

# GAOS PRODUCTION GUIDELINES

## 1. INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines have many origins, not least among them "Schedule D: Production Guidelines" of the GAOS Constitution. In addition, some members of the Society have from time to time requested a comprehensive document; as a result, some of the "job descriptions" were drafted by keen GAOS members, or by members who having performed the task in so many GAOS productions felt they wanted to pass on their knowledge.

GAOS particularly wishes to thank all the members and friends who helped in bringing "The Production Guidelines" to the light of day and in particular Sue Bergomi, Di Brown, Kath French, Rodney Gill, Bea Hoesli, Christophe Lerche, Gordon McVeigh, Joy Waelchli, Linda Krasker, Yvette Callier, Len Everett, Maureen Goodman, Michel Huber, Liz Kernen, Anthea Roth, David Stieber, Mike Sell, Maureen Wittig and the GAOS Committee for helping with the draft texts and suggesting alterations and additions. Above all GAOS is grateful to George Krasker for his original authorship and tireless promotion of good theatre practice.

## 2. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The Production Guidelines of the Geneva Amateur Operatic Society (GAOS) have been written to meet three needs:

1. To gather into a single source the experiences of Society members in preparing and running a production, so that mistakes made in the past are avoided and successes are repeated.
2. To help potential and new members of the GAOS Production Team to appreciate the responsibilities of the job for which they have volunteered.
3. To ensure that everyone on the Production Team knows
  - What every other team member does.
  - How each team member's responsibilities link with those of the other team members and with the role of the GAOS Committee.

The Production Guidelines do not set out to describe the skills required by specialist members of the technical team, nor how such skills are applied to the task. It does aim to describe the way things are done in GAOS and occasionally the way things should be done. If a member of a Production Team does something in a different and better way, the guidelines will be updated to reflect it.

Following these guidelines does not guarantee a successful production. However if they are followed, the risk of failure is minimised and will enhance the show's enjoyment for cast, production team and audiences alike.

### Why do we do it?

Amateur Theatre is a creative activity, bringing to everyone involved in it new experiences, new friends and added richness to daily life. It is an antidote to stress at work or at home. It requires energy and dedication. Amateur Theatre is also an outlet for talents and skills and satisfies the need to extend our imagination and ingenuity.

### The mix

The raw materials of a GAOS production are the script and music, plus an enthusiastic and willing cast. These ingredients are worked into shape and provided with sets, costumes, lights and the rest by the Production Team, whose members are no less willing and enthusiastic. The deadline of the first performance is the strictest discipline that cast and production team must adhere to, with the inevitable time-pressure and last-minute panic that this entails. Nevertheless, a GAOS production always hits its peak at the first performance and maintains its high standards right up to the final curtain.

### **Dealing with the Cast**

Every GAOS member participates as an amateur and gives his or her time and energy out of pleasure in doing something well. The directing, rehearsing, the set construction, sewing of costumes, installing of lights - and the performances themselves - are done in members' spare time.

- It is imperative that Production Team leaders bear this in mind and use an appropriate style of leadership. This includes praise where it's due, criticism only if it's constructive, help when it's called for and gentle words and understanding in times of stress
- Only by communicating effectively and without hostility can a GAOS Production Team member be sure that a good show will be staged

Production Team members must take care not to undermine the self-confidence that all actors, amateur and professional, need. Negative comments like "Red doesn't suit you" and "I hope you'll do better tomorrow" are unhelpful and can sabotage a production. On the other hand, members of the cast are expected to devote themselves seriously to the production, to acknowledge that they too are part of a team and to suppress any notions of individualism. This applies, for example, to 'personalisation' of costumes and to performance out of character. As team members, too, casts are expected to help the Stage Manager with striking the set and lights, so that the move out of the theatre is accomplished as quickly and efficiently as possible.

### **Assistants**

Although some of the positions listed on the following pages demand knowledge and skill, GAOS members with little or no experience of the task often fill them. For this reason, it is worth recommending to anyone contemplating taking on one of these tasks that he/she offers to act as Assistant to the appropriate team leader for one show, before taking full responsibility at the next. Producers and technical team leaders can also play an active role by inviting keen but inexperienced members to act as Assistants. In this way, new talent is being developed for our society and GAOS can be sure of its Production Teams in the years to come.

### **The GAOS Constitution**

Nothing in these production guidelines replaces the Constitution schedule D and other items relating to GAOS productions.

### **Safety**

The workshops, stores, rehearsal areas and theatres used by GAOS all contain hazards and care is needed at all times to avoid accidents to oneself and to others. Hand and electric tools must be used safely and put away properly after use. Timber and scenery must be handled carefully. In the theatre - walk, don't run. Use of ladders and towers follows good safety practice. Lighting teams must devote special care to safe handling of their gear and power sources.

The GAOS Technical Manager has a Safety Manual listing the safety practices to be observed. He is responsible for keeping it up to date and for ensuring that its recommendations are followed.

## **3. YOUTH PRODUCTIONS**

Youth productions allow the Society's younger members to hone their skills in all aspects of theatre: on-stage and behind the scenes, as choreographers, musicians, even front-of-house and at the box office. In principle, every single member of the cast and crew is a youth, i.e. under 19; to make this a true learning experience, however, and because of the sums and value of the equipment involved, an adult 'godparent' is appointed (usually by the producers, possibly and if necessary in consultation with the Committee) for every position on the production team.

### **The role of 'godparents'**

The 'godparents' should have experience of one specific role and be willing to share their skills and knowledge with a young person. Their basic task is to mentor, teach and work alongside young people on the production team, to ensure that their experience of the show is educational, fulfilling and successful. The role of each godparent on the production team will vary depending on the abilities and previous experience of the young person being mentored.

#### **Before rehearsals**

Immediately after the Committee has accepted the proposal, each 'godparent' should arrange a meeting with their 'godchild' to discuss their role on the production team. This is an opportunity to talk through the GAOS Production Guidelines and Golden Rules and to raise any questions or concerns. After this meeting, the young person should have a clear idea about running a show and their role in it.

This is also a good time to write some short and long-term goals for the show, with details of what needs to be done and deadlines for doing it. In these discussions, the 'godparent' must always ensure that the young person takes into account school work, exams, holidays, etc. and establish the goals accordingly.

Immediate attention should also be turned towards finding a team for the production area concerned. The 'godparent' can help the young person look at the various resources, e.g. friends (either within their own circle or of other members of the production team, teams involved in previous shows, school departments, etc.) Once this team has been put together a list of all team members (with ages for those under 19 years old) should be given to the Production Secretary.

#### **Throughout the production period**

The role of a 'godparent' is one of support and will involve maintaining regular contact with the 'godchild' to ensure that targets are being worked towards and reached. The young person should feel able to call on the 'godparent' at any time to help with questions or concerns. The 'godparent', in response, should feel in a position to offer positive criticism and feedback regarding the targets and their fulfilment. It is the 'godparent' who will continue to ensure that each young person successfully fulfils their role on the production team.

## **4. THE PRODUCERS**

Many GAOS productions involve two Producers and these guidelines take this into account. A production starts with an offer, by the potential Producers, to the GAOS Committee, using the form available from the Secretary and with no additional text other than a brief accompanying letter and a synopsis. The purpose of this restriction is to ensure that all offers are alike and can be compared by the Committee members without the influence of elaborate presentation.

When making the offer, the Producers will usually have already invited a number of GAOS members to be key members of their Production Team.

Offers for GAOS productions are due:

- **For the Winter show: by end March for a decision in April**
- **For the Spring Show: by end May for a June decision**
- **For the Summer Show: by end December, for a January decision**
- **For an Autumn show: by end February for a March decision**

The Committee may invite the Music Sub-Committee to advise and comment on the offer and may invite the Producers to a meeting to discuss details of the offer.

If the Committee decides that the Producers have insufficient experience, they may be asked to invite a Production Advisor to work with them, or the Committee may assign a

Production Advisor. The Production Advisor is an experienced GAOS producer, whose function is to help the Producers by suggesting improvements in blocking, directing, staging and producing. Diplomacy is an essential attribute of the Production Advisor, especially in front of the cast during rehearsals when he/she must not overrule, or appear to undermine the authority of the Producers.

All GAOS **youth productions** must involve two Producers who have considered the implications of that role and discussed with an adult GAOS member both the time commitment involved and the necessary skills and attributes. The Production 'godparent' is an adult GAOS member who understands the particular needs of working with young people and whose function is to help the Producers by suggesting improvements in planning, organising, blocking, directing, staging and producing.

### The Vision

From the outset, Producers have a vision of the show and the individuals in it. Every scene is blocked: the Producers know exactly where each character must, be at any moment and the action (or reaction) he/she is expected to produce. Each character is visualised and described in detail: old or young, domineering or subservient, good-humoured or belligerent and so on. Principals can be invited to develop their own characterisations and share them with the Producers and the rest of the cast.

Producers have an idea of what each scene contributes to the progress of the: story and how each person on stage makes his or her own contribution. These concepts and visions are shared with the cast, so that all are "marching to the same tune."

Once their offer has been accepted, the Producers

- Revise the script to incorporate any changes from the original: cuts may be necessary to give good pace and a not- too-extended performance time
- Prepare a budget (with the Treasurer) within the first two weeks of rehearsal. Buy or rent the scores and libretti through the Business Manager. For the Pantomime, the music will have been agreed and ordered already
- Block every scene before rehearsals start
- Write audition notes (to accompany a Newsletter 4-6 weeks before the auditions) and prepare audition pieces to be sent, on request, to those who may want to audition (see Appendix A)
- Prepare a rehearsal schedule
- With the Production Secretary, plan and prepare for the auditions, including perhaps a pre-audition read-through
- Talk to the Set Designer and Set Constructor about their requirements. Prepare a props list
- Prepare a sound effects list and discuss voice amplification (if needed) and auditorium music with the Sound Engineer
- Discuss their needs for costumes, choreography, lighting, make-up and other technical aspects with respective team leaders. This is the opportunity to make clear to the team that no changes may be made to agreed designs without reference to the Producers

### The Auditions.

The Producers work closely with the Musical Director and the Production Secretary (and Choreographer if needed) and Production Advisor, if there is one, to ensure smooth and effective running of the auditions. Everyone attending must fill in a form (see Appendix B) with name, address and telephone numbers, vital statistics (a 'costumes' person does the measuring), preferred role(s) and acceptable roles, plus dates not available and other volunteered tasks (for example, set construction). This form is given to the Producers and Musical Director one by one as people come forward to audition.

The auditioning team makes notes as each person performs. After the auditions (usually after the last audition), The team sits and discusses casting until consensus is reached. They inform the Production Secretary (who maybe present during the discussions) of the decisions and letters are sent to every person who has auditioned. Letters of acceptance may include the expectations listed in the paragraph above headed "Dealing with the Cast" that reads "On the other hand, members of the cast are expected to devote themselves seriously to the production, to acknowledge that they too are part of a team and to suppress any notions of individualism." as well as a rehearsal schedule.

### The Rehearsals

During the first rehearsals, Producers aim to give principals and chorus enough time to learn words and music before blocking starts. It is usually during the later rehearsals that principals and chorus rehearse movement together. Where two or more Producers are involved, one of them may take responsibility for rehearsing chorus actions, especially reaction to what the principals are doing.

The rehearsal schedule will probably be changed as business travel, illness and slow learning delay progress and as Producers note the need for extra rehearsal of some parts of the show.

Producers demonstrate **leadership** through their knowledge and understanding of stagecraft, intimacy with the script, handling of individuals who are having problems with script, with music, or with blocking and in dealing with members of chorus who might be having difficulty with movement, music or timing.

Indecision, changes of mind, inattention, lack of firmness and "muddling through" are inevitable precursors of a disgruntled cast and a poor show. There may be occasions on which Producers ask experienced principals "What do you think?" or "How would you do it?"

Producers give praise sparingly but always where it is due.

The Producers' scripts are printed on one side of the paper only, the blank page being used for blocking and other notes. If any changes are made to the blocking, the producers must change their notes in the 'master script' to ensure that there is no argument later.

The Producers know the script and do not refer to it more than necessary during a rehearsal. Their instructions and advice to principals and chorus, while founded on the stage directions in the script, add the Producers' own interpretation, based on their vision of how the show is to be presented on stage. Producers ensure understanding of the script (for example, of obscure and 'foreign' references) and correct (uniform) pronunciation and emphasis. They encourage speaking up in preparation for the theatre although, in the more intimate confine, of a rehearsal room, cast may find this difficult.

Before and during the rehearsal period, Producers keep in touch with the Technical Team either in formal production meetings or by personal contact. Production meetings have the advantage that problems and opportunities can be shared, but they are difficult to arrange among a group of working people. Personal contact has the advantage of enabling the Producers to monitor progress of set construction, costume making and procurement of props and also to keep an eye on the expenses of each team to ensure that there are no over-runs. The budget cannot be changed without the Committee's approval.

- Producers invite the Stage Manager to attend appropriate rehearsals, in order to ensure that he/she sees and agrees the physical relationship between cast, sets and stage. Other production team members also attend rehearsals from time to time.
- The Props team leader may be asked for some props early in rehearsal, to help cast members to get into character.
- The Costume Designer may be asked for hats, shoes, etc for the same reason.

- The Lighting Designer is given a copy of the blocking plans, so that a detailed lighting plan can be prepared.
- The Costume Designer is frequently present at rehearsals, trying on costumes as they are made. A "costume call" is often part of a Sunday afternoon rehearsal before the move into the theatre.

As rehearsals progress, fewer changes are made to script and blocking. Principals repeat difficult movements and 'business', while chorus movement is repeated until they are no longer looking at their feet. Cast are reminded that a prompt is disruptive and destroys the theatrical illusion, so they are encouraged to improvise their way out of trouble while remembering, however, that the correct cue must be given for the next line. The Producers rehearse the timing in a way that, during the performances, the stage is never left empty and that the last words of dialogue overlap with the first bars of music. One rehearsal may be a 'word' rehearsal during which all lines are spoken without any movement or action.

In preparation for the move into the theatre, Producers plan a maximum of re-rehearsal time in the theatre compatible with the needs of the technical team and of the Orchestra. This includes at least one costume call, one technical rehearsal (before which the Producers warn the cast to expect to stop frequently) and any other re-rehearsal (for example, of special effects) that affects the cast.

### **Rehearsal Notes**

Notes are given after all rehearsals, not only by Producers but also by the Costume Designer, Musical Director, Choreographer and others. Cast is reminded not to leave before notes have been given. The purpose of notes is to polish/ improve individual performances and to correct mistakes that have been made (though corrections are best made at the time and the correct action rehearsed and repeated if necessary).

If notes include changes to blocking or script, these changes are entered into the master script. Notes are praise first and constructive criticism second. As production proceeds, notes become more detailed and fewer and include encouragement, until the dress rehearsal at which the Producers' notes are mainly re- assuring and inspiring.

After the dress rehearsal, which is run non-stop, the Producers hand over the production to the Stage Manager. They should now keep out of the stage and dressing room areas, except to offer words of praise and support and to solve last-minute problems if they are asked.

### **Production Coordination**

In order that the entire Production team understands exactly what the Producer expects to happen on stage for each scene a Technical Sheet should be completed and then updated as the production develops. As well as providing a general overview of each scene it also provides a detailed checklist of what is to be provided. A copy of the Technical sheet is at Appendix C.

## **5. MUSICAL DIRECTOR**

Everything musical falls within the responsibility of the Musical Director (MD). He/she works with the Producers to prepare and submit the offer to the Committee and shares the budget-setting process with the Producers and Treasurer. The MD is responsible for arranging the hire or purchase of scores and libretti, through the Business Manager. The MD works with the Orchestra Secretary to invite musicians into the orchestra (in the case of a larger orchestra) or invites them personally (in the case of Pantomime and Summer Show). The MD reworks the scores, transposing and cutting where necessary, to suit the instruments he/she has chosen and prepares scores for Conductor (usually the MD) and for each musician. The MD's score includes the final words of each piece of dialogue that is the orchestra's cue, in order that dialogue and music synchronise.

The MD participates fully in the casting process. The MD listens to every person at the auditions, noting voice characteristics and suitability for specific roles. The MD makes sure that every potential chorus member can contribute to the effect being sought and identifies possible problems, which he/she may be able to resolve during rehearsals.

In the first rehearsals, the MD takes charge of the chorus and helps them to learn their music. The MD works with individuals whenever time permits and mainly with the principals when the Producers and Choreographer are rehearsing the chorus. The MD attempts to develop and encourage the musical ability of each principal and, as far as possible, of each member of the chorus. The MD, with the Producers and others, gives notes after each rehearsal in order to polish and improve individual performances and to correct mistakes that have been made (corrections are best made at the time and the correct action rehearsed and repeated if necessary). The Sound Engineer and MD together arrange microphone rehearsal and training.

During rehearsals of a Spring show, the Orchestra Secretary is the contact between the MD and the orchestra, for the purpose of hiring instruments (for which the insurance is arranged with the Business Manager) and arranging orchestra rehearsals according to the needs of the production and the availability of the individual musicians.

During the show, the MD ensures the highest possible standards of performance from principals, chorus and orchestra. He/she helps and encourages principals, conducts the warm-up for the cast and offers suggestions for (musical) improvement. He/she keeps the orchestra up to the mark with a mixture of praise and admonition. During performances, he/she takes the starting cues from the signals (such as red/green lights and curtain opening/closing) given by the Stage Manager, while working to lighting cues (for the music stand lights) agreed with the Lighting team leader.

## **6. ORCHESTRA SECRETARY**

Producers usually include an Orchestra Secretary on their Production Team when a larger orchestra is required, for example, an operetta or musical comedy, for which a typical GAOS orchestra includes 20-25 musicians.

The Orchestra Secretary discusses the formation of the orchestra (number of individual instruments, specific players) with the Musical Director and, having ascertained the budget from the Musical Director, invites players to be part of the orchestra for the specific production. The invitation, confirmed date in the form of a letter of contract, includes fee (normally not less than the previous year), rehearsal and performance details, names and phone numbers of key people. With the Producers, he/she arranges dates, times and places for not more than five orchestra rehearsals (two orchestra only, two with cast and the dress rehearsal, but not the technical rehearsal).

Orchestra parts are ordered by the Business Manager in time to be given to each musician not later than one month before the first rehearsal, having first been studied by the Musical Director (who may want to reduce the score and transfer some parts to synthesizer or piano).

At the first orchestra rehearsal, the Orchestra Secretary welcomes all the musicians, especially those new to GAOS and confirms that all instructions have been received and understood.

During the rehearsal period, the Orchestra Secretary is the contact between the Musical Director and the orchestra, for the purpose of hiring instruments and for ascertaining the value of all instruments which will be left in the orchestra pit from dress rehearsal until last performance (insurance for these instruments is arranged by the Business Manager).

Before the move into the theatre, the Orchestra Secretary reminds the Stage Manager that music stands may need to be transported from the Workshop and reminds Lighting that the orchestra lights (where these are not already part of the music stands) will be needed. He/she also gives a list of orchestra members to Publicity (for the programme) and to the Treasurer (for Payment). At the last performance a cheque, normally accompanied by a letter of thanks signed by the Chairman, is handed to each musician. The Orchestra Secretary also ensures that there is an area in the theatre for the musicians to hang their coats, leave their instrument cases and to warm up their instruments.

During the run of the show, the Orchestra Secretary lets the Stage Manager know when all orchestra members are in the pit and ready to play.

At the last performance, the Orchestra Secretary collects all the rented orchestra scores and returns them to the Business Manager after ensuring that all pencil marks have been erased.

## **7. PRODUCTION SECRETARY**

The Production Secretary acts as the right hand of the Producers and coordinates and facilitates many of the routine tasks that are a vital part of a production. The main functions are listed below:

### **Before the auditions**

- Convenes meetings of the technical team, prepares (with the Producers) an agenda for each meeting and records and distributes action notes as requested
- With the Producers, prepares the first rehearsal schedule
- With the Business Manager, orders scripts, scores and libretti and arranges for the retyping of words, plus any photocopying
- With the Business Manager, books the audition rooms and the rehearsal rooms
- With the Producers, prepares audition notes to accompany "Curtain-Up" 4-6 weeks before the auditions
- Sends audition pieces (words and music) on request

### **At the auditions**

- Takes charge of the arrangements
- Issues the audition forms
- Lists who is auditioning
- Ensures that each person auditioning is measured (by Costumes)
- 'Feeds' each person auditioning into the casting team (Producers, Musical Director and, possibly, Choreographer)
- Gathers the completed audition forms.

### **After the auditions**

- Participates in the casting meeting; prepares and sends the acceptance and rejection letters; keeps the audition forms
- Advises the technical team leaders who has volunteered to work on their teams
- Prepares, distributes and maintains the cast list with addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses
- Organises the distribution of scripts, scores and libretti to the cast
- Maintains and distributes rehearsal schedules

### **During Rehearsals**

The Production Secretary,

- Represents the Assistant Secretary of the Society and signs on new members (all cast must be members of the Society, except for children under sixteen whose parents must be members)
- Ensures that newcomers are properly welcomed
- Knows the show and helps the Producers by noting changes to blocking and script
- Organizes breaks: collects money, arranges coffee, other drinks, biscuits, goblets, etc. to be available and cleared away

- Acts as go-between for cast and Producers
- Writes, or delegates the writing of, profiles of the Producers and principals together with the English and French synopses of the show and sends these, with lists of cast and technical teams, to the Publicity team for the programme
- Ensures that the photographer has access to the technical and dress rehearsals
- Arranges distribution of the photograph album and collection of orders
- Looks after the welfare of the cast

## 8. SET DESIGNER

The Set Designer is invited by the Producers to read and discuss the script and, after acceptance of the offer, to prepare designs for each scene in the production. The designs are in colour and include every detail such as furniture, larger props and, for scale, a human figure. A model of the stage can be used to demonstrate the way in which each set is placed in relation to entrances, exits, the proscenium arch and lighting barrels and to give a coloured image of each set.

Before designing the individual components of each set, the set designer visits the theatre with the Producers and the Stage Manager (set constructor). The set designs take account of

- Existing components in store at the Barn; capability of the construction team
- The budget for set construction and the cost and availability of materials
- Size for transportation and access to the theatre
- Dimensions of the stage and its characteristics (including sight lines) and opportunities for flying scenery, special lighting effects
- Cast numbers, entrances and exits, weight and maneuverability of the sets on stage, storage in the wings
- Potential use in future productions

The colour designs are agreed with the Producers and with the Set Constructor (Stage Manager), Costume Designer, Lighting and Make-up before the auditions. Then the Set Designer produces working drawings. Each item to be constructed is drawn, on a separate sheet, in plan and elevation or in isometric view, with all dimensions and materials of construction clearly indicated. The choice of materials is agreed with the Set Constructor to ensure understanding. All drawings are handed to the Set Constructor at least ten weeks before moving into the theatre for the Pantomime and Spring Show and eight weeks for the Summer Show. At the same time, the Lighting team leader is given a set of plan and elevation drawings showing the placing of set components on stage, in relation to lighting barrels. The Set Designer also gives a set of stage plans to the Producers and the Choreographer before movement rehearsals begin.

### During set construction

The Set Designer is expected to make frequent visits to rehearsals and to the Barn to check on progress during set construction. He/she is available to the Set Constructor to resolve problems and comment on suggestions. Before the fourth or fifth weekend of construction, the Set Designer, with the Stage Manager, calls a painting team together (the Production Secretary can help) and buys paint. Sets are painted at the Barn in parallel with the final stages of set construction. Traditionally, the Set Designer takes complete responsibility for the painting and he/she shows the painters how to do it correctly. The aim is to have all construction and painting completed before the move into the theatre, although paint, brushes and plastic sheeting are always taken to the theatre for last-minute jobs.

**In the theatre**

During the period between moving into the theatre and the dress rehearsal, the Set Designer works with the Producers, the Stage Manager and Lighting Designer to make adjustments to the placing of sets on stage. He/she will also agree on, or suggest, design changes to the sets and other details, especially during the technical rehearsal and take responsibility for getting the changes implemented.

**9. STAGE MANAGER**

The Stage Manager (**SM**) is responsible for the running of a show. He/she is ultimately responsible for:

- all operations backstage (especially for sets, props, lighting and special effects)
- the coordination of these operations with Front-of-House, catering, cast and orchestra
- smooth and timely performances

The SM ensures that the set is built and painted, gets to the theatre and is removed promptly after the show. For some shows it is preferable to split responsibility for set construction and SM, (hence the reference to Set Constructor in the section on Set Designer). This has been a successful approach. It must be noted, however, that the SM needs to be involved in set design approval and throughout construction, in order to be best prepared in the theatre.

The SM is responsible for taking over the theatre, for the *état des lieux* (with the Technical Manager of the Society) and for handing back the theatre (usually to the concierge) in good order.

The SM may delegate some duties to an Assistant Stage Manager.

**During the rehearsal period**

As part of the Production Technical Team, the SM discusses and agrees the Set Designer's designs and the set construction budget. At a meeting of the Production Team soon after the auditions, the set designs are presented, to allow full discussion with the Producers on lighting, special effects, props, costumes and make-up so that everyone understands and agrees the desired result.

The SM purchases materials and organises the set construction. The SM makes sure that the Producers agree details of construction (including dimensions, colours and positioning on stage) and invites GAOS members to work at the Barn on set construction and painting. The SM arranges for transport of the set and related materials to the theatre and back, as well as catering equipment, FOH materials, props, costumes make-up and related equipment from and to their various stores. The SM keeps close contact with the show's Lighting Designer, to be sure that the latter has all that is needed to develop and implement a lighting plan, a special effects plan and transport of materials.

The SM attends selected rehearsals in order to give and receive guidance on stage dimensions and positions of the set, furniture and props. The SM is familiar with the script and the action of the show, taking special note of the Producers' vision, of scene change requirements and other key moments in the action of the show. He/she discusses potential problems and changes with the Producers.

The SM gives two lists to the Production Secretary, for the programme. One list is of those who have helped with set construction and painting and the second is of probable stage crew, lighting crew and other members of the technical team present in the theatre.

In the Theatre: preparation

Once the show has moved into the theatre, the SM is responsible for the proper and safe handling, storage and deployment of all sets, props, lighting, tools and other GAOS equipment in the theatre. He/she must be satisfied that the theatre is fit, safe and clean to work in. He/she checks that the dressing rooms are functional and that the lighting

team can carry out its plans. He/she makes sure that fluorescent lights backstage and in the corridors are dimmed or blacked out, that doors open and close quietly, that fire extinguishers and first aid boxes are available and ready to use and that rubbish sacks are placed and used.

The SM is the primary GAOS contact with the concierge and has a key to the theatre (if one is available). He/she makes sure that the theatre is locked after work, after rehearsals and after performances.

The SM installs the sets. With the stage crew, he/she makes sure that every set, piece of furniture and prop is in its assigned storage place, is available when it's needed and that at least one person knows that it is his or her responsibility to move it on and off stage. He/she invites the cast to 'walk the set'.

The SM ensures that signs reading "No personal jewelry" and "No Smoking" are put up in appropriate places.

### **In the Theatre**

The SM is responsible for the Technical Rehearsal, which is run with as many stops as are necessary to set lights, to mark positions for scenery, etc. Usually the Technical Rehearsal is an opportunity for cast to rehearse some pieces, but an additional 'dry' Technical Rehearsal, without cast, may be called, in order that stage crew may practice scene shifting, lighting may focus and point lights and other technical teams may prepare in the same way. Other special rehearsals, arranged with the Sound Engineer, may be for using setting the sound levels of microphones. The Dress Rehearsal, usually the evening before the first performance, is the responsibility of the Producers and is run without stopping. At the end of the Dress Rehearsal, the Producers formally hand over responsibility to the SM, who runs the show from then on. To do this, the SM makes sure before every performance that cast and orchestra are present, that the technical team is ready for curtain-up and that FOH activities are being handled in a timely fashion. He/she consults with the FOH Manager on the filling of the auditorium and on the moment that the audience is ready for the performance to start.

The SM gives the signal to start - usually instructions to the lighting box to bring the house lights down and to the orchestra to file in. He/she gives cues such as 'Curtain open' and 'Curtain close'. However, all members of the technical team are expected to know their own cues and act on them and the callers (who report to the SM) are responsible for getting the cast into position for entrances. The SM makes sure that set, props, furniture and cast are in place before any 'Curtain open' cue and handles walk down, curtain calls and encores on the basis of experience.

The SM is the GAOS contact with the firemen (pompiers) and any other authorised outsider backstage and makes sure that no unauthorised outsider enters the backstage area during the performance.

The SM ensures that public announcements occur on time and are audible. The SM and FOH share responsibility for resolving any complaints from, or problems with, members of the audience.

At the final performance, the SM is told about all and any ideas for jokes and tricks. He/she is responsible for ensuring that the audience sees nothing which spoils the show, that nothing is done which might lead to a dangerous situation and that everyone involved in the production understands this.

The SM, in this role and as Set Constructor, is responsible for the production expenses of the Technical Team. However, this responsibility is usually delegated to Lighting, Props, Costumes, Make-up and other team leaders, all of whom are expected to submit expense claims to the Treasurer within two weeks of the end of a show. The SM, therefore, is normally responsible only for set construction expenses, for which he/she may request an advance from the Treasurer.

In addition to the items mentioned above, a checklist of what might be taken from the Workshop to the theatre includes items such as:

- Black tunnel curtains,
- Blackout screens,

- Catering equipment,
- Clamps,
- Dry ice machine,
- First aid kits
- Front-of-House materials,
- Ladders and/or steps, masking tape,
- Musical director's lectern, music stands,
- Tower (if needed and available),
- Paint, brushes, plastic sheeting,
- Refrigerator,
- Ropes and pulleys,
- Smoke machine,
- Spare wood (ply, lambourdes),
- Stage weights,
- Tools (electric and hand) including drill bits, screw bits, saw blades, staples, screws, hinges, screw hooks and eyes, electric leads,
- Trestles
- Vacuum Cleaner

## 10. CHOREOGRAPHER

The Choreographer (more than one in some productions) is invited by the Producers to plan and teach movement to principals and chorus. The Choreographer uses his/her skills to plan a series of movements that meets the needs of the scene, while taking account of the resources - GAOS members are not all young, sprightly and talented. A list of team members is given to the Production Secretary for the programme.

The Choreographer is shown the set design and is given a floor plan for each scene before the first movement rehearsal.

### Planning the movements

In planning movements of principals and chorus, the Choreographer consults with the Costume Designer to ensure that the movement and the costumes complement each other. If the production calls for costumes that affect movement (such as long skirts, crinolines, high-heeled shoes, boots), the cast are encouraged to wear them at rehearsal. The Choreographer also consults with Props concerning accessories such as sticks, fans etc. and with the Musical Director concerning the tempo of each number. The placing, or entrances and exits, of the cast before and after each number is agreed with the Producers.

The cast will usually be singing while moving. This means that

- Most faces must be turned towards the audience most of the time
- The cast must be able to see the Musical Director at certain critical moments. If these are not obvious, they must be agreed with the Musical Director
- The cast needs enough breath to sing. The learning process is quickest when directions are precise. Since the cast have by this time learnt their words, telling them on which word or syllable to make a movement or take a step improves timing.

**In rehearsal**

During the whole rehearsal period, the Choreographer is assigned time in which to teach the principals and the chorus their movements. The Rehearsal Pianist may be invited to provide music or a tape recording may be used.

At the first chorus movement rehearsal, usually after the chorus has learned, words and music, the Choreographer, with the Musical Director and/or the Rehearsal Pianist, describe and demonstrate the steps, a few at a time and let the chorus learn and practice them. In later rehearsals, the whole cast comes together to run through the movements as part of the action.

The Choreographer is present at all rehearsals in the theatre and gives notes after the Producers. He/she is often present at the first performance (or two) to give guidance and help.

**11. COSTUME DESIGNER**

The Costume Designer (**CD**) and Wardrobe Mistress (it is usually a lady member of GAOS who volunteers for this job) takes responsibility for all costumes worn on stage during the production, including any special items such as masks, animal costumes, oversize items (for example, giants' heads in the Pantomime) and accessories such as belts, hats, gloves and shoes (often brought by individual cast members). The CD is asked by the Producers to agree the budget for costumes for the show. The budget is based on the needs of the show, which may include hiring some specialised costumes.

Producers invite the CD to share their ideas on costume designs, including styles, colours, fabrics and accessories. The Set Designer has consulted her, so that colours of sets and costumes are coordinated and she has consulted the Lighting Designer. She takes into account the stock in the GAOS costume store (including rolls of unused fabric).

The CD prepares (sketches or describes as best possible) the design for each costume and discusses them with the Producers. In the meantime, the CD has put together a team and delegated individual tasks. The team has obtained (mainly at the auditions) the measurements of all the cast and used them in planning the acquisition of materials and the making of new costumes, or the adaptation of existing costumes. By the time of the first rehearsal, all the designs are agreed and the creating of costumes has started. A list of team members is given to the Production Secretary, for the programme.

The Lighting Designer is given pieces of material in order that colours and textures may be taken into account in the lighting plan. The Props team leader is consulted about accessories such as umbrellas, fans, bags, masks, etc. which are colour-coordinated with Costumes.

**During rehearsals**

At rehearsals, the Costumes team checks individual costumes for fit and comfort and invites the Producers' comments. The 'costume call', usually at the last Sunday rehearsal before the move into the theatre, is a general check that all the costumes meet the needs of cast and Producers alike. Adjustments, but not major changes, are made at each rehearsal up to the dress rehearsal.

**Moving into the theatre**

Most of the cast will bring their own costumes to the theatre but the CD and Wardrobe Mistress make sure that any items that have not been given to cast members are transported to the theatre. This applies particularly to mirrors, iron and ironing board, as well as a sewing machine (which is usually personal property).

**At the performances**

A Costumes team member is present at every performance, to help with quick changes and with the inevitable button sewing, repairs and adjustments. At the end of the show, the team makes large bags available for cast to put their costume items in and invites three or four cast members to assist with the transportation of the bags to the costume

store. The team subsequently sorts the contents and takes them for cleaning and laundering. Finally, all costumes are hung on appropriate rails in the costume store.

The Costume Designer is responsible for all purchases made by the team and may (usually does) obtain advances from the Treasurer, especially when incurring substantial expenses. The CD submits a single expense claim to the Treasurer

## **12. LIGHTING DESIGNER**

The Lighting Designer (**LD**) takes responsibility for all aspects lighting the show, as well as smoke, dry ice, pyrotechnics and other special effects. He/she also ensures that the hard-wired communications system is set up in the theatre. The LD maintains close contact with the Producers during the preparation of the offer to the Committee, in order that any unusual effects and their cost are mentioned in the offer. He/she discusses with the Producers their vision for each scene and set, with a copy of their detailed blocking plans, so that the appropriate lighting effects can be planned and installed in the theatre.

The LD invites other members of GAOS to work on the lighting team before and during the show. A list of team members is given to the Production Secretary for the programme. Familiarity with each theatre's equipment and installations is essential and the LD will visit the Theatre to ascertain the status of lighting system and power supply. Prior to moving into the theatre the LD attends some rehearsals and develops a lighting plan, showing what equipment needs to be installed on barrels, in the gantry, in the lighting box and elsewhere. The lighting plan is based on the results of discussions with the Producers, the Set Designer and the Stage Manager, as well as on the budget (which the LD has agreed with the Producers), the equipment available in the GAOS lighting store and equipment that needs to be hired for the run of the show.

The LD and Technical Manager of the Society check on the status of the equipment needed. They make sure that it hasn't been offered to another user at the same time, that it is fully functioning and that consumables such as spare lamps and gels are available. The LD prepares an itemised list for transportation and, in consultation with the Stage Manager, orders a truck for the move-in.

### **In the theatre**

At the move into the theatre, the LD ensures safe handling and temporary storage of all the GAOS lighting equipment and checks on the status of the theatre's own systems and equipment, such as the lighting board or computer, the main switch panel and the smoke and fire alarms (which may need to be turned off). He/she assigns tasks to individual members of his team. These tasks include hanging lights, wiring them up, gelling and pointing them, installing systems for pyrotechnics and other special effects and installing the communications system. He/she may enlist the help of theatre staff, where the contract with GAOS includes professional services.

During the days before the technical rehearsal, he/she monitors the performance of his team to ensure that the deadline for completion is met. The LD takes responsibility, with the Stage Manager, for the running of the technical rehearsal at which lighting needs are largely met. Lighting cues and levels are set during this rehearsal, which is often the first opportunity to do so with all lights in place, gelled and (roughly) focused and pointed.

### **During the performances**

Once the show has opened, the Lighting team runs the lights and some special effects from the lighting box, with one or two members of the team working with equipment backstage as required, or wherever the patch board is located. The LD works very closely with the Stage Manager to ensure smooth running of the show, precise cues and prompt action in case of unforeseen incidents and delays.

After the final show, the Lighting team strikes all the equipment for return to the lighting store and to hiring companies. It is usual for cast members to help with this. The LD confirms to the Technical Manager that the equipment has been returned and reports on any deficiencies noted during the run of the show. The LD obtains advances from

the Treasurer, especially when incurring substantial expenses and submits a claim for the expenses of the lighting team to the Treasurer.

### **13. PROPERTIES (PROPS) TEAM LEADER**

The Props team leader is responsible for obtaining or making all the props needed for the show. He/she discusses with the Producers the list of props (initially provided by the Producers) and agrees the budget with them, which takes into account props which already exist in the props store and those which need to be bought or hired.

Two areas of ambiguity exist; one is between Props and Set Constructor (Stage Manager) and concerns furniture and similar items. The other is between Props and Costumes and concerns dress accessories such as belts, bags, hats, masks, etc. These should be discussed to ensure that there is neither a duplication of effort nor omission. Other props, if not in the props store, can be the subject of an appeal to the cast or to local shops and businesses, or might be found in a flea market. Skill with papier-mâché, plasticine, foam rubber and other materials exists within the Society and should be tapped before expensive purchases are made. Sometimes compromise can be achieved where an item in the props store is not exactly what the Producers had in mind but will serve the purpose.

#### **During rehearsals**

The Producers and Choreographer may ask for specific props, necessary to the action of the piece, to be made available at the later rehearsals. The Props team should be able to anticipate such a request and to assign a high priority to procurement of items likely to be called for at rehearsals. In any case, the Props team leader attends as many rehearsals as possible in order to ascertain what props are needed, where it is used on stage and where it should be stored. A props chart, listing each prop, its owner, scene, location and other pertinent information is prepared and displayed backstage during the show.

The Props team leader invites some GAOS members to be part of the Props team. It has been found useful to do this early in rehearsals, or even before and to assign responsibility for certain props to specific team members. A list of team members is given to the Production Secretary for the programme.

The team leader also prepares a schedule for the run of the show, including the technical and dress rehearsals, to ensure adequate manning. As a general rule, the Pantomime requires 6 props people to make and find props and 4 per performance; the Spring show 3-4 people to make and find props and 2-3 per performance; the Music Hall 2-3 to make and find props and 2 per performance.

#### **In the theatre**

The Props team leader asks the Stage Manager to transport all the props, plus the shelves, torches, vacuum cleaner, dustpan/brush, first-aid boxes and props tool box, with the sets to the theatre. Once in the theatre, props are sorted and placed in the appropriate places, usually a props table at each side of the stage with a drawn silhouette of each prop on a white paper tablecloth, for use throughout the run of the show.

During the show, the Props team checks all props for correct placing and for condition (batteries? custard pies?) before every performance. They maintain a schedule of props distribution (who wants which prop, where and when) and ensure that a Props team member is always there to hand over a prop as a cast member goes on stage and later, to accept it as the cast member comes off stage.

At the end of the production, the Props team packs all the props into boxes or cases and helps the stage crew to load them into the truck returning to the props store. The Props team should be present to unload them at the store. The Props team leader may (usually does) obtain advances from the Treasurer, especially when incurring substantial expenses and submits a single expense claim to the Treasurer for all props and materials bought or hired and finally arranges that the props storage area is tidy and in good order for the next production.

## **14. SOUND ENGINEER**

The Sound Engineer takes responsibility for the audio aspects of a production: pre-recorded music and sound effects, live amplification and the operation of related equipment (other than orchestra).

He/she agrees a budget with the Producers based on the specific needs of the production. In particular, the Sound Engineer agrees with the Producers on the use of live amplification, musically literate operators and with the Technical Manager on the budget for the acquisition of the appropriate equipment.

The Sound Engineer brings together a team, possibly comprising both young people and experienced adult members of GAOS, to help him/ her plan and run the audio aspects of the show. A list of team members is given to the Production Secretary for the programme.

### **Introductory and interval music**

The Producers will provide the basic material to be recorded determine the style and length of this pre-recorded music.

### **Sound Effects**

The Sound Engineer ascertains the requirements of the Producers and takes responsibility for finding and/or recording the requested sound effects. He/she develops a sound plot, with appropriate cues from the script and ensures that the equipment is operated for maximum contribution to the production.

### **Live Amplification**

This may take three different forms:

- Off-stage microphone
- On-stage hand-held or stand microphones (hard-wired)
- Hand-held, concealed or 'discreet' radio microphones.

In all three cases, the amplified sound will need balancing with music, whether pre-recorded, live electronic (amplified) or live non-amplified. The Sound Engineer is responsible for mixing and balancing the sound inputs, so that the audience hears the best possible sound through the loudspeaker system.

### **Dedicated Rehearsals and Training**

If cast members are to use individual microphones, the Sound Engineer is responsible for ensuring that every person involved can use a microphone to best effect. In consultation with the Producers, the Sound Engineer gives or arranges training and dedicated rehearsal with the orchestra present.

### **In the Theatre**

The Sound Engineer installs the necessary equipment in the theatre, or ensures that it is available, in working order and correctly positioned. He/she tests the equipment, is responsible for its operation, sets sound levels and meets the specific needs of the production and of the Producers.

If radio microphones (hand-held or concealed) are used, sound levels are reset before every performance. To do this, the Stage Manager ensures that principals using microphones are on stage in costume, with microphones and that the orchestra is assembled, an hour before 'Curtain up'. Sound levels are set during the loudest vocal and orchestral pieces for each principal and for each duet, trio, etc. At the end of the show, the Sound Engineer makes sure that all the equipment is properly packed and returned to store, to the hirer or, if it is part of the theatre's equipment, that it is left in the

same condition as it was found. He/she submits a single expense sheet to the Treasurer.

## 15. MAKE-UP DESIGNER

The Make-up Designer is responsible for the design of the make-up and is invited by the Producers to discuss ideas for make-up for each cast member, including changes in make-up required by the script. She (it is usually a lady member of GAOS who volunteers for this job) takes responsibility for all aspects of make-up, including hair and (if needed) wigs and she is asked by the Producers to agree the budget for make-up for the show. The budget is based on the needs of the show, which may include purchasing some specialised make-up and purchasing/hiring wigs.

In the case of a youth production, this role may best be filled by two young people, each in charge of either hair or make-up, possibly supported by one 'godparent' for both make-up and hair. This will make it possible for each young person to concentrate on a specific area.

During rehearsals, the Make-up Designer discusses her designs with Lighting and Costumes, to make sure that the desired effect is achieved. She shares her ideas with each principal and gives instructions to the ladies and men's chorus concerning hairstyle requirements for the show (particularly important if long hair is required). She also tells the men if beards or moustaches are needed.

The Make-up Designer contacts, not later than five weeks before the move into the theatre, the person who looks after the make-up cupboard (which is in the costume store) to check on stocks and replenishment. She asks this person to order whatever materials they jointly feel are necessary for the show.

She invites some GAOS members to be part of her team and they meet at a rehearsal to see the principals and cast in action. Together they prepare written or sketched instructions, to be pinned on the dressing room walls, for those members of the cast who wish to do their own make-up. They prepare a roster, to ensure a sufficient number of the make-up team are present in the theatre at each performance. They also agree on the steps necessary to get the boxes of make-up from the costume store to the theatre in time for the first rehearsal. A list of team members is given to the Production Secretary for the programme.

At the move into the theatre, the Make-up team leader takes responsibility for assigning dressing rooms (after discussion with the Producers) and for preparing dressing rooms with the provision of make-up, tissues, cotton wool, cotton buds, make-up remover, paper towels, soap and rubbish bags.

During the show, they arrive at the theatre an hour before curtain-up, so that all cast members may be made up in time. They maintain a minimum number of team members in each dressing room throughout the performance so that cast can have make-up changed or renewed.

At the end of the show, the team put all make-up items back into the boxes or crates in which they came and arrange (usually with the Costumes team) the transportation and return of materials to the costume store. The Make-up Designer makes sure that everything is properly tidied away, tells the person who looks after the make-up cupboard of any shortages and submits a single expense claim to the Treasurer for all make-up items bought or hired.

## 16. FRONT-OF-HOUSE MANAGER

The Front-of-House (**FoH**) Manager is the first GAOS 'interface with the paying public. In this role, he/she must be firm, fair and polite and supportive of the FoH team members. In the same way, he/she can count on the support of the GAOS Committee.

Before the show (during the rehearsal period) the FoH Manager invites GAOS members of all ages to be part of the FoH team and gives a list of team members to the Production Secretary for the programme. These volunteers should be present at several

shows. People who offer to do the job just once in order to see the show free are not welcome. The FoH staff must know what to wear, when they are to arrive and what their job entails.

The FoH Manager also checks on the materials needed. A cash box, a cash float (from the Treasurer), a coin-counting tray, torches, badges, baskets (for the programme sellers) and sticky tape (for notices) are essentials.

Notices required include -

- Directions for ticket buyers ('Box Office') and ticket holders ('Pair' and 'Impair' or ticket numbers) on the auditorium doors ('No flash photography and no video cameras: no food and drink')
- At the cloakroom ('unguarded: no responsibility')
- On doors to the stage and dressing rooms ('No entrance for public' on one side and 'No cast in costume past this door' on the other)
- 'No Smoking' at the cast bar and Smoking permitted here' in the appropriate place.
- Where to park.
- Mobile phone warnings
- Stroboscopic effects notice, etc.

Most of these materials are stored in the props storage area at the workshop. The FoH Manager may collect them in person or ask the Stage Manager to arrange for their transportation to the theatre. As soon as the Production Team has moved in, the FoH Manager walks through the theatre, to become familiar with

- Location of the emergency exits.
- Cast entrances and exits,
- Public address system (if any),
- Seat numbers and related entrances ('pair' and 'impair').
- Doors that need to be unlocked before and locked after, performances are identified.

He/she must also ascertain whether any extra rows of seats are required and if so, organise them. He/she must also discuss and agree communications with the Stage Manager.

Despite the fact that GAOS uses the same venues repeatedly it is imperative that even experienced FoH Managers conduct this survey because of changes to layout or additional restrictions imposed since the last engagement.

Before the dress rehearsal, the Publicity team may supply photographs for posting in the foyer. The FoH team pins or tapes them in the most suitable places. A table may be set up for GAOS approved publicity material; the placing of it is discussed and agreed.

Programmes are delivered to the foyer by the Publicity team. These are stored away from public view and distributed to programme sellers (part of the FoH team) before each performance. The FoH team sends copies to the dressing rooms, the backstage teams, the lighting box and the orchestra (one per name in the programme).

Before each performance, the FoH Manager checks with the box office in case there are special needs: school groups, wheelchairs, double-bookings, filming of the video, etc. In the same way, the FoH Manager reports any seating problems to the box office. The FoH Manager also checks with the Catering Manager that all is ready for the arrival of the audience and for the interval. Finally, the FoH Manager checks with the Stage Manager that the curtain is closed and the orchestra out of the pit before allowing the audience to enter the auditorium.

The Front-of-House Manager tells the Stage Manager, who is responsible for starting the show (including the restart after the interval), when the doors to the auditorium have

been closed. Communication is usually via the lighting crew as their lighting box is often located close to the foyer.

Latecomers are invited to take their seats with minimum fuss.

The FoH Manager makes sure that the team is included in invitations to the after- show party, evening meals and presentations (if any).

After each performance the FoH team combs the auditorium for lost objects and clears away rubbish that audiences leave behind. After the last performance, the FoH Manager boxes up the FoH materials and arranges with the Stage Manager for their return to the store.

### **Ticket checkers**

Ticket checkers position themselves at each entrance to the auditorium and check that tickets are for 'this' performance and for 'this' entrance. They keep the ticket stubs until the end of the current performance and make sure that people carrying cameras know the rules (no flash photographs, no videoing at all). They do not permit food and drink to be carried in.

### **Programme sellers**

Programme sellers circulate in the foyer before the doors open, position themselves near the doors when the audience is entering the auditorium and (one or two of them) move around the whole auditorium before curtain-up. Without being aggressive, they offer programmes (at the price confirmed by the Treasurer) to everyone in the audience. Cash received is collected by the FoH Manager who periodically pays it into the GAOS account and provides an expense/income account to the Treasurer at the end of the show.

### **Ushers**

Ushers acquaint themselves with the seat layout before the doors are opened. They know of cast entrances through the auditorium (where and when) and make sure that aisles and doorways are kept free of obstructions. During the interval and when children are on stage (in the Pantomime song sheet) they guard the tunnel doors, stairs on to the stage and any other likely danger points.

## **17. CATERING MANAGER**

The Catering Manager is in all cases an adult GAOS member invited to fill the function by the Assistant Business Manager.

The Assistant Business Manager also ensures that the Catering Manager has access to:

- One or more cash boxes and several cash trays
- Coin counting trays
- Bottle openers and other utensils.

Most of these materials are stored at the Workshop, in the props store. The Catering Manager may collect them in person, or ask the Stage Manager to arrange for their transportation to the theatre.

The Catering Manager invites GAOS members to be part of his/her team and gives a list of team members to the Production Secretary for the programme. The team is responsible for providing drinks (wine, beer, orange juice, apple juice, water) and snacks (nuts, crisps, chocolates, etc) before each performance and during the interval, in the designated section of the theatre foyer or in the cafeteria if it is suitable and available. At the Music Hall, the Catering Manager ensures that bread, ham, cheese, butter, condiments and other foods (for example, mini-pizzas and ramekins) are provided and that the appropriate equipment (for example, a cheese-slicer) is brought from the store to the theatre. For youth productions, a sign-up sheet is given to the cast

to request parental support in providing items for sale, such as cakes. No alcoholic drinks are served.

The Catering Manager selects a team to man the service points and the food preparation area. The team sells the consumables at prices that ensure no loss to the Society. The team is responsible for setting up its own tables etc and for clearing away and cleaning up, after each performance.

In order to pay for purchases before the show, the Catering Manager may ask the Treasurer for an advance; he/she will in any case ask for a float of small notes and coins before the first performance. The cash received each day must be counted and expenses and income recorded by the Catering Manager for reconciliation with the Treasurer at the end of the show. Cash should be paid periodically into the GAOS Account to avoid large cash sums accumulating with the attendant risks.

Additional responsibilities of the Catering Manager include providing wine, beer and soft drinks to the cast bar throughout all shows, to the after-show party organisers at all shows and to the cast and Technical Team of the Pantomime at their break between shows on Saturdays and Sundays.

## 18. PROMPT AND CALLERS

The Producers, usually from among experienced actors in the Society, invite the Prompt to be present at every rehearsal and performance from the time that the Producers specify "Down Books". His/her function is to remind cast of forgotten lines and to supply missing cues, so alertness, familiarity with the script and a clear, carrying voice, used with authority, are essential. Everyone must remember that, during a performance, the voice of the prompt is disruptive and destroys the theatrical illusion, so cast are encouraged to improvise their way out of trouble provided, however, that they remember the need for a correct cue for the next line.

Callers work from a script, which they have personally marked up during the first rehearsals in the theatre. While cast, principals and chorus alike, are encouraged to listen to the show relay in the dressing rooms and to work out their own cues for moving to the wings ready for their entrances, callers have to chase the inevitable slowcoach. Callers always check that cast is in place a few moments before their entrance.

The Stage Manager needs to know that cast are ready and in place, often out of his sight, before the "Curtain Open" command can be given. Callers report to the Stage Manager at this critical time and also in the interval, about fifteen minutes after its start, to ask whether they should call the cast for the next act.

Sometimes cast have arrived too early for their entrance: this applies especially to children. A crowd in the wings gets in the way of stage crew and of cast coming off stage and creates noise, which can be audible during a quiet scene on stage. Callers should take care not to call cast too soon or, if it proves necessary to do so, to invite them to wait a few moments outside the doors leading on to the stage.

## 19. CAST

Following the auditions for each show the cast for the next performance is selected. In the unlikely event that post-audition developments lead to a change of mind, the producers should bear in mind Schedule D, paragraph 8 of the GAOS Constitution: "The producer(s) and musical director have the right to remove any member from a production for unjustified absence from rehearsals or unsuitability for the part in which they have been cast, subject to the approval of the Committee".

In addition to the obvious requirements of attending rehearsals and performing in the actual production, there are a number of other responsibilities and matters of discipline that rest with the cast. Cast Members are expected:

- To ensure that they have **Accident Insurance**. GAOS is unable to obtain accident insurance for anyone on stage or working back stage.
- To be a **fully paid-up** members of GAOS.

- To **pay attention and concentrate** on what is going on at all times even if not directly involved.
- To **maintain a complete silence** when remarks/notes/comments are being made by the Producer, Musical Director, Choreographer or any other members of the Production team.
- To **refrain from eating and drinking** while physically performing (this includes the chewing of gum as this can be dangerous when performing chorus movement).
- To **refrain from taking refreshments** into the rehearsal rooms and the theatre auditorium.
- To **respect the work of the Costume Designer and the Make-up Designer** and not to change the costumes or make-up. (The 'look' projected by the costume and make-up has been carefully developed with the Producers and form an integral part of the show).
- To be prepared for some **minor financial outlay**. This is particularly relevant to footwear but also involves rehearsal refreshments, back-stage sandwiches, chocolates, contribution to thank-you presents to the technical teams, etc. There are also a number of other items that involve payment but these are optional e.g. purchase of a show T-shirt, video etc.
- To not leave the rehearsal area without asking whether help is needed to **clean up the rehearsal room**, re-arrange chairs, clean up the kitchen etc.
- To **refrain from inviting people back-stage** during the **interval**
- To offer assistance at the end of the show to help the technical teams **clean up the theatre**.

## 20. WORKING WITH CHILDREN – THE “AUNTY”

In many GAOS productions, in particular the Christmas show, some of the cast members are children, or under the age of 16. While children inevitably inject a huge amount of enthusiasm into any show (they are inveterate hams, and find fun in even the dreariest bit of theatre), working with children requires special consideration of a number of factors, as detailed below.

### How many children?

The answer to this question depends, of course, on the production. In addition to the requirements of the script, the following points should be borne in mind:

- more children onstage means more children to keep busy backstage; conversely, it has proven easier in some cases to have a dozen kids onstage for much of the show than to have half a dozen with only one number who then have to be entertained for the rest of a three-hour performance;
- more children, and more scenes with children, means more costumes; it may be tempting to work a couple of kids into a street scene, but that also means a couple more costumes.

### What the production team needs to know

- Children's rehearsal needs are different from those of adults: they are quick learners (many producers have remarked on the "sponge" phenomenon), but their attention drops off quickly after one or two hours and especially after 9 p.m.
- Children need separate dressing rooms where they do not get under the adults' feet, and boys and girls over the age of 11 or 12 need to be able to change in separate places, although they can share a common area while not onstage.

### What the children (and their parents) need to be told

Children (and their parents) need to be told a number of things at the audition:

- the parents have to be paid-up members of the Society;
- the children are members of the cast and must expect to be treated as such; this means that all the Golden Rules apply to them as well;
- cast members are also expected to pitch in on other aspects of the show, and this holds true for the parents as well; they should be asked at the audition in what area they will help, and be held to their commitment. This applies equally to Moms and Dads.

### **The role of the “Aunty”**

As soon as the child parts have been cast, the Producers of any show involving large numbers of children should appoint someone to be the children’s Aunty. Ideally, this will be a parent of one of the children in the show who is willing and able to make a fairly substantial commitment to it. The Aunty’s tasks during rehearsals include but are not limited to:

- 1) acting as liaison between the parents and the production team (the latter needs to be kept informed about absences, allergies, scheduling conflicts, etc., the former about changes in the rehearsal schedule, costume needs and fittings, etc.);
- 2) drawing up a list of addresses and phone numbers for car pooling purposes;
- 3) making sure every child completes a Health Form (see Appendix E);
- 4) drawing up a rota of parents to supervise rehearsals, as required (this will depend on where the rehearsals take place, how long they are and how often the children are at loose ends during the rehearsals);
- 5) reminding the children and the parents about rehearsal etiquette (GAOS is not a babysitting service: children must be dropped off and picked up on time, provided with a snack if they need one, and reminded to concentrate during the rehearsal and not to disturb those rehearsing when they are not);
- 6) obtaining a copy of the script and liaising with the Costume and Make-up Designers on requirements for the children.

Once the show moves into the theatre and during performances, the Aunty should:

- 1) have the Producers and/or the stage manager explain the rules of behaviour in the theatre specifically to the children;
- 2) draw up a fresh rota for supervision; the actual number of parents in the dressing room for any one performance will depend on the needs - the number of children and how busy they are; the age of the children (younger children need more help getting in and out of costumes and are not allowed to do their own make-up), the number of quick changes (where one parent will probably be needed for each child), and so on;
- 3) sit through a rehearsal of the whole show so as to gauge at what point the younger children will need to be brought up into the wings, the trick being to get them there without rushing and in time to get ready to enter, but not so early that they grow fidgety and disrupt the work of the stage manager and his or her team backstage;
- 4) arrange for the children to be busy while not onstage (set up a TV corner, bring in a supply of games and drawing materials);
- 5) if there is to be a special “aftershow” party for the children, organize it or delegate someone to do so.

## **21. THE COMMITTEE’S ROLE**

Some of the routine tasks involved in preparing and running a show are the responsibility of Committee Members and need not concern the Production team. These tasks include

- Setting the dates of the production at a joint meeting with GEDS and any other local drama groups, usually in May for the coming season.

Dates of GAOS productions are approximately -

- Pantomime: first performance in the last days of November or the first days of December.
  - Spring show: before Easter, or in the week after Easter Week.
  - Summer show: as late as possible in June, but with the last performance not later than about 26th June.
  - Autumn show: as early as possible in September, but no later than the weekend of *Jeûne genevois*.
- Booking the theatre, according to agreed dates and availability and suitability of theatres (the Business Manager)
  - Selecting the show from among those offered; inviting the advice of the Music Sub-Committee if necessary; ensuring that the Producers understand their duties and responsibilities and have prepared themselves and their team accordingly (the Committee as a whole)
  - Helping the Producers to prepare the budget (the Treasurer); approving the budget and approving any subsequent changes proposed by the Producers (the Committee as a whole).
  - Publicity, including mailings (proof-read by the TIE ticket office), posters and radio; advertising in the programme; printing of the programme; selecting and briefing the photographer (the Publicity Manager and Assistant)
  - Members' bookings, for which the form is attached to the Newsletter mailed, at the latest, three weeks before public bookings open (the GAOS Secretary and the Theatre in English ticket office)
  - Booking audition rooms and rehearsal rooms; buying and renting scores and libretti; insurance; pompiers; moving and tuning the piano (the GAOS Business Manager with the Production Secretary)
  - Inviting GAOS members to be Front of House Manager, Catering Manager, to run the cast bar; ordering the tickets and offering complimentary tickets; paying the Droits des Pauvres in Geneva (the Assistant Business Manager)
  - Arranging the show video and distribution (at the time of writing, the Assistant Secretary)
  - The Chairman's message in the programme (the Chairman)
  - Safety (including the GAOS Safety Manual), état des lieux in the theatre, Barn clear out (the Technical Manager with the Stage Manager)
  - Preparing and manning the Information Desk at GAOS productions, at which audiences can find out more about GAOS and how to join (the Committee as a whole)
  - The after-show party (the Vice Chairman)

**Appendix A – Audition Notes****Audition notes for**

Produced by

**Auditions:** The auditions will be held :  
 in (location)  
 on (days)  
 from (time) (developing time for dancing, singing and reading auditions)

**Call-Backs:** day, location and time.

**Rehearsals:** Regular week days: days, locations and time.  
 Extra rehearsal: days, locations and time.  
 Weekend rehearsals: days, locations and time.  
 Specific rehearsal schedule for dancers (see under the title “Dancers”).

**Performances:** days, location and time.

(include any warning about public holidays during which one’s rehearsals or performances are planned)

**Synopsis****Characters** (in order of synopsis)

For each of them include information about:

- The character
- The number of pages of text
- The songs (how many solos, duos ... ensemble)
- The vocal range
- The dancing level

**Chorus**

- Number of people (male and female)
- characters
- numbers (style)
- specific requirements (dancing, singing, costumes)

**Dancers**

If the production team is looking for specific dancers.

- Number of dancers
- Style of numbers (modern, contemporary, tap etc.)
- Specific requirements (specific rehearsals, availability etc.)

**Audition material**

- a) For principals
- b) For chorus
- c) For dancers

**Contact persons**

Any further details concerning the show can be obtained by contacting:

**Note**

To participate on stage in any GAOS show, there is a possible financial commitment. Please refer to the adequate document on that purpose.

**Appendix B – Audition Form**

**Audition Form for**



Name (in capital letters):  
.....

Address: .....

Post Code: .....Town: .....

Home Telephone ..... .....

Professional Telephone.....

Mobile Telephone .....

Fax.....E-mail.....

**Are you already a Member of GAOS? ( ) Yes ( ) No (check as appropriate)**  
***If you are not a Member you will be required to become a Member. Please ask the Production Secretary for information.***

I am interested in the following roles:

- 
- 
- 

Check as appropriate:

- I will accept any part offered:            Yes ( )            No ( )
- I would be interested in an understudy:    Yes ( )            No ( )
- I am interested in chorus:                    Yes ( )            No ( )
- I read music:                                    Yes ( )            No ( )
- Voice type:            soprano ( ) alto ( ) tenor ( ) baritone ( ) bass ( )

To be part of the show, I am invited to accept one of the following tasks:

- Sewing: ( )            Set construction: ( )            Set painting: ( )
- Move into / out of the Theatre: ( )            Coffee break: ( )

Foreseen absences:

.....  
.....

Date & Signature:

.....

**Appendix C – Technical Sheet****Technical Sheet  
Act xx – Scene xx**

The following key information will help the entire GAOS production team understand exactly what is expected to happen on stage for each scene. The Technical Sheet is a reminder and detailed checklist of what is required and what is to be avoided.

The right column is used when there is an updated version of the technical sheet as:

N = new; C = changed; D = more details.

It records and tracks immediately aspects of a scene that have been changed and in which way they have been modified.

<b>Spot on</b>	<b>Key points the director wants emphasised in the scene</b>	
<b>Timing</b>	<b>How long and the pace of the scene?</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Synopsis of the scene</b>	
<b>Set</b>	<b>Set on stage including cue(s) for any change(s).</b>	
<b>Lighting</b>	<b>Lighting ambiance including special effects and cues for changes.</b>	
<b>Props</b>	<b>Props required.</b>	
<b>Music</b>	<b>Orchestra requirements.</b>	
<b>Amplification &amp; Sound effects</b>	<b>Who needs a microphone? Sound effects.</b>	
<b>Choreography</b>	<b>Choreographic pieces and choreographer(s)</b>	
<b>Costumes</b>	<b>Which costume for which character? Style, colour and accessories.</b>	
<b>Make-Up</b>	<b>Style and any change (including wigs).</b>	
<b>Scene change</b>	<b>Style (live, black-out, curtain close etc.) Cue(s)</b>	

**Appendix D – Cast Personal Expenses****ALL PARTICIPANTS  
IN A GAOS PRODUCTION****Some Minor Personal Expenses (Mostly Optional)**

- 1) If you are not already a member of GAOS and you are considering appearing on stage in a show you will be required to become a member of the society. The current membership fee is Frs. 50.00 per member and Frs. 25.00 for subsequent members of the same household. A reduction is made for students. *(For Information - membership fees are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> August of each year for the subsequent year. Even if you join the society in the middle of a current year you will still be expected to pay the full yearly subscription and this will become due again on the following 1<sup>st</sup> August)*
- 2) During rehearsals for any show refreshments are made available. To cover the costs of supplying these refreshments all participants will be asked for a contribution of Frs.20.00 at the first rehearsal. *(Part of this contribution will be reserved to help cover the costs of the backstage bar during the performances)*
- 3) During the performances there will be a backstage bar providing beverages. However, you will be expected to pay for any sandwiches or chocolates etc., which may be provided.
- 4) In the event that GAOS has to purchase Scores and/or Libretti for a show and you wish to have your own copy you will be asked to pay for this at the same price charged to GAOS.
- 5) In certain circumstances you may be requested by the Wardrobe Mistress of a show to provide your own black character (or similar) shoes and perhaps tights. Shoes are always a problem in our shows and we cannot keep a stock of various shoes of various sizes.
- 6) It is a tradition in GAOS that at the end of every show cast offers thank-you presents to various members of the technical teams and you will be asked to contribute to the cost of these presents. This is of course totally voluntary and up to each individual to decide whether or not to participate and the amount of your contribution.
- 7) Sometimes souvenir T-shirts are ordered for shows and these are sold at cost price to anyone wishing to purchase one.
- 8) It is a tradition in GAOS that at the end of every show there is an "After Show Party". This is again optional but the cost per person is usually around Frs. 15.00.
- 9) It is a tradition in GAOS that a video film is made (usually by one of our members) of the rehearsals and the show itself. These are sold to anyone who wants a copy and they usually cost around Frs. 60.00.
- 10) **MOST IMPORTANT - GAOS is unable to obtain accident insurance for anyone appearing on stage or helping backstage in any way. It is essential therefore that each individual ensure that he/she has accident insurance. If you are living and working in Switzerland then you will automatically have accident insurance through your employer since it is obligatory in Switzerland. PLEASE CHECK THEREFORE EITHER WITH YOUR EMPLOYER OR YOUR FAMILY THAT YOU DO HAVE ACCIDENT INSURANCE.**

**Appendix E – Children’s Health Form**

(name of show) - health form

For the period (total period from 1<sup>st</sup> rehearsal to close of show), including rehearsals in (location(s)) and any other rehearsal room, and rehearsals/performances in (name/location of theatre).

**Personal details:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency contact details:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

**Health insurance details:**

Health insurance company: \_\_\_\_\_ Membership No./Policy No: \_\_\_\_\_  
Physician's name and phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Other information:**

Allergies (food, medicine etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Any other relevant information: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of last tetanos vaccination: \_\_\_\_\_

I give permission for my child to participate in the production of ... and for the responsible adult to make any emergency decisions regarding my child's health. I will not hold GAOS responsible for any accident/ injury which may occur.

Signed (parent/ guardian): \_\_\_\_\_