An Introduction to Technical Theatre
MODULE 2

Organizational Structures

The task of theatrical production requires many specific skills. These skills may be found in a few individuals or delivered by some highly and specifically trained artists and artisans. The collaborative nature of the art of theatre coupled with the need to produce on a specific timeline makes it necessary for theatre organizations to maintain and follow an organizational and communication structure. This Module breaks down that structure, reporting order, and typical duties. Every organization has its own particular distinctions between job titles, duties, and reporting structures, but the descriptions below are fairly standard in the theatre industry.

There’s More to Know

People are often struck by the number of jobs it takes to operate a theatre successfully. This list of job titles might have any number of employees working under them depending on the size of the producing organization. Many people who work in the arts are not directly involved in the on-stage work of a stage production, but rather work in support areas that may include audience services, finance, educational outreach, play development, and many others. A number of people have worked their way into production through other related jobs in support areas of theatre companies.

Administration

Board of Directors: Steers and guides the organization. Provides funding and leadership.

Producer (commercial theatre): Secures the performance rights to stage a production, hires the artistic staff, secures the performance space, and provides financial backing for the production.

Artistic Director/Head of Theatre: Provides artistic guidance, chooses the plays that will be performed during the season, hires production directors, and is responsible for the artistic vision and direction of the theatre or organization. Reports to board of directors.
Executive Director/Managing Director: Responsible for the operation and development of the organization. Oversees the day-to-day operations of the theatre including outreach or educational programs, finances, and community relations. Reports to the board of directors.

Production Management

Production Manager: Responsible for the overall technical operation of a theatre company and maintains season budgets and resource allocations. Supervises all technical staff. Reports to the artistic director and executive director.

Technical Director: Responsible for the oversight of technical operations of a theatre, including scenery, lighting, sound, projections, and construction. Works with designers to ensure requirements are achievable, safe, and within budget parameters. Supervises scene shop staff. Dual reporting relationship with both the artistic director and production manager or managing director.

Master Carpenter: Oversees scene shop and show build.

Carpenters: Construct scenery.

Costume Shop Manager: Responsible for the day-to-day operation of the costume facilities. Supervises costume shop workers. Reports to the technical director or production manager.

First Hand: Assists the costume shop manager in day-to-day operations and builds costumes.

Cutter: Cuts fabrics, plans patterns, and builds costumes.

Draper: Drapes garments and builds costumes.

Stitcher: Builds costumes.

Master Electrician: Responsible for the day-to-day operations of the electrical department. Supervises electricians. Reports to the technical director or production manager.

Electricians: Hang, focus, and maintain lighting equipment.

Prop Master: Responsible for the construction or acquisition of all show props. Works with prop designer, scenic designer, stage manager and performers. Reports to director and production manager.

Prop workers/carpenters: Build and maintain show props.

Scenic Artist: Responsible for all painted scenic finishes. Works with scenic designer and technical director. Supervises painters.
Creative

Playwright: Creates and develops the play script. On an original production, may assist the director in interpreting the work and may supply rewrites of script elements.

Production Director: Sets a vision for and brings together the many complex aspects of a theatrical production, including the script, performers, design, and music into a unified production. Reports to the artistic director and executive director.

Assistant Director: Facilitates the director’s work on a production. This may include research, blocking notation, taking notes, and working with an ensemble or chorus. Reports to the director.

Musical Director: Responsible for the arrangement and reproduction of live music for a production. Reports to the production director.

Choreographer: Responsible for creating the style and form of dance and movement routines in a production. Works under the production director.

Fight Choreographer: Responsible for creating safe and repeatable action and fight sequences. Works under the production director.

Scenic Designer: Responsible for the development and design of all scenic elements of a production. Reports to the production director and production manager.

Costume Designer: Responsible for the design of all costume elements for a production. Works with the costume shop manager. Reports to the production director and production manager.

Lighting Designer: Responsible for the design and cueing of lighting for a production. Works with the master electrician. Reports to the production director and production manager.

Sound Designer: Responsible for all audio production elements. Reports to the production director and production manager.

Projections Designer: Responsible for all projected elements of a production. Reports to the production director and production manager.

Prop Designer: Responsible for the design of all properties for a production. Works in concert with the scenic designer. Reports to the production director and production manager.

Show Management

Production Stage Manager: Supervises all stage management activities including management personnel and interns. Maintains master schedules for the company. Reports to the production manager.
Stage Manager: Provides practical and organizational support for a production team, including the director, designers, actors, and technicians. Facilitates productive rehearsals, runs technical rehearsals, and represents the director’s vision throughout a production’s run. Reports to the production director and production manager.

Assistant Stage Manager: Provides production support to the stage manager. Reports to the stage manager.

Crew

Wardrobe Crew: Responsible for the preparation and maintenance of production wardrobe. Work with costume shop manager. Ultimately report to the technical director. Directly report to stage manager during production run.

Shift Crew: Responsible for the movement and daily maintenance for show scenery. Work with scenic designer. Ultimately report to technical director. Directly report to stage manager during production run.

Props Crew: Responsible for setup, storage, and maintenance of prop elements for a production. Work with prop designer and scenic designer. Ultimately report to technical director. Directly report to stage manager during production run.

Dressers: Responsible for setup and assistance of costume dressing and quick changes for performers. Work with wardrobe crew, costume designer, and performers. Ultimately report to technical director. Directly report to stage manager during production run.

Board Operators: Responsible for the running of cues during performances via lighting, sound, and video consoles. Work with designers. Ultimately report to technical director. Directly report to stage manager during production run.


For Further Exploration