STEPHENS COLLEGE
THA 227 STAGE MANAGEMENT I

Lecture #14: Technical Rehearsals

HANDOUTS: *She Loves Me rehearsal report*

TAKE TO CLASS:

ANNOUNCE:

I.   What is a technical rehearsal?

   A.   the "tech" rehearsal is where all of the elements of the performance begin to come together. This includes lighting, sound, props, scenery, special effects, and sometimes costumes.

   B.   the technical rehearsal belongs to the stage manager, designers, stagehands, and (of course) the director. It is not for the benefit of the actors except in those instances where the actors' business directly interacts with a cue.

II.   Technical rehearsals should be planned so as to waste a minimum of time. There are both financial and morale reasons why this is important:

   A.   stagehands are paid by the hour. They get paid as much when they're sitting around as when they're actually doing something. A technical rehearsal is no time for a lighting designer, for example, to realize that s/he can't light an important part of the stage; while he or she is sitting there trying to figure out what to do – something that should have happened a long time before the technical rehearsal, carpenters and prop people are sitting around earning a lot of money.

   B.   you only have the actors for a limited number of hours each week; every hour they spend standing around while a scene shift is run over and over is an hour they can't spend actually rehearsing.

   C.   wasting people's time is rude. When a stage manager or designer (or director) wastes actors' and stagehands' time because he or she didn't do his homework, the message sent is, "Your time isn't important to me."

This doesn't mean that designers should play it safe and only do things they *know* will work; if that were the case, they'd never grow. Designers should have done enough homework to ensure that everything they try at least has a *probability* of working and should have designed in a fallback position in case something *doesn't* work.

D.   the are ways to minimize the time that actors must spend standing around in rehearsal:

    1.   *paper tech*: This is really nothing more than a specialized production meeting during which the entire show is talked through, cue by cue, with all designers, the stage manager, and the director participating. Much confusion and miscommunication can be eliminated by having a paper tech.

    2.   *dry tech*: this is a cue-to-cue rehearsal in which each cue (in all departments) is actually run, without actors. Ideally, the lighting and sound designers will have had *cuing* rehearsals prior to this. The cuing rehearsal is when light levels and sound volume are examined and refined. The stage manager may or may not be required at cuing rehearsals. Likewise, you may wish to have held a scene shift rehearsal prior to the dry tech. Seel below.

E.   At the first technical rehearsal with actors, it is helpful to remind them that while they have been rehearsing the show for weeks, the crew is just starting to do so.

F.   The director, designers, and stage manager will need workspace in the house with small work lights (preferably on dimmers). Some or all of the above may need space for notebook computers, lighting console monitors, and other items as well as for legal pads and scripts.

G.   You will be communicating with the stagehands via a headset. The various designers will also be communicating with their crews via the same headset system. It can get very confusing. Keep your cool, keep organized, and do what you can to minimize headset "chatter". NOTE: IATSE crews may resist your pleas to eliminate irrelevant conversation of the headset. Use tact and common sense.

H.   Prior to the first full tech, you should have planned out all your scene shifts – who moves what and where everything stores when it is offstage. First tech is *not* the time to discover that the large backing flat won't fit in the available space backstage or that the painted backdrop won't fly all the way out.

I.   Talk through complicated cue sequences before running them for the first time so

that everyone, including you, knows what's happening.

J. First tech is the appropriate time to demonstrate special effects such as pyrotechnics to the cast.

III. Rehearsal reports:

A. Are an invaluable way to facilitate communications.

B. Should be distributed to the director, ASM, all designers, and all department heads (Master Carpenter, Master Electrician, Sound Operators, etc. These, by the way, are often referred to, more or less affectionately, as the Grunts, Squints, and Sound Pukes – **but not by you**).

C. subjective comments are inappropriate.

D. Should be clearly written and laid out so as to be easy to read. DISTRIBUTE AND DISCUSS SAMPLE REHEARSAL REPORT.