



# Director Handbook

Version 1

*A welcoming theatre community with a passion for creating vibrant, engaging entertainment*

This handbook is for directors. It is kept accurate by the Production Chair with help from active directors.

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# 1. Introduction

Welcome to Langham Court Theatre! You've been asked to direct a show. There are several things we'd love you to know about us:

- We're a community theatre where everyone is volunteering their time and skills
- We put on high quality productions
- We encourage an educational mindset, and provide an opportunity for our members to grow their skills
- We are volunteers working together to create a great community

This guide is meant to cover the important information for directing at Langham and is not a guide for directing in general.

## 2. Production Responsibilities

Outlined below are some key parts of Directing at Langham.

### 2.1. Production Team

You'll be putting together a production team. Finding a Producer early will help you with this, especially if you are new to directing at Langham. Your Producer will help you with the administrative side, including timelines, promotion, and tracking costs. Beyond the Producer, plays will also have the following positions in their production team:

- Stage Management (SM)
- Set design
- Costume design
- Lighting design
- Sound design
- Properties
- Set Decor

and may also include:

- Projection Designer
- Music Director
- Choreographer
- Coaches (Dialect, Instruments, Movement, other)

Ensure everyone knows we are a volunteer organization. If you know who you'd like to work with, ask them. Volunteers may also ask you if they can work on your show in a specific capacity. If you or your producer can't fill a role, ask the Production Chair and Volunteer Coordinator for suggestions.

### 2.2. Regular Production Meetings

The director and designers use these meetings to clarify a unified artistic vision. At Langham, the director works with the production team to realize their vision. At these meetings each department updates on their work, current tasks, and timelines. Early production meetings are critical, but less frequent (twice a month). As opening approaches you'll be having regular meetings, and direct communications even more frequently than that. Some directors will also meet with a subset of departments for a more focussed discussion.

## 2.2.1. Discuss Expectations with the Stage Manager

During rehearsals, you will be working closely with the SM. By meeting ahead of time to discuss how each of you work best can simplify the rehearsal process for both of you.

Some questions to start with may be:

- When will breaks be taken and who will call for them?
- How flexible are blocking notes?
- How is the room to be set up for rehearsals?
- How would the director like for prompting to work?
- What are the expectations you have of your SM, and what do they need from you in order to facilitate? Do they have expectations from you?
- How (and when) should further expectations from either party be shared?

## 2.3. Auditions

Most plays hold auditions 10 weeks before opening, so an audition package should be out well in advance. The audition process will be discussed with your Producer and SM in production meetings leading up to the event. If you would like other members of your production team present at auditions, you may invite them. However, auditioning to a large panel of people can be intimidating, so please be aware of the actor's perspective. Other directors may ask to observe how you conduct auditions, take this as an opportunity to teach and reflect on your own process. It is up to you how you'd like to do your auditions; group audition, scheduled appointment, prepared monologue, cold read, or something else. **Anyone may audition.**

### 2.3.1. Audition Package

It is up to you to prepare an audition notice / package to prospective actors. The General Manager (GM) will have this posted to the Langham website, distributed to the newsletter editor, and sent to those on our mailing lists. This audition notice should contain:

- a short description of the play
- date and time of auditions and callbacks
- what is expected for the actor to have prepared
- contact email for further questions, normally the Producer.

Callbacks are held shortly after the first round of auditions. Everyone who auditions gets a respectful phone call thanking them for auditioning. The Director should be making most of these calls, but the Producer can also help.

### 2.3.2. Audition Feedback

An actor may ask for feedback from the audition. The director chooses whether to provide that feedback. If feedback is given, take the time to thoughtfully construct it. Do not give feedback during a phone call when you're telling an actor they were not cast for a role.

### 2.3.3. Casting

Talk to the GM and your Producer if you are wishing to cast someone in an acting union or association. They will help you understand our current Paid Artist Policy. If none of the actors you want to cast are from an acting union or association, you can go ahead and cast.



## 2.4.2. Rehearsal Schedule

Rehearsals usually start ~10 weeks ahead of a play, and occur 3 times a week: Tuesday and Thursday evening (7-10pm), and Sunday afternoon (1-4pm). These times have worked well in the past, but can be adjusted.

With your SM, decide which scenes will be rehearsed when, taking into consideration availability of cast. Your rehearsal time is limited, so be sure to get through everything you'll need to. As opening night gets closer, you may want to schedule more rehearsals. It is expected that at least three full runs of the show occur before tech weekend with minimal (preferably no) interruptions. The SM will write up a draft of your rehearsal schedule for distribution to cast, crew, and production team and keep this updated if changes are required.

In this rehearsal schedule you will also include:

- Date of costume parade. The costume designer will want to check the costumes for the actors and that they look good together. The lighting designer will want to see how lighting interacts with the costumes. All actors will wear their costumes onstage for designers to observe. Actors with multiple costumes will switch out as required. The date for this should be discussed with the costume designer.
- Date(s) for being off-book. This is the point where the actors are no longer allowed to carry their script with them around onstage. Prompting will be required, and may be facilitated by the SM, ASM, or a dedicated prompter.

## 2.4.3. Room Booking

The theatre is a busy place and to keep things running smoothly there is a central Room Booking Calendar on our website. Only the GM can add/modify/remove bookings. You can ask your Producer to book additional times. The calendar is only helpful if it is kept accurate, so please have your Producer keep the GM aware of changes.

## 2.5. Director's Notes for the Program

The Director writes a half-page description of the show. This may include historical context, or other important information about the show that a regular audience member may not have access to. This could also be historical productions of the show, or elements you have drawn upon. Or you could write why this play is relevant to the current social climate.

## 2.6. Example Timeline

When	What
12 months before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meet with Producer: discuss expectations and vision</li> <li>- Identify and recruit all members of production team</li> <li>- Identify unusual requirements: music, costumes, unusual casting, etc.</li> </ul>
6 – 9 months before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schedule 1st production meeting; the Producer chairs the meeting</li> <li>- Confirm roles and communication protocols</li> <li>- Producer will distribute scripts to all designers</li> <li>- Book audition dates, times and space and send info to GM</li> </ul>
5 months before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confirm set designer has met with head scenic carpenter</li> <li>- Send audition details to newsletter editor and GM</li> <li>- Generate an Audition Package (see 2.3.1. Audition Package)</li> <li>- Provide Producer with sections of scripts for audition process.</li> </ul>
10 weeks before opening of a PLAY  (NOTE: 14 weeks before opening of a MUSICAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>AUDITIONS!</b></li> <li>- The audition forms are included in your Director package. The Producer will have these available.</li> <li>- The Producer will have sections of scripts for auditions.</li> <li>- Have production dates and rehearsal times available for potential cast</li> <li>- Arrange accompaniment and have music pieces ready (MUSICAL only)</li> </ul>
Confirm Casting (ASAP after Auditions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Call and thank everyone who auditioned. This can be divided between yourself and the Producer.</li> <li>- Send cast list to Newsletter Editor</li> </ul>
<i>Throughout Rehearsals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide any interesting stories to the GM for media attention</li> <li>- There will be a weekly production meeting chaired by the Producer. Here you will help guide designers to a unified vision of the production.</li> </ul>
First Read Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Producer will distribute a Welcome Package to cast (included as part of your Director package)</li> <li>- The SM will distribute rehearsal and performance schedule to cast.</li> <li>- Welcome cast to your vision with an explanation about how you run your rehearsals and the artistic vision of the team.</li> <li>- The SM will distribute the proposed rehearsal schedule (see section 2.4.2)</li> </ul>
Meet & Greet (First rehearsal onstage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open M&amp;G with introductions, welcome newcomers, introduce GM, and Board Members</li> <li>- Coordinate head shots as required (those that do not have a recent headshot in the file). Promotional shots are usually done here too.</li> <li>- Start writing your Director's Notes for Program (see section 2.5.)</li> </ul>

4 weeks before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Obtain bios from everyone for the program</li> <li>- Obtain director's notes and "About the Playwright" from director</li> <li>- The Producer will be preparing the program.</li> <li>- The costume designer will request a Costume Parade around here.</li> </ul>
10 days before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Paper tech</b></li> <li>- The stage manager and designers will walk through the complete show. You will clarify your vision for technical elements if necessary (Earlier production meetings with designers should have everyone on the same page).</li> </ul>
Tech Weekend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be available; stay positive.</li> <li>- Archival photos are done on Tech Dress Rehearsal on Monday evening</li> </ul>
Opening Night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You are expected to be there. Book your complimentary tickets at the Box Office.</li> </ul>
Closing Night!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Give thank you cards to cast, crew, and production team.</li> </ul>

### 3. Tech Weekend

This is a long weekend where the technical aspects are finalized. To simplify this process a Paper Tech is often performed a week ahead of time. Tech weekend is different for every show, but a typical schedule is outlined below.

#### 3.1. Paper Tech

This meeting is primarily for the SM to put cues into their book. You and the designers will be running through the entire show, verbally explaining the cues they think will best shape the artistic vision your team has discussed.

Questions about design will come up, but this is not a design meeting. You will answer these questions quickly and efficiently, or make a note of them and discuss them at another time. The Producer should also help keep the meeting on track.

The Lighting, Sound, Projection designers, the Producer, and the SM are also present.

#### 3.2. Typical Tech Weekend Schedule

##### Level Set – Friday Evening / Saturday Morning

You will meet with the Lighting, Sound, and Projection designers to set levels. The SM, and ASMs are also present. The lighting designer may have invited volunteers to see how the lights appear on people. Crew may be present for moving set pieces.

##### Tech without Actors – Saturday Afternoon

The SM goes through the entire show to ensure the cues from Paper Tech line up with their book. The lighting, sound, and projection designers are present with the director.

##### Q-Q – Sunday Afternoon

Actors come in to do a run of the show. Stretches of the play without tech requirements are skipped. This is not a rehearsal. This time is for the SM to identify challenging sequences of cues, and for actors to adjust to their lights and cues. Actors are not usually in costume unless they need

to practice a quick change or the lighting designer wishes to see how the costumes interact with their lighting.

### **Tech Dress – Sunday Evening**

The entire show is run, with costumes, running props, lighting, sound ... the works. The show is only stopped if something is unsafe or the show gets derailed. The director makes notes, but shouldn't be stopping the show.

### **Invited Dress – Monday Evening**

A full run of the show, but this time with an invited audience, usually about 20 people. These audience sit in the back half of the auditorium because a photographer will be moving around taking photos of the actors. A group shot is taken immediately after the show of the cast, crew, and production team. This is typically when the director gives the last set of notes for actors.

## **3.3. Week of Opening**

### **Dark – Tuesday**

The cast and crew are usually given Tuesday off. Directors can decide whether an additional run is required.

### **Preview – Wednesday**

The first paid audience.

### **Open – Thursday**

There is a catered opening night reception in the lounge after the show. Cards and flowers are often exchanged.

## **3.4. Discuss New Expectations with Stage Manager**

The role of Stage Manager changes during the run of the show. Performance reports will be sent to the production team to keep them informed of the show, with an emphasis on required fixes. The Stage Manager is responsible for keeping the actors consistent between shows. If you'd like the SM to pay attention to a particular scene, let them know. After opening night, you are not to give additional notes to the cast.



## 4. Director: Tools

This handbook should be provided with a set of printed documents at the Pre-Season Meeting. They are also available on our website under Handbooks and Policies. These documents will include:

**Audition Forms:** Used to collect actor information at auditions. Your Producer also has a copy. This document is to be updated for your show and available at auditions.

**Guidelines for Respectful Communication:**

Langham only works when we work together. Different people will have different ideas and emotions will get... out. In the most generous interpretation, this is due to people being invested in the success of the production. These guidelines can help navigate a collision of ideas.

**Harassment and Discrimination Policy:**

Harassment is not tolerated at Langham and can be against B.C. law. This document outlines the procedures to be followed should harassment occur. This policy should be referenced at the first read through, when the Ombudsperson meets the cast.

**Welcome to Langham Court Theatre:**

This document is an overview of a production at Langham. Designed for actors, but is relevant for all members of your production.

**Paid Artist Policy:**

This policy outlines how to go about engaging actors who are part of a union or association. Before you go ahead with offering the role, check with the GM and your Producer.

**Detailed Emergency Info:**

This is to be distributed to each cast, crew, and production team member for your production. The SM is responsible for distribution, collecting primary contacts on a *Summary Form*, and holding these throughout the production. This has been included for your own information.