall- style meetings, all in an effort to solicit and develop new ideas, strategies and solutions for 2015's initiatives. (Wyman 3)

By embracing new avenues of communication, the union is able to communicate with members around the globe; theatres today are better able to communicate with the communities that house them, and with the artists that occupy them. As a result, the

number of professional theatres has increased and artists are able to forge careers from diverse experiences in many towns.

When asked about technologies regularly used by stage managers, Jane Page was quick to bring up the changing reality of gathering a production team together: whereas at the beginning of her career, the primary mode of communicating with her cast, director, and designers was "Verbal and paper" (Page 1), in theatre productions today "Everyone uses laptops or iPads, and Skype for auditions and meetings" (2). Today, not only do theatre artists travel to other cities, states, and countries for jobs, they sometimes complete significant portions of the work remotely, without having to travel at all. The way artists collaborate creatively has completely changed; as such, the communication skills honed by professional stage managers have migrated from a focus on in-person communication to a focus on electronic communication.

The change from in-person communication to electronic communication has affected the stage management profession greatly, as so much of the job revolves around communication. Whether designers are working on a show from out of town or not, they will not be in attendance at the majority of rehearsals, where crucial discoveries that will impact their designs are made. It is the responsibility of the stage manager to keep designers informed and aware of what they are missing each day in the rehearsal room. Similarly, the theatre's administrative staff and the producers must be kept informed of these developments. Thanks to new technologies, this process has been largely streamlined: "Paperwork is much quicker now with faster computers and communication is much quicker via email than in person or over the phone" (Lang 3). With email, stage

managers can send out electronic reports to the entire team at an instant, keeping everybody informed of the very latest developments.

When asked what single technology has impacted the stage management profession the most, Jenny Lang did not hesitate before responding: "Email, no question about it. Communication is much quicker and more efficient now and you can often solve problems through email alone" (Lang 3). Jane Page agreed with this assessment (2), as did Bill Christie (15). All four of the interviewees indicated email as one of their primary modes of communication with cast, directors, and designers today. In a very short time, email has established itself as the predominant method of formalized communication among adult professionals. Theatre practice has adopted this convention along with other industries; emails have embedded themselves into the daily rituals of stage management practice, and this technology does not seem to be going anywhere for the time being.

Jane Page largely viewed developments in electronic communication as a positive step for the stage management profession. When asked if advances in technology have fundamentally changed the job of a stage manager, Page once again referred to electronic communication and email: "Yes, instant information and questions can be sent from the room, saving time in rehearsals" (Page 3). As a former stage manager, now a director, Page's appreciation of the timesaving aspect of electronic communication is twofold. In *Stage Management*, Lawrence Stern begins his chapter on rehearsal procedures as follows: "As the closest assistant to the director, one of your most important functions [as a stage manager] will be to assist in getting the most productive results out of the time

allotted to each rehearsal" (Stern 110). From this perspective of optimizing rehearsal time, the ability to answer questions and share information instantly is a positive indeed.

However, this optimistic view of email belies the fact that the rapid rise of electronic communication provided challenges for mid-career stage managers expected to incorporate new methods. The advent of email constituted a major change in stage management practice for the interviewees. Thomas Kelly vividly recalls the time when the telephone was the preferred means of communicating outside of rehearsals. Now, the focus is shifting away from telephone communication—a cross between in-person and electronic communication—in favor of fully electronic communication for the same purposes. When asked about the primary mode of communication with the cast, director, and designers when he first started stage-managing, Kelly responded:

> The telephone—it may sound primitive but it worked. Dialing took the longest. If working at a theater with a switchboard/operator, we would also leave call times and messages with them and instruct the cast to call. Rehearsal Halls were good to give out times as long as they had an update on any changes, etc. from you. We also would leave messages with people's agents, managers, etc. There was also a lot more pressure to get the call finalized by half way through the day, so it could be distributed in person. EVERYONE in NYC had answering/message services— the subject of the early musical *Bells Are Ringing*. Most actors had either JU 6-6300 or LO 4-3250. The stage managers would call the number and leave call times for all the clients at each service, then the actor would call in and get their call. This was handy for callbacks from auditions, too. Of course, the cast, etc. also had all the SM's home phone numbers, so they could call and double check,

etc. Emergencies were sometimes handled by telegram or messenger services…

sounds complicated? It was actually more foolproof than email, voice mails, etc.

(Kelly interview 2)

Kelly reminds us that newer technologies are not infallible. Emails get lost, voicemails go

unheard, and unless the stage manager is diligent in follow-through, over-reliance on

technology in communication can lead to more confusion than a personal interaction

would have produced.

The message services described by Kelly are reminiscent of rehearsal hotlines,

which are still used in theatres today. In *The Stage Manager's Toolkit*, Laurie Kincman

explains rehearsal hotlines:

At the end of one day's rehearsal, you hope to announce to the cast the plan for

the next day, emphasizing anything that has changed from previous information.

That schedule may include actors not present at the time, so you need a way to

reach them as well. Many theatres maintain a rehearsal hotline—a telephone

number on which the next day's schedule is recorded as the outgoing voicemail

message each night. Written communication of the schedule might take the form

of a document posted on your callboard and/or a show website or emailed out to

your cast. (101)

The rehearsal hotline can be seen as a direct descendant of earlier messaging services

used to convey similar information to the cast—though now the stage manager is only

required to record the message once, instead of dialing multiple messaging services to

contact everyone. As time went on, the process became streamlined, allowing for faster

execution on the part of the stage manager.

While rehearsal hotlines offered an added convenience to the stage manager by avoiding multiple messages, smartphones have allowed an added convenience to many cast members seeking information about the next day's schedule. Now that so many people own smartphones that enable them to access their email accounts from anywhere, they no longer need to dial a number to be informed of the call—the information is there in their personal inbox whenever they wish to see it. For this reason, some theatres are now beginning to phase out the rehearsal hotline. An Internet search for rehearsal hotlines yielded results such as the meeting minutes from a recent production meeting of the Seattle Opera that read:

5. Hotline usage for the Daily Rehearsal Schedule

- It was determined that the Daily Rehearsal Schedule will no longer be recorded on the Rehearsal Hotline.

- The rehearsal hotline will continue to be a resource for the status of rehearsals due to inclement weather and emergencies.

- The rehearsal schedule is emailed to the principals and staff daily.

- Anyone who has a scheduling question can call Jeffrey on his cell . . . Should you not be able to reach him feel free to call Yasmine Kiss on her cell phone. This number will be included in the outgoing message.

- The chorus hotline is still in use for those who need to report an absence or tardy arrival. (Minutes)

At the frantic pace the technology boom has set, what was once viewed as a great convenience (like messaging services or the rehearsal hotline) quickly becomes an unnecessary step, as company members embrace the latest developments. Just as

messaging services before them, rehearsal hotlines will likely fall out of favor within another decade, whether or not the emails or websites that replace them provide greater accuracy or security. While electronic communication has ingrained itself in stage management practice, it is only one available method of communication, and not ideal for every situation. As long as it remains one tool in a stage manager's arsenal, instead of the only available tool, electronic communication is a welcome addition.

Written Communication

Many of the forms of electronic communication that stage managers partake in also fall into the category of written communication, which also includes the all-important paperwork generated by the stage manager. No longer confined to hand-written notes, stage management paperwork is another of the most visibly altered aspects of the practice. Bill Christie praises the abilities of modern computer programs that have made written communication so much faster in such a short time:

> Communication, whether you're sending attachments or all of that kind of stuff, you can just get your job done quicker. And we have enough to do. And if you can keep organized as you're going along through the day or whatever and you can correct, then all of a sudden copy it, paste it on there—and I didn't even know, I'd heard the words copy and paste, until working here, I didn't know how to do all that. Never had to do it for 26 years upstairs. So it's just those—what now is very fundamental and rudimentary wasn't to me. And so at least I'm discovering how to do all that, which is cool. And I'm not embarrassed, it's just who I am. (Christie 16-17)

With discoveries made every day in the rehearsal room, a stage manager's paperwork requires frequent updating. Whereas with handwritten paperwork this might entail starting over entirely, computerized paperwork can be edited over and over with ease.

In *The Stage Manager's Toolkit*, Kincman identifies a potential benefit of written communication over in-person communication: "Written communication provides a level of personal control over the information. You can rewrite a rehearsal note several times before actually printing or emailing a report to make sure it is "just right"" (Kincman 4). However, the ease and instantaneous nature of email and computer programs used to generate paperwork has enabled an apathetic approach to written communication among the younger generation of stage managers. Problems arise when stage managers fail to take advantage of the opportunity to make written communication "just right" in favor of sending it out as quickly as possible.

When asked about the cons of technologies that are currently embraced as part of stage management practice, Jenny Lang identified modern methods of paperwork creation and distribution as both pro and con: "The pros of using technology is that paperwork creation and distribution is much quicker and usually more accurate. However, because of this technology, people can become hasty and make more mistakes than they would if they were communicating in person or taking more time to create the paperwork" (Lang 3). The convenience of new methods of written communication is a double-edged sword for those who view it purely as a short cut.

Thomas Kelly echoed the concerns voiced by Lang, and took them a step further, critiquing an accompanying trend he sees among younger stage managers. Kelly worries that an overemphasis on style within paperwork comes at the expense of substance:

The cons are the reliance on text instead of personal, face-to-face

communication—the root of so much confusion, misconceptions, etc., the lack of

personal style, also the SAMENESS of all paperwork, etc. If I get a new prop list

everyday, how do I know the changes, etc.? All paperwork *looks* great these days,

but the content is often misguided gibberish . . . There seems to be a new focus on

style and programs, not content; and things seem to get rolled out just to fit a

deadline and look good or get posted; but if there are mistakes or omissions, then

what's the point? When I made lists, schedules, etc. on a yellow pad, I thought

through the pencil. I also went over and over it before typing to be sure I had to

only type it ONCE. Now people start with what should be an early draft or yellow

pad thought sheet, and it becomes the final product . . . not good, says Tom.

(Kelly interview 3)

This is a major concern within stage management practice. Helpful tools can expedite the

process of paperwork creation, but it is still a time-consuming activity that requires much

attention to detail, both in the gathering and organizing of information.

The key for stage managers is to strike a balance between embracing modern

conveniences while not shirking from the parts of the process that still take more time.

Stage managers like the interviewees, who began their careers without the benefit of

faster technologies, are at somewhat of an advantage here. They are not afraid of doing

things in the older, even more time-consuming way because that is how they first learned

to do it. They are able to view new technologies as a time-saver instead of a substitute for

putting in the time. Jenny Lang illustrated this point in the previous chapter, when she

acknowledged that paperwork was the most time-consuming aspect of the stage

management profession when she began working, and continues to be the most time-consuming aspect today, despite technological advances that have streamlined the process (4).

Lang elaborated on ways to strike a balance with technology usage when she explained her own process of paperwork generation, including how she uses paperwork templates to save time:

> Creating the running paperwork for each production is the most time consuming. I have a template that I use so I don't have to recreate that, but gathering and inputting the information from what I have written in my script takes time, as does making sure nothing gets missed. This is the hardest part of paperwork. It must continually be updated and proofread because things change sometimes all the way up to opening night (Lang 5).

When used in this manner, technology can help the stage manager to create paperwork that is visually appealing and easy to read, while still containing complete and accurate information. This approach, while still time-consuming, offers the best possible results for a stage manager's paperwork and illustrates an ideal marriage between stage management and technology.

Thomas Kelly shared additional thoughts on possible ways to ensure that stage managers do not abuse the ability to input information into a standard, pre-generated template:

> So much formally verbal or worked out in conversation—scheduling, cue sheets, etc.—are now reduced to "fill in the blanks" computer entry. Mistakes are not found or vetted; typos that totally change the meaning of a sentence in a report or

schedule are not caught in the rush to SEND. There should be a device that does

not allow "sending" without checking/proofreading . . . like a necessity to scan the

entire document at a speed consistent with reading of a page before the SEND

button can be pushed. All standard schedules, reports, etc. should not print unless

the date, year, day and AM PM settings have been erased and reset one time.

(Kelly interview 4)

Whether the answer to the problem of hasty paperwork lies in additional technological

features that enforce fact checking or not, Kelly makes a good point here. The stage

manager's paperwork does not exist to be aesthetically pleasing (though it is helpful to

help guide the eye of your reader in this way). The stage manager's paperwork exists to

further facilitate the smooth running of a production, and as such, demands a level of

personal care and attention from the stage manager that no technology will replace.

Critics will never see a stage manager's paperwork, but they might see a technical

mistake in the performance that resulted from negligence on the part of the stage

manager.

In-Person Communication

While written and electronic communication has wrought considerable changes

on stage management practice, in-person communication remains largely the same (at

least in theory). The stage manager is a daily presence in the rehearsal room, interacting

with the cast and director; in production meetings with the design team; and over the

course of a production will have countless conversations with any combination of the

above individuals. The largest change to in-person communication where stage

management is concerned is simply knowing when to do it: "As more people become involved, especially if compromise will be needed, the stage manager should consider whether the chart or the chat best serves the production as a whole" (Kincman 1). With the choice of in-person communication or written/electronic communication, stage managers must use their best judgment to gauge the situation and determine which method of communication will prove most effective for any given moment.

When asked about his primary mode of communicating with the cast, director, and designers in the present, Kelly acknowledged the current realities of the industry while maintaining a healthy skepticism about blind acceptance of newer methods: "Email and all its bastard children, but best is in person or phone" (Kelly interview 4). In many cases, electronic communication is a faster method of conveying information, especially to any designers that are out of town. However, much is lost in electronic communication. There is no body language or facial expression to aid in understanding or convey tone. There are no visual or verbal cues from the recipient to indicate whether additional clarification is necessary, which can lead to unintended confusion that actually takes longer to fix.

With so much emphasis put on electronic and written communication, it is important for stage managers to maintain their skills of in-person communication. Jane Page worries that this aspect of communication is being overlooked in favor of newer methods: "Technology is huge! Everywhere. I sometimes think that some stage managers do not know how to have a conversation, which can be a lot quicker at sorting problems out, rather than an infinite number of messages or emails" (Page 2). With many members of younger generations glued to their smartphones, the art of conversation is being lost.

However, it remains an integral part of the stage management process, and a significant source of the artistry involved in the job. In many cases, if the option of a face-to-face conversation exists, it will prove more efficient than a chain of emails or text messages. It remains up to the stage manager to determine which form of communication will be the most effective per situation, not what will be the easiest or the most personally convenient.

Regardless of the technologies at play—or not—in the task of communication, the objective remains the same: to share information with another person or group of people. Bill Christie keeps this fact in his mind and admonishes his trainees to do the same:

> Once you get the basics like we talked about of the pencil, the paper, the this, the taping of the floor, and how to send this out and making sure this designer knows this wish and this wish, and the director wants this, and all of that, yeah. Managing and communication, the bigger picture comes down to, when you've got all of that stuff going on . . . how do you handle a catastrophe, how do you handle a sickness? Life is happening, and then you're dealing with human beings, you're not dealing with pencils and tape and a piece of paper and a script. You're maintaining the integrity of what was directed, design-wise and acting-wise and all this kind of stuff, and that is a human being dealing with another human being and it takes a talent and a reserve and a logic to know, and a self-confidence, going "I approach this person this way, this situation this way, this person…" And how do you teach that? Sometimes by example. (Christie 19)

The "creative manipulation" Christie refers to requires considerable skill on the part of the stage manager. While the profession may not be as outwardly creative as many other

facets of theatre, in pursuit of effective communication the stage manager's creative

impulses are able to truly shine. The vital role that the individual stage manager plays in

the quality of communication between a theatre team is unique and irreplaceable.

Electronic means are helpful for communicating from a distance, but the intended

recipient is still a person, not a machine. The tone in which information is conveyed is

just as important to the conscientious stage manager as the information itself. Without a

skilled communicator to properly utilize the technology, many of its benefits are lost.

In *The Stage Manager's Toolkit*, Kincman agrees with Christie's assessment of

communication, stating that all forms of communication—verbal, written, and

electronic—should be informed by the same goals:

> Tactful, Timely, and Specific: The author offers these three words as they key
>
> elements of successful communication, whether it is in person or in writing. They
>
> demonstrate respect for both the production and its personnel, and will enable the
>
> stage manager to facilitate creativity and collaboration in a highly successful
>
> manner. (Kincman 2)

No matter how the information is being conveyed to the receiving party, it still falls to the

stage manager to ensure that the information is being presented in the best way possible

for the intended audience—the fellow collaborators on that particular production.

While technologies like email offer a convenient method of communicating with

a large group of people in one message, a stage manager must think critically and

determine if the information that needs to be conveyed could be presented in a way that

allowed for greater tact, timeliness, or specificity. Perhaps the information that needs to

be communicated is complex, could be easily misconstrued in email, and would require

multiple follow-up emails to clarify (what Kincman called "specific"). Perhaps due to the

fast pace of theatrical production, information that is extremely time-sensitive must be

communicated before a member of the team is likely to check their email again

("timely"). Or perhaps a given piece of information simply does not need to be shared

with the whole team, and would be better communicated through a one-on-one

conversation instead of a note in the rehearsal report ("tactful"). The stage manager

should always prioritize tact, timeliness, and specificity over personal convenience.

In his interview, Bill Christie called particular attention to the importance of

tailoring communication techniques to each group of people. He views this as one of the

stage manager's chief concerns:

> So yeah, the places and the surrounding folks do inform how you grow and what
>
> you do. And I think that attitude really informs how I relate to the artists. And also
>
> being a director, I have that instinct of managing people, directing people,
>
> understanding folks, and how do you get the best work out of 20 different
>
> individuals. You recognize the fact that crews, P.A.s, [production assistants]
>
> anybody that you work with in an office, an enclosed little space where you have
>
> to get along, you start going they're this way, they're this way, they're this
>
> attitude, they perform this, they go off on this, and they need this kind of
>
> direction. And hopefully what I have discovered or developed—that I would wish
>
> any stage manager worth anything must develop—is how to understand different
>
> personalities and get the best out of them. I call it creative manipulation. Because
>
> that informs how you talk to each one to motivate them . . . (Christie 7).

There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to communication. Each theatre structure will have its own demands. By taking the time to gauge the individual personalities and needs of collaborators, Christie, like any good stage manager, is able to ensure that communication is carried out in the best way to ensure that it is received and perceived as tactful, timely, and specific by the intended audience. In this way, the stage manager is able to employ the "creative manipulation" Christie references, ensuring that not only is the information received, but also serves to further the production in a positive manner.

The stage managers of today have more communication tools than ever before at their disposal. In order to keep current with standard practice in society, tools like email, texting, and computer-updated paperwork have been embraced by the profession and offer opportunities for streamlined, instantaneous communication with large groups of people over great distances—forever changing the way theatre is made. With the great convenience offered by new technologies comes the added responsibility of maintaining critical engagement with in-person, written, and electronic forms of communication. Only in this way is the stage manager able to provide the most tactful, timely, and specific means of communication for the intended audience in any given situation. In this way, stage managers will be able to avoid the pitfalls of over-reliance on electronic communication, and actively serve the production to the best of their ability using all available resources.

CHAPTER IV

STAGE MANAGERS AND TRAINING

One of the most profound changes that technology has wrought on stage

management practice in the last few decades has impacted stage management training.

Like many professions, stage management has largely relied on an apprentice-style

approach to learning the craft, as Toby Malone illustrates using the stage managers of the

Stratford Shakespeare Festival as his example:

Despite the breadth of approaches throughout the Festival's history, there is a

noticeable chronological thread that links to stage managers' central endowment

of knowledge through mentorship. Young stage managers may learn their

profession at theatre school, but the true learning is passed on as they toil as

assistant stage managers or prompters . . . we see approaches that span the

development of stage management as a professional industry, as each generation

learns from its predecessors and layers in lessons from the past. (Malone 68)

However, as newer technologies are incorporated into stage management practice, the

largely linear transmission of knowledge from master to apprentice has been diverted, as

in many cases seasoned practitioners find themselves training younger, less experienced

individuals who nevertheless may have a firmer grasp on current technologies than their

instructors.

This chapter will examine stage management training, both in professional and academic environments. The mentor/mentee relationship has been very important to stage management training in both formal training programs and entry-level professional jobs. The ways that changing technologies have affected training and the teacher/student dynamic are important in identifying the best methods of utilizing technology for both the older and younger generation of stage managers. By examining past and current training methods, as well as what skills are proving under-developed among the newer, more technology-savvy generation of stage managers, one can begin to identify the implications of current training practice and recommendations for future stage management training and development of training programs.

A discussion of stage management training practices is perhaps best begun with a discussion of the most common methods of introduction to the profession. Most stage managers do not become stage managers overnight; instead, they learn the craft through a training program at a university or through serving as a production assistant or assistant stage manager. The stage managers interviewed for this project all studied theatre at the university level (whether or not stage management was their area of focus at the time). Additionally, all four interviewees have experience teaching at the university level—ranging from guest lecturer to full-time faculty member. This gave the participants excellent insight into both sides of the training process.

Many stage managers are introduced to the profession while working in another position in the theatre—such as acting, props, wardrobe, or run crew. Jenny Lang's experiences are reflective of this: "I took a company management internship with Dallas Theater Center right out of college. While there, I realized that I wanted to get into stage

management so I was able to switch to their stage management internship program"

(Lang 1). Oftentimes a young professional interested in stage management is able to

transition into this role after building a positive relationship with an individual company,

like Lang did. It is desirable to fill a job as demanding and as relied-upon as that of the

stage manager with a known quantity.

Like Lang, Thomas Kelly was aided in the process of transitioning to a stage

management career by building a relationship with a theatre company. He gradually

eased himself into the role of stage manager from a background in performance:

> I began seriously pursuing stage management in the sixties. During college, I was
>
> still acting, etc. but summers, I went to a summer stock theater in upstate New
>
> York, where I began to learn and appreciate the position of stage manager and all
>
> other technical, backstage work. I was there from 1962-1968, and I became their
>
> PSM the summer of 1966, which is also when I joined AEA as a Junior member,
>
> becoming senior the following year. (Kelly interview 1)

Summer stock theatre companies remain an important resume-building experience for

many fledgling theatre practitioners. These short-term jobs offer experience, and

sometimes even a way into the union, like it did for Kelly.

Perhaps the most interesting origin story out of all the interviewees is Bill

Christie, who found his way into the profession through a string of fortunate, well-timed

coincidences. His introduction to stage management was a true crash course in

adaptability:

> I had just moved to Kansas City and had recently gotten my Master's in directing,
>
> and needed a job . . . And a brand new theatre was opening in Kansas City called

the American Heartland Theatre. So I thought, maybe I can volunteer usher at this

brand new theatre . . . . Through that process of a year and them getting to know

me, and me listening, I heard that [the general manager] wanted not to have

different stage managers per show. I said, "Can I apply?" And the general

manager said "Sure." So I got my resume, which didn't have hardly any stage

management experience. I did one stage-managing duty in graduate school, for a

professor who was directing a show, loved it. So that was my real claim to fame.

But they knew I had a Master's, they had known me for almost that year, and I

was mature, all that. So they interviewed me for that, and evidently not having

any luck with existing stage managers, they hired me to do that role. (Christie 2)

Christie's experiences prove the importance of networking and personal trust—as well as

a willingness to adapt to the circumstances of individual positions—in procuring

employment as a stage manager, even over previous experience in the field.

Jane Page was introduced to the stage management profession in college. Like

Christie, her interest in stage management was coupled with an interest in directing.

However, she viewed the trajectory of her career differently: "I think when I was stage

managing it was the natural road for a director. Stage-managing was not very often a

career goal, but rather an "on-ramp" to directing. There were not Assistant Directors in

regional theaters very often and when there were they did not give maintenance notes"

(Page 3). Because stage managers are present through the entire theatrical process—

before, during, and after rehearsals—and interact with every member of the team, stage

management training serves as an excellent introduction to many other professions in

theatre for those who wish to try their hand in another area, as Page did.

Many stage managers had one or more mentors who were especially influential in their early careers. Both Jenny Lang (1) and Jane Page (1) credited their mentors in their interviews when discussing how they began stage-managing. Thomas Kelly particularly benefitted from a stage management mentor in his training. When asked how he first got into stage-managing, Kelly gave much of the credit to his mentor, with whom he cultivated a working relationship that lasted a decade:

> My biggest influence was Robert Currie, who gave me my first NYC stage management job and for whom I worked on and off for about ten years. He was the PSM at the Lincoln Center Repertory, who were the first occupants of the Vivian Beaumont, now the Lincoln Center Theatre. It completely sold me on big, exciting, spectacle-type theater and especially classic and repertory. It was my first exposure to a lot of famous and fabulous actors and directors, new plays, full immersion, etc. Bob had been a Broadway SM on many shows and was extremely instrumental in my learning as a stage manager, making contacts, learning the ways of IATSE [International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees] and Equity Unions, etc. (Kelly interview1)

This example of the mentor/mentee relationship illustrates how important these relationships can be to aspiring stage managers, whether they are found in a university setting or in a professional theatre, or both.

Understanding the different learning opportunities afforded by university programs in stage management and entry-level professional opportunities in stage management is crucial in order to optimize the learning potential of both experiences and justify their continuance. Stage management is a young and evolving practice, and

therefore so is stage management training. The idea of a university education in stage management is newer still, and not to be taken for granted. University programs teaching stage management are yet another example of how the profession has evolved, largely aided by technological advances in society—at university, paperwork creation and interfacing with show control technologies make up a sizeable portion of stage management curriculum. Students of stage management learn document formatting the same way their fellow technicians in other departments learn how to draft or sew: as a fundamental skill of their profession. However, like many other changes to the profession discussed in earlier chapters, the trend has been met with skepticism as well as acceptance.

As the stage managers interviewed for this project and virtually every introductory stage management book agree, stage management can never be fully learned in a classroom. However, universities continue to add and develop programs that cater to stage management specifically. Today, students who desire a formal education in stage management are able to turn to resources like URTA:

> The University Resident Theatre Association is the nation's oldest and largest consortium of professional, graduate (MFA) theatre training programs and partnered professional theatre companies. URTA was established in 1969 to work towards the highest standards in theatre production and performance, and to help bring resident professional theatre to the university campus and its community (URTA – Who We Are).

A quick perusal of URTA's member directory will yield a list of a dozen universities offering a Master of Fine Art degree in stage management or production management—

most less than half a century old (URTA Directory). These programs offer advanced

training in stage management—often in tandem with a resident theatre company, which

will employ students as production assistants. Some programs even allow students to

become Equity Membership Candidates (EMCs) and earn points towards a union card

while still in school.

Since stage management is widely acknowledged as a job that can only be learned

by doing it, aspiring stage managers may question whether a degree in stage management

offers any benefit to them beyond what they could achieve at lesser cost to themselves by

merely working their way up in a professional theatre environment. The spring 2014

issue of URTA's newsletter offered the following justification for pursuing an advanced

theatre degree:

> There's a meme on George Takei's Facebook page showing two panels. One is a
>
> random field of dots under the headline *Knowledge*. In the other, under the
>
> headline *Experience*, the dots are all connected. It's self explanatory, but what's
>
> not self-evident is that experience doesn't always teach the right lessons . . . but
>
> the combination of education, training, and experience can't be beat. George
>
> Takei is right; education and training creates the dots, and then experience
>
> connects them. (Cadena 6)

Education is not meant to replace professional experience, but to compliment and enrich

that experience. A stage management degree can assist young stage managers in

obtaining positions at more prestigious institutions, or expedite the process of receiving a

union card. Increasingly, an MFA is the price of admission for those who wish to teach at

four-year universities themselves. Though formal education is not necessary to learn the

job, and is not right for everyone, it can make a profound difference at the onset of a career. For this reason, coupled with increased societal expectations of college attendance overall, BFA and MFA programs in stage management are increasingly common.

Because stage management eludes codification—with the job description varying between different organizations and individual stage managers bringing their own personal styles and strengths into the execution of different tasks—no two stage managers will have an identical training experience, regardless of education level. In his interview, Bill Christie pointed out that even a negative experience working with a senior stage manager offers opportunities for learning, just as a positive experience would:

> I've run across a number of different stage managers in my life who are of that sort of ease, understanding, and know-how to communicate wonderfully diplomatically—both the actors and administration, all of which have their own idiosyncrasies and emotional impact. And it's okay, how do you serve all of that and still stay cool and calm? I've also known some that choose to need to be dramatic about it, and have a difficult time balancing it, and dramatically need to let everybody know that. And so I learned from them also. (Christie 3)

Whether picking up useful tips and tactics, or simply learning what not to do, young stage managers have a new opportunity to learn every time they work under a new mentor, and will pick up different skill sets from each individual. Sometimes, the acquired skill is difficult to explain in the abstract: like how to carry out a job with a minimal ego.

Jenny Lang agrees with Christie's assertion that stage managers are responsible for keeping their own egos in check in service of the production. In her interview, she shared some of the most important advice she gives as an educator: "Stage Managing is

not for the faint of heart. It is a time-consuming and often-thankless job . . . You have to love being behind the scenes making things happen and taking care of everyone else's needs. If you don't love it, don't do it. That's what I always tell my students" (Lang 4). Putting one's ego aside is one of the most difficult tasks required of a stage manager. In situations like this, the true importance of the mentor/mentee relationship in stage management is revealed. There is no better way to develop the discreet skills that set great stage managers apart than to observe someone who has already managed this subtly important task. Truly the best way to hone the stage management craft is to work with as many different people as possible in that capacity, and learn from all of them.

This has never been truer than in the digital age, when technology has so rapidly altered stage management practice. At this moment in time, the industry is gifted with more experienced stage managers who have worked professionally both with and without the benefit of many modern technologies that newer stage managers take for granted, and therefore are better equipped to cope when technology fails. Conversely, newer stage managers who are growing up using email, computers, and smartphones every day enter the profession with a technological fluency that their mentors may or may not have been able to attain. Both groups have much to teach each other for the future betterment of the stage management profession.

Bill Christie is keenly aware of the reciprocal relationship that exists between himself and the P.A.s that work under him. He acknowledges especially the training in technology use that students are receiving in university training programs that surpasses his own technological knowledge:

I can't begin to think I know hardly much. I mean, you in your studies and

mentioning certain things in the education you're getting, is 100% of stuff I

couldn't even begin to imagine right now. And techniques and technology and in

the design world… All of that kind of stuff that you and many other young folks

are being acquainted with, you know I don't have a clue. (Christie 17)

University coursework in stage management provides a slower-paced environment in

which to explore new technologies further in-depth before using them in practical

applications. This fact, coupled with increased technological fluency through everyday

immersion, has resulted in young stage managers who are savvier around technology than

ever. For this reason, aspiring stage managers can look to benefit from university training

programs and professional experience in different ways, especially in relation to

technology.

The challenge for stage managers moving forward will be to strike the appropriate

balance in training between technological and non-technological skills. With so much

technology being added into theatrical production, there is a necessity to address these

new concerns in training programs so that new stage managers are prepared to be

competitive in the job market. However, as discussed in the previous chapter on

communication, many younger stage managers entering the profession have under-

developed communication skills, despite the fact that technology facilitates faster, easier

communication. This discrepancy must be addressed in training programs. When stage

managers learn to utilize a new computer program or app in service of the production, it

is important that they are taught the *why* as well as the *how*.

The critical thinking that stage managers must employ in even seemingly simple tasks like sending an email reflects the profession's true depth. Stage management is often described as a non-creative position on the production team. However, this description does the job a major disservice—it is unflattering, and also inaccurate. Careers in the arts attract creative people to them, including the people who become stage managers. Portraying the stage management profession as a non-creative position marks it as inferior within the artistic community, and diminishes the appeal of the position to prospective students.

Though stage managers may not show their creativity as overtly as other members of a production team, a stage manager actually devoid of creativity would be of little use to anyone. In her interview, Jenny Lang emphasized the importance of creativity and artistry in the stage management profession as she described what makes a good stage manager:

So many things make a good stage manager, but some of the most important include organizational skills, the ability to communicate effectively in writing and in person, remaining calm under pressure, being a good mediator and problem solver, calling a good show, and having an artistic eye. At the beginning of my career I probably would not have mentioned the need for being a good mediator or having an artistic eye. This is something I have realized through my experience. Having an artistic eye is something I think few stage managers have, but I think it is one of the most important qualities of a good stage manager. The ability to understand what the director and designers are going for and then calling the show from an artistic mindset so that is flows smoothly and eloquently

from beginning to end. A stage manager with an artistic eye is also much more

valuable when a problem arises during tech or rehearsal. That person is able to

creatively solve problems thus enhancing the artistic quality of the production.

(Lang 2)

When viewed in this way, a career in stage management takes on a whole new

significance. By encouraging the creativity of aspiring stage managers from early in their

training, mentors would be able to cultivate a new generation that feels more valued in

their positions and are therefore more invested in the process. If stage managers learn to

bring their creativity to each task, more attention will be paid to the details that subtly

shape the production over time.

Former stage manager Jane Page is especially appreciative of the creative and

analytical skills of a good stage manager. In her interview, she cited the relationship

between stage management and directing as her impetus for joining the stage

management profession (3). The perceived relationship between stage management and

directing—the position that serves as the unifying creative force of Western theatre

production—offers a further argument for the stage management profession's innate

creativity. However, since the time when Jane Page began working as a stage manager,

she has observed a decline in one particular skill set among practitioners:

Distressed to see a lot of stage managers who are not trained or skilled at giving

actors notes once the director has left the show in their care. They are fine at

maintaining the tech but sometimes the acting is not cared for in a run. When I

was stage-managing, that was the stage manager's primary job. I have only had

one stage manager in years who has asked for copies of my digital notes that I

send out now during rehearsals. Not sure how the SMs are moving away from that

responsibility. (Page 3)

This once-vital aspect of the stage manager's process is now being lost, to the detriment

of long-running productions. Stage managers remain with a production after opening,

while the director departs. At this point, the artistic maintenance of the production is put

in the stage manager's hands. However, if note giving is not included in stage

management training, this role goes unfilled. Like Lang, Page is keenly aware of what is

lost when a stage manager fails to apply an artistic eye to the production.

Aspiring stage managers must be encouraged in the development of their artistic

eye in order to combat the trend Page observed in the devolving quality of maintenance

notes. In order to achieve this, educators must find the best way to develop such a quality

in young stage managers, or if it is even something that can be taught in the first place.

When asked about whether young stage managers can be taught to have an artistic eye,

Lang replied:

This is difficult to teach. However, it is something that can be developed

throughout one's career. I think you have to sort of have an artistic eye to begin

with, but the more experience you get, the easier it becomes to come up with

solutions that benefit the production artistically and technically. Also, having a

rhythm, reading music, and timing the calling of cues (scenic, lights, etc.) to what

is happening in the show (particularly musicals) is an art form in and of

itself. You have to have that understanding at an early age I think, but then you

continue to develop and refine it . . . You can only get really good at it with

experience. The more shows you call, the easier it gets. Stage management is

one of those things that is difficult to teach in general. You have to get on your

feet and do it. (Lang 5)

Here, Lang admits that some skills, though difficult to teach fully, can be explained in a

university setting and then illuminated by continued experience. She echoes the sentiment

of Lawrence Stern in *Stage Management*, when he opens chapter one with the following:

"My point of view is that (1) you don't become a professional Actors' Equity

Association/Broadway stage manager without prior experience and (2) you don't become

any kind of stage manager by reading a book, not even this one" (Stern 1). Many

concepts that are difficult to grasp outside the context of live performance—like the role

a stage manager's artistic eye has to play in furthering the production—become clear

when called upon in practice, and continued practice is the only way to master these

concepts.

Stage management training must be rooted in practical application of skills

through production work, either at the university or professional level. Only in this way,

over time, can the artistic eye of a stage manager be fully developed. Again, this requires

training programs to place equal emphasis on the technological proficiency and the

artistic proficiency of a stage manager. Immaculately designed paperwork turned in as a

class assignment will not teach the latter skill, but hands-on practice focused on the

creative outlets available within the stage management profession will. The seemingly

disparate skill sets associated with technological and artistic proficiency achieve the best

results when they are combined in real situations.

Bill Christie agrees with Lang on the importance of practical production work for

trainees in the profession. Additionally, he emphasizes the obligation of mentors to

observe aspiring stage managers in action during production work and guide the experience constructively. In his interview, he worried about important aspects of the job that are not being taught or are not able to be taught in the classroom:

> I think my main focus that I always feel unconsciously is how to talk about the human aspect of it. Because that's how I approach it. But that's what I would hope anybody going into this business can at least figure out for themselves, that side to themselves, because it may not be being taught. I don't know. I don't know how you teach that . . . I guess it would take the professor, the teacher… if he goes and sees them in action somehow, if that is a possibility, if they're able to stage manage undergraduate productions and they see and sit and listen, how they deal with the other human beings, and counsel them in a certain way, it's kind of like, "You're not God. Get off the power thing and stop yelling at people." Or if that is indeed happening. Because I do believe some people can be encouraged, some people think they want to go into stage management and maybe just *shouldn't*, you know… (Christie 19)

As previously discussed, stage management is a difficult job that requires an individual to be very selfless in service of the production. Not everyone who goes into stage management does so for the right reasons—the love of the work and the desire to serve a production in any way required. If this is observed to be the case, stage management mentors do a disservice to trainees by failing to point it out. Stage managers who enter the profession for the wrong reasons will likely not remain in the profession, or if they do will not find it fulfilling; passively allowing this to happen benefits no one.

It is not enough for training programs to extol the values of a good stage manager in a lecture and send trainees off on their own. Instead, stage management training must combine practical work on the part of the trainees with sufficient observation and feedback from those more experienced. Otherwise further experience may only serve to reinforce bad habits that have not been pointed out and corrected. As summarized in URTA Update by the metaphor of connecting the dots, effective training lays the groundwork that is then augmented by experience (Cadena 6). By utilizing their own skills of communication to constructively guide their stage management students, stage management mentors are able to lay the strongest possible groundwork.

This responsibility was very present in the minds of the interviewees, who now find themselves in the role of mentor. As a full-time educator at a university as well as a professional stage manager, Jenny Lang takes her role as mentor very seriously. In her interview, she discussed some of the methods she employs to try and optimize the experience of her students. A cultivation of the artistic eye is certainly present in her approach:

> I tell my students to always look at the production from the big picture viewpoint and to try to offer creative solutions, and I encourage them to call musicals from a score. I also have added a music reading component to my class. And I tell them that the conductor is their friend. You must keep your eye on the conductor to call a good show, meaning you must watch them on your monitor and take your cues off of how they conduct the music. This is the key to marrying the music and what the audience sees happening on stage technically. These are the only ways I know how to teach it. (Lang 5)

In addition to the importance of the artistic eye, Lang once again draws attention to the importance of a variety of experiences in stage management training. Although she is only one instructor, her students are still exposed to a variety of stage management styles through her—including musicals and operas in which the stage manager is required to call the show from a score. In this way, Lang is able to offer her students experiences that might not otherwise come up right away in their careers.

Bill Christie—who works full time as a stage manager and has no current university affiliation—has many of the same concerns as Lang about the young stage managers who work under him as part of their training. He too remains very aware of his responsibilities when it comes to furthering the education of his production assistants and stage management interns:

> And I've had a number of interns, from universities and colleges and stuff spend time, etc. and I'm very clear to say, "This is how I've learned to do it. Ask questions, view it, but do not leave here saying this is what a professional stage manager does everywhere." My goal for you as an intern is to know what I'm doing, good bad or indifferent, then to take it and ask questions and learn and find out here, here, here, here, here, here. Get exposure I never had so that you can decide what kind of stage manager you'll grow into. And what's effective. And learn from it all. (Christie 18)

Once again, a young stage manager's experience working with a variety of people and places compounds their opportunities to learn. By critically analyzing the techniques they observe from more experienced stage managers, trainees are able to pick and choose the most effective methods to tailor to the needs of each individual production. In this way,

maximum efficacy as a stage manager can be achieved, and the profession will continue to advance in the manner it traditionally has, with each subsequent generation of stage managers building upon the body of knowledge passed down to them by their mentors and adding new discoveries of their own.

Today's stage managers have inherited a body of knowledge from their predecessors that is impressive to say the least. Moving forward, the profession has a real opportunity to compound that body of knowledge again. By applying a critical eye to timesaving technologies instead of accepting them at face value, stage managers will be able to synthesize the best techniques from the pre-digital age with newfound knowledge of technologies that can aid in the execution of everyday tasks. In this way, the profession could obtain the best of both worlds; stage managers will remain on the cutting edge of technology without losing the discreet critical and artistic skills honed by earlier generations without the benefit of such technology. The important thing is to not let the body of knowledge that has been built up to this point be lost.

The imperative to train the next generation of stage managers effectively is vital to the survival of the stage management profession as it currently exists. Stage managers are such an integral part of the current theatre landscape, it is easy to forget just how new the profession really is, and how quickly it could once again be redefined in a way that stage managers would not desire. When asked how stage management has changed over the course of his career, and what typical tasks have been added or are performed differently now, Kelly expressed his concern for the way the role of the stage manager is viewed in many of the modern companies with high production values. As theatres

increase in size and complexity, jobs that had been the domain of the stage manager are parceled out:

> CORPORATE nature. . . theater has changed so much. The stage manager position has been divided into all kinds of production supervisors, assistant directors, designer assistants, dreaded dramaturges, PR people who are relentless, rude and harbor a notion of their job and the show's priorities and meanings that may be far, far from yours . . . it has become far less human, and the stage manager's authority on shows has become emasculated and minimized to the point of being janitorial and reactive instead of proactive. (Kelly 3)

This disturbing trend gives stage managers more reason than ever to train the next generation to be as effective as possible. If stage managers are not perceived as capable of carrying out the necessary tasks for a smooth production, those tasks will be reassigned—not necessarily to the benefit of anyone. Or conversely, like the maintenance notes that were once a key aspect of a stage manager's performance duties, these tasks will simply be neglected, again to the production's detriment.

As jobs are divided between more and more people and positions, the chances for miscommunication and important details and tasks being lost in the shuffle dramatically increases. If stage managers maintain the active presence that has been associated with the position in the past, such measures will not be necessary. The best way to combat this trend of parceling out stage-managerial tasks is for stage management teams to fight against the passivity that technology enables. Now more than ever, the stage manager must know when to look away from the screen, get up from the rehearsal table, and do what needs to be done.

The human element that stage managers bring to the production process continues to be their greatest asset. This is what technology can never replace: the communication techniques, the tailored interactions, the creativity and positive outlook, the rapid problem solving. It is these skills most closely associated with the human element of production that must be emphasized in training environments. Whether working as professors or PSMs, stage managers must continue to hone their training of themselves and others if the young profession is to continue at the level of importance it currently holds for the next century of technological innovations.

Stage managers first entering the profession have the choice of obtaining a college degree specific to stage management or forgoing this step and entering the workforce; both options have their pros and cons, and this is a personal choice each individual must make. However, it is important to remember that university training programs are not a substitute for practical experience; they are meant to augment that experience with additional insights. Both academic and professional forms of stage management training should share a common goal: for the trainee to benefit from the body of knowledge passed on by the experienced stage manager who serves as mentor, and to provide opportunity for trainees to work with as many mentors as possible in order to repeat this benefit each time. For training programs to remain effective in the digital age, it is important for mentors and mentees to critically engage with technology, and seek out the most effective ways to combine new methods with old knowledge.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The technological revolution of the last three decades has impacted every facet of society, including the arts. This thesis has shown how the stage management profession has taken in many of the new technologies available, and how they have affected it. Stage managers today use an extensive list of tools that were unknown to their immediate predecessors. From automation of lighting and scenic elements, to file-sharing of background tracks, to computer-generated paperwork, to the daily slew of emails that has become standard professional practice, stage managers have adopted and adapted new technologies, and made them an essential part of their craft. In the hands of a skilled stage manager, these technologies enhance and streamline the production process—especially in the realm of electronic forms of communication. When asked if technology had improved his job as a stage manager or made it more difficult, Thomas Kelly replied:

> Yes, a combination . . . hard to keep up with all the tech—both SM and scenic, electric, sound, etc. However, the spread sheet and excel have helped/improved. The Internet is invaluable as an info tool—local food and supply outlets on the road, maps, directions, "things to do" for cast, history/bios of people you may be Working with or interviewing with, schedules and event pages of other theatres, concerts, etc. (Kelly interview 3)

Obviously then, stage managers are putting the new technologies to good use on a wide range of tasks. With the growing number of theatre artists who travel to new locales regularly, a stage manager's ability to quickly disseminate information about the new and unfamiliar surroundings offers a real comfort. These are just some of the benefits that new technologies offer to stage managers, who continue to adapt more technologies to a theatrical purpose.

Despite the changes in technology, however, the essence of the stage management profession has not changed: the stage manager still exists to facilitate the smooth running of the production through observation, action, and communication. Jenny Lang espouses this view of the constancy at the profession's core. When asked in her interview if technology has fundamentally changed the role of the stage manager in theatre, she responded: "No. I think it has made the job of the stage manager easier, but it has not changed the duties of the stage manager or what makes a good stage manager" (Lang 4). The participants in this study all voiced similar ideas about what makes an effective stage manager. Building upon the foundations they had already established through training and previous experience, their divergent career paths lead them to similar conclusions about what makes stage managers effective: adaptability, creative manipulation, an artistic eye, a critical sensibility. Through the process of integrating technology into theatre practice, the participants in this thesis illustrate what it is to be effective as stage managers. As new methods were developed, they incorporated these methods into their practice seamlessly as a means of enhancing their natural powers of communication.

When asked if technology has improved his job as a stage manager, or changed it in in any sort of fundamental way, Bill Christie articulated the adaptive qualities that

have allowed him to succeed in stage management for the last thirty years, with or without technology:

> Very much so. I'd have to say it has changed me, because that's the way of the world. Everything is electronic, and people get the information, they understand the information, and that's what's going on. So you just… I just have to jump on and embrace it. Therefore I've grown as a human being. To learn how to do this, because that's just the way, everybody else is younger than me, so that's the way they know how to operate. So, therefore it's had to improve the way I function just because that's what's expected. So it's improved me I think more than it's improved things in general. It exists . . . and so, understanding how all these computers work is advancement, because that didn't use to exist that way. So yeah, it's improved me for the better. (Christie 16)

Whether or not technology's influence on the stage management profession has proven altogether a positive one, stage management has nonetheless experienced tremendous progress in the 20th and 21st centuries. Stage management has come into its own as a profession, with each generation passing on skills to their apprentices, who then build upon them. Progress is inherent in this endowment of knowledge, supported through oral tradition.

A good stage manager is able to adapt to the circumstances of different companies, whether that means using new and unfamiliar technologies or doing without those that have become second nature. A great stage manager is able to help trainees achieve the same, and teach new stage managers to be effective within the parameters of each new theatrical production. As long as stage managers continue this tradition of

knowledge transmission from mentor to mentee, the profession will continue to experience progress. Therefore, it is vitally important that this method of knowledge transmission be preserved in the digital age.

Stage managers have played a vital role in shaping 20th and 21st century theatre in America. In this study, I used an oral history method to extract information from former and current practitioners. In the interest of increasing the presence of stage management in the historical record, oral history will prove a vital resource. The evolution of the profession now known as stage management was by and large accomplished by oral communication in the mentor/mentee relationship—a tradition that the oral history approach of this study seeks to honor and uphold.

Seasoned stage managers like Thomas Kelly, Jane Page, Bill Christie, and Jenny Lang are uniquely able shed light on the evolution of the stage management profession during this critical time. Their contribution to the furthering of theatre practice through modern technology is a necessary inclusion in the study of the discipline's history, not just for aspiring stage managers, but also for all theatre scholars seeking a comprehensive understanding of modern theatre practice. This thesis aims to help fulfill the need for a comprehensive history of stage management, and provides exciting implications for further research. Future explorations in this new area of inquiry might include stage managers who branch into other entertainment fields and how they tie into theatre, stage managers from countries other than the United States, stage managers who left the profession before technology established its presence, or stage managers who have never practiced theatre without the aid of technology. Additionally, the four-person sample

used in this study could simply be expanded upon within the same parameters; there are many other stage managers out there with unique perspectives of their own.

Professional stage managers, like the ones interviewed for this study, who have experienced theatre practice before and after the advent of digital technologies, have a unique perspective to offer that following generations will not experience firsthand. New technology can aid stage managers in the execution of their jobs, but it cannot replace the skills and artistry that previous generations of stage managers have cultivated. The history of stage management—as told by those who lived it, enriched with the divergent experiences of their individual career trajectories—will help to ensure that future stage managers continue to build the profession in a positive direction. By sharing their experiences and their intimate knowledge of theatre practice, stage managers will help to ensure that fictional representations of stage managers in plays are not the only ones available for future study.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEA: Actors' Equity Association (the union of professional actors and stage mangers in the United States)

AGMA: American Guild of Musical Artists (the union of professional opera singers and stage managers in the United States)

ASM: Assistant Stage Manager

BFA: Bachelor of Fine Arts

EMC: Equity Membership Candidate (early-career actors and stage managers earning points towards a union card)

IATSE: International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (the union of professional stage crew for theatre, film, and television)

LORT: League of Resident Theatres (a professional theatre association that represents the major regional theatres of the United States in their collective bargaining with AEA)

MFA: Master of Fine Arts

PA: Production Assistant

PSM: Production Stage Manager

SETC: Southeastern Theatre Conference

SM: Stage Manager

TCG: Theatre Communications Group (a not-for-profit organization which seeks to foster communication among theatre artists at all levels of development)

URTA: University Resident Theatre Association

USITT: United States Institute for Theatre Technology

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, October 13, 2014

IRB Application No   AS14103

Proposal Title: Stage Management Practices and the Digital Age

Reviewed and   Exempt
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved   Protocol Expires: 10/12/2017

Principal
Investigator(s):

Fiona Carmody   Maria Beach
121 Seretean Center   121 Seretean Center
Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL OF MODIFICATION

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Friday, November 14, 2014   Protocol Expires: 10/12/2017

IRB Application No: AS14103

Proposal Title: Stage Management Practices and the Digital Age

Reviewed and   Exempt
Processed as: **Modification**

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s)   **Approved**

Principal
Investigator(s):

Fiona Carmody   Maria Beach
121 Seretean Center   121 Seretean Center
Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

Modification to change inclusion criteria to those who began working as stage managers no later than 1990.

Signature :

Hugh Crethar

Hugh Crethar, Chair, Institutional Review Board

<u>Friday, November 14, 2014</u>
Date

APPENDIX D

BLANK COPY OF CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: Stage Management Practices and the Digital Age

INVESTIGATORS: Fiona Carmody, 2nd-year MA student in the department of Theatre at Oklahoma State University. Advised by Dr. Maria Beach, assistant professor and director of graduate studies in the department of Theatre at Oklahoma State University.

PURPOSE:
This study will examine the evolution of the stage management profession in the digital age, and how these changes affected the practitioners of professional stage management.

Participants will be former or current professional stage managers who began their careers no later than 1990, and who stage managed for at least 10 years.

You will be asked to discuss your stage management career, how the job has and has not changed as a result of technology, the pros and cons of technology, and your views on the profession then and now.

PROCEDURES:
I will ask a series of 15-20 interview questions by phone. This study is designed to last approximately 30-60 minutes. I will record and transcribe the interviews.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:
There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:
There are no direct benefits to you. However, this research will fill an important gap in the living history of theatre, chronicling the development of one of the most essential aspects of modern American theatrical production.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Unless otherwise requested, interviewees will be cited by name in my thesis. You may participate anonymously if you prefer.

I will record and transcribe the interviews. You will be sent a copy of the transcript for approval, and may edit your statements if you wish.

Audio recordings will be transcribed and destroyed within 10 days of the interview. Transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected computer.

COMPENSATION:
There will be no compensation for participating in the interviews.

Okla. State U.
IRB
Approved _11-14-1_
Expires _10-13-1_
IRB.# _AS-14-10_

104
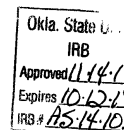
CONTACTS:
You may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study:

Fiona Carmody, Dept. of Theatre, 121 Seretean Center for the Performing Arts, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (314) 601-1139, fiona.carmody@okstate.edu.

Faculty Advisor: Maria Beach, Ph.D., Dept. of Theatre, 121 Seretean Center for the Performing Arts, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-2966, maria.beach@okstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:
I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.

CONSENT DOCUMENTATION:
I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and of the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:
- I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.
- I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

APPENDIX E

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What year did you begin stage-managing professionally? What year did you join AEA (Actors' Equity Association – the union of professional actors and stage managers)?

2. Are you still working as a stage manager or production manager currently? If not, when did you leave the stage management profession?

3. How did you first get into stage management? Did you have a mentor(s) who was particularly influential as you learned to stage-manage?

4. What city/theatre(s), if any, have you worked in the most as a stage manager? How long have you worked in this city/theatre(s)?

5. What would a typical day in rehearsal look like at the beginning of your career? What would a typical performance entail for you?

6. What was your primary mode of communicating with the cast, director, and designers when you first started stage-managing?

7. What was the most demanding or time-consuming aspect of the job when you first started stage-managing?

8. What was/is your favorite part of stage-managing? What do you think makes a good stage manager?

9. How has stage management changed over the course of your career? What typical tasks have been added or are performed differently now?

10. How many of the following technologies have you used as a stage manager? What are the pros and cons of the technologies you have used? (email, Dropbox or other file-sharing softwares, Meeting Wizard or other scheduling softwares, Microsoft Office, AutoCAD or other drafting softwares, smartphones, clear-com, texting, laptops, desktop computers, Virtual Stage Manager or similar programs)

11. How have technologies like these affected your job as a stage manager? Overall, would you say technology has improved your job as a stage manager?

12. In your opinion, what single technology has impacted the stage management profession the most?

13. If you have worked regularly at more than one theatre, how have different theatres utilized advances in technology? Are some more reliant on new technology than others, or is there a sort of industry standard?

14. What is your primary mode of communicating with the cast, director, and designers now (or what was it at the end of your stage management career)?

15. What does a typical day in rehearsal look like now (or what did it look like at the end of your stage management career)? What does/did a typical performance entail for you?

16. What is the most demanding or time-consuming aspect of the job when you first started stage-managing (or what was it at the end of your stage management career)?

17. Do you think advances in technology have fundamentally changed the job of a stage manager? If so, how? If not, why not?

VITA

Fiona Clare Carmody

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: STANDBY PROGRESS, PROGRESS GO: AN ORAL HISTORY OF STAGE
MANAGEMENT AND THE DIGITAL AGE

Major Field: Theatre

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in Theatre at Oklahoma
State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Design and
Technology at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri in
2011.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and English at
Truman State University, Kirksville, Missouri in 2009.

Experience:

Graduate Teaching Assistant and Guest Lecturer to Professor Lee Brasuell in
"Stage Management" and "Advanced Stage Technology"; Dr. Maria
Beach in "Theatre History I"; Professor Lloyd Caldwell in "Acting for
the Camera"; at Oklahoma State University, 2013-2015.

Selected Stage Management Credits (2011-2014): *The House of Yes, Dying
City*, *Fully Committed* for the Fishtank Performance Studio; *Zombie
Prom*, *The Rocky Horror Show*, and *Lysistrata Jones* (ASM) for Egads!
Theatre; *Slashdance, Dear America: Across the Wide and Lonesome
Prairie*, the 2012 and 2013 *Young Playwrights Festival, Freedom
Sisters, The Presidents!, Tell-Tale Electric Poe* for the Coterie Theatre;
Auntie Mame'd for Kansas City Artists Against AIDS.

Professional Memberships: Golden Key, Alpha Psi Omega, and Phi Kappa Phi
honor societies