

Front-of-House in Theatre

Subject: Theatre Arts

Level: Form Four

Qu: Who is the first staff member you meet when you go to the theatre?



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<https://www.oldvictheatre.com/news/2017/12/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-front-of-house-manager>

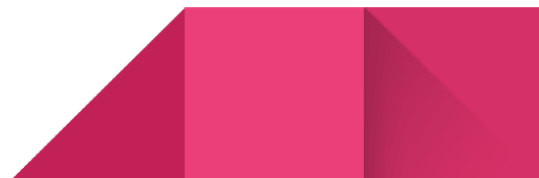
Yes, the Parking Attendant. Who is next?

The Front-of-House Staff will certainly meet and greet you! In particular, the Front-of-House Manager is the overall person who is responsible for the smooth operation of the house (typically both the lobby and audience seating area) during the run of the show. House Managers welcome the public to the theatre and oversee their safety and well-being before, during, and immediately after the show. They answer questions, listen to patrons' compliments and concerns, and make audience members feel welcome.

The front-of-house staff may be the *only* members of the company who the audience interact with on a regular basis, so their interactions are of prime importance. **Look at the video below:**

[Front-of-House Staff](#)

Now let us read this article. Look for the **ORANGE UNDERLINES.**





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FRONT OF HOUSE



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Front of House staff are essential because they are the first people to greet our patrons when they arrive at the theatre. Indeed we know many of our customers so well that we think of them as friends.

It is our role to ensure that all goes smoothly when the audience arrives for a performance and this begins in the foyer. Here, after a cheerful greeting at the door, our team members are available to sell sweets, to give out programmes and to hold tickets which are waiting to be collected.

Next it is up to the auditorium where our stewards collect tickets. Ah, tickets; all does not always run smoothly! However our new ticketing system provides us with a list of all tickets sold, together with names of purchasers. This means, when there is doubt about who is the rightful occupier of a seat, that we can establish who has actually come on the night before



the one for which they have booked or even for the wrong show all together. Occasionally we need to wait until just before the performance begins to seat patrons who have misplaced their tickets. During the pantomime run there was an afternoon when 40 people arrived without a ticket between them. All was happily resolved. You may wonder why we retain all ticket stubs; it means we know exactly how many people are in the auditorium so that we can do a head count in the car park in the event of an evacuation. Last but not least is our unsung hero the first aider, who sits in the auditorium for every performance. If there is no first aider, there can be no show!



As you can imagine, all of this requires careful organisation and cheerful and helpful volunteers. Our ideal number for each evening is a team of seven with an eighth member to act as FOH manager. A quick calculation will tell you that we need 56 people for the run of a week's production. In fact, however, several of our helpers do more than one evening of duty and willingly take on someone else's role. Nor does being a team manager on one evening preclude you from being a team member on another. It requires a minimum of four people for a show to proceed. We are all very flexible – especially when there's 'flu in the air!

Retrieved from: <https://www.thelittletheatre.net/front-of-house/>

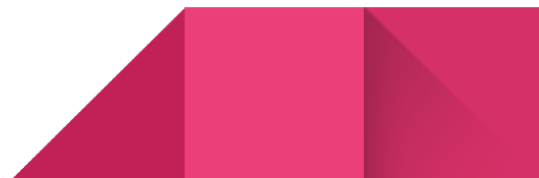
Activity One

Identify three (3) persons who would work along with the Front-of-House Manager.

Typical Responsibilities

- Responsible for ensuring excellent customer service from front-of-house staff
- Staffs and organizes all public and preview performances
- Provides an excellent patron experience at all performances.
- Manages printed program distribution, and secures programs and other patron materials.
- Maintains the appearance of the lobby and all public areas; communicates with Maintenance as necessary to ensure a clean environment
- Resolves conflicts with any patron issues
- Hires, trains, schedules and/or supervises Assistant House Managers and Backup House Managers
- Recruits and coordinates volunteer ushers
- Coordinates performance timelines with stage management, including preshow chat, curtain speeches, and intermission
- Maintains ticket-scanning equipment, hearing impaired devices, and walkie-talkies for communicating with stage manager
- Completes and distributes house report for each performance, if required
- Provides leadership in emergency situations, including fire alarm and inclement weather warning

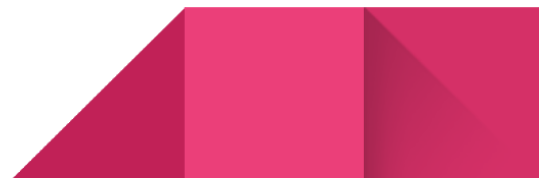
Retrieved from: <https://aact.org/house-manager>



Activity

Write the steps you would take to solve the following issues:

1. A patron arrives late without a ticket. It is raining outside and the production starts in two minutes. It is not a 'full house' (some seats are free).
2. During the production, a lady begins to open her bag, puts her phone light on and starts mixing a powdered drink.
3. The buzzer which calls the audience back to their seats after the intermission, has suddenly malfunctioned. How would you assist the Stage Manager in a timely way?



ANSWER KEY

Question 1.

1. Radio an usher to meet you half-way.
2. Escort the patron to the auditorium door.
3. Seat the patron quickly and safely while taking note of the seat number. If there is time, take information from the patron.
4. Inform the House Manager and the Box Office Manager

Question 2.

1. Approach the aisle and seat number carefully.
2. If the seat is close to the aisle, you may be able to whisper to the patron
3. If the seat is far away, you may need to use your flashlight on and off to draw his/her attention.

Question 3.

1. Reduce the number of ushers in the auditorium and call out the rest to the foyer.
2. Make an announcement
3. Ask ushers to approach patrons who may not have heard
4. Escort patrons into the auditorium

Good Work.

END of LESSON

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