



## *The Role of the High School Technical Director*



## Introduction

As a high school technical theatre teacher or technical director, you are first and foremost an educator; much of your time and energy is focused on guiding the technical side of the creative process while growing young artists. However, you are also called upon to be a skilled technician with a broad scope of knowledge. Your duties are likely varied ones. In addition to teaching you may find yourself acting as a designer, managing a shop and running construction crews. Frequently you may be called upon to act as facility caretaker or event manager. The *Technical Theatre Educator's Manual* hopes to offer a resource to support you in the many roles you take on as a part of being a technical theatre educator.

Whether there is a modest platform temporarily erected in the corner of a multi-purpose space or a thousand seat Performing Arts Center outfitted with state-of-the-art equipment, being the technical director of a school theater comes with tremendous responsibility and unlimited opportunities. We're tasked with educating our students, but unlike most other subjects, our charge includes public performances with dozens of students presenting their skills for a live audience of parents, friends, and community members.

Like the other teachers and staff in our schools, our goal is the same: to educate our students and keep them safe in the process. But unlike our colleagues, we're tasked with being experts in numerous areas and balancing our personal ongoing education with what we provide to our students. A theater can be a dangerous place when the tools and other equipment are not used properly. In addition to building the sets, we are often responsible for the lighting, sound, video, props, costumes, wigs, makeup, and overall maintenance of the space. How can one person manage all of these roles? Here are a few tips.

## Helpful Tips

### Reach out for Help

It would be impossible to capture all of the hats you wear in one place; instead, this manual is designed to offer enough of the basic information needed for those new to the job, while providing resources to point the more experienced in the right direction to find the details they are seeking. The manual models the first and most important tip- reach out for help.

### Tap Vendor Expertise

Establish good relationships with your vendors. The companies that sell you materials and equipment want you to be successful. Their employees see many facilities and spaces and they bring product expertise. Chances are, if you are experiencing a problem, they've seen it before.

### Involve your students

Train your students well and they will be a source of help in running productions and a legacy of knowledge to help other students. Students can be trained throughout the year to take on the following roles:

- stage manager
- assistance designers
- light and sound board operators
- crew heads
- build crew

## Recruit volunteers

Tap into the expertise of your community. Perhaps there is an electrician, a skilled rigging person, construction manager or an audio specialist in your parent pool. Reach out to area churches and college and community theatre programs. You never know until you ask who may be available to offer knowledge or an extra pair of hands.

## Using the Manual

This *Technical Theatre Educator's Manual* is intended to be specific to high school technical theatre needs. The goal of the writers was to create a basic digital resource, primarily for the beginning technical director, that can be used as the start of your personal technical theatre manual. All pages can be easily downloaded and saved or accessed online in the moment on any smart phone, tablet or other device. The manual is divided into sections, with each section containing a narrative about the topic, along with some illustrated common tasks.

## About the Authors

**Kristi Ross-Clausen** is an AV & Theatre tech writer, speaker and teacher as well as a theatre safety advocate.

**William "Donny" Covington** is the Technical Theatre Director for Richardson High School in Richardson, Texas, and an instructor in the Technical Theatre Magnet Program.

**Charles Crews** is the Director of Technical Theatre at the Richardson Independent School District in Garland, Texas.

**Mitchell Critel** is an Assistant Professor of Theatre Design and Technology and Production Manager and Technical Director for the University of Evansville.

**Weston Keifer** is the Technical Director at the Robinson Fine Arts Center in the Plano Independent School District, Plano, Texas.

**Dana Taylor** is an adjunct faculty member for theatre and music at the University of Evansville.

**Christopher Treviño** is the Technical Services Associate, Arts and Humanities for the University of Texas, Dallas