

STEPHENS COLLEGE  
THA 227 STAGE MANAGEMENT I

Lecture #11: The Prompt Book

HANDOUTS: *Prompt Script Example (Pygmalion Excerpt)*

TAKE TO CLASS: *She Loves Me - Lighting Designer's Script, Script from S. French or Dramatists' Play Service, Example of "cut-out" Prompt Script, Example of photocopied page of Prompt Script, To Turn Again Book*

ANNOUNCE: Syllabus change - next class is project work time

- I. Definition and contents:
  - A. The prompt book is a script including accurate records of all lines, blocking, props, scene shifts, costume changes, and lighting, sound, rail, winch, and other cues.
  - B. Also includes contact lists, theater information sheets, and other information
- II. Preparation:
  - A. Why can't we just use the script in the form in which it comes from the publisher?
    1. No way to insert additional pages for prop lists, contact lists, and other information
    2. margins are not wide enough to note blocking and cues
  - B. Methods of preparing the script:
    1. *"cut-out" method*: This is the most economical way. Unbind the publisher's edition of the script. On standard letter-sized or 3-hole-punched notebook paper, cut out a vertical rectangle slightly smaller than the size of a single page of the script (usually about 6" X 4"). You will need one sheet of this for each leaf of the script. Using a cellophane tape you can write on, tape the pages to the cut-outs. SHOW EXAMPLE

Disadvantage: Extremely time-consuming. A less time-consuming but more expensive variation of this method would be to unbind two scripts and tape one page to each side of a sheet of letter-size paper.

2. *photocopy method*: using a blank sheet of white paper, mask off the page of the script you wish to copy and photocopy it onto a letter-sized sheet.  
SHOW EXAMPLE

Advantage: easier and less time-consuming than "cut-out" method

Disadvantage: costly

3. *Scanning/OCR method*:
  - a. scan the script into a computer. This is, essentially, taking a picture of the page; the text cannot be edited by a word processor.
  - b. run an **optical character recognition** program. This converts the digital picture into editable text.
  - c. Advantages: cheaper and much more flexible
  - d. Disadvantage: takes *much* more time than any other method.
  - e. keep pagination consistent with the scripts everyone else is using!
  - f. SHOW SHE LOVES ME SCRIPT.

C. Use index tabs

1. to indicate the first page of each scene.
2. also tab contact sheets and other reference materials.
3. Label these on both the front and the back.

D. As with all SM materials, the prompt book should be neat and clear enough that anyone could understand it.

E. As you learn of lighting, sound, fly, or other cues, pencil them in.

1. At first, you will not have cue numbers; these will come later from the designers. Suggest (strongly) to the sound designer that the sound cues be lettered rather than numbered. This will keep them from being confused with light cues, which *must* be numbered (because the computer demands a cue number). As computerized audio control becomes more common, this may have to change.

2. You may wish to use abbreviations such as:

"E" or "L" . . . . . Light cues  
"S" . . . . . Sound cues  
"R" or "F" . . . . . Rail cues

I prefer to *not* use abbreviations.

3. You may wish to color-code your cues using either stars or colored stick-on dots. There are two methods:

a. Use a different color for each department

b. use green for GO and red for STOP - useful for sound cues. SHOW TO TURN AGAIN PROMPTBOOK.

F. Note potential problems such as quick changes and scene shifts.

G. Also include:

1. prop and costume lists

2. contact list

3. rehearsal scedule

4. theater information