

SOUTHERN COUNTIES DRAMA FESTIVAL 2023
NOTES FOR THE GUIDANCE OF PRODUCERS/DIRECTORS AND STAGE MANAGERS

OPEN MEETING SUNDAY 29th JANUARY 2.00PM TO 3.30PM

This is the opportunity for each group to individually discuss details and resolve doubts and problems. Your Stage Manager and Sound/Lighting Technicians should attend as well as your Producer/Director. The meeting is for us to find out what you want and for you to find out if you can have it. Please raise anything you want at the meeting; we would much rather be bothered with details than surprised with problems later on. If you want any help, information or advice before the meeting, please feel free to ring the Festival Stage Director.

Some of the things to be discussed will be:-

LIGHTING

This meeting is your only chance to discuss this, so please come prepared. We do not need a script but you should have already filled in Form D and returned it to us before Monday 23rd January. Your details should look something like this:-

CUE No.	ACTION	TIME	EFFECT
Preset			Stage lights ON
0			House lights fade
1	Tabs open	10 sec	FOH ON
2	Wall lights	Snap	Special ON
3	Actor exits	5 sec	Fade to blackout etc

We can usually meet your needs, although sometimes some compromises may be necessary. You must tell us at this meeting your requirements for colours, practicals and any special effects or lights not included in the standard rig. We have to set up lighting to meet the needs of all the groups competing, so you will only get those specials, practicals and special effects that have been requested and agreed at this meeting. In the event that you require follow spots, you must provide your own operators.

STAGING, SCENERY AND PROPS

We do not limit the amount of scenery you have, but please remember that scenery should be free standing within the black box we provide. Anything that you can set in 10 minutes and strike in 5 can be used, but we need to know the plan of stage and lighting areas. You should have already filled in Form C and returned it to us before 24th January. All scenery must be adequately fireproofed, supported and safe. If we consider it is not, we will advise you how to make it comply. We will also examine and may test, at your technical rehearsal, any electrical wiring for wall lamps, etc. and if we do not consider it to be safe, this must be corrected by the time of the performance or it will not be allowed on stage. Fire regulations are very strict and you must warn us in advance of any naked lights, *smoking on stage and pyrotechnics. We also need to know about firearms or blades, real or imitation. We have to get clearance for these things and failure to do so can endanger the theatre licence so we reserve the right to close the curtains and disqualify you if you have not told us in advance.

* Under the terms of The Health Act 2006 the Barn Theatre is a smoke-free building

However, where the artistic integrity of a performance makes it appropriate for someone taking part in that performance to smoke, smoking can be allowed. If there is to be smoking, then please remind us on the evening of your performance as a notice informing the audience of this is required to be displayed on the foyer notice board.

SOUND

It is your responsibility to provide the CD's or laptop containing your sound and to operate the equipment on the night, but we will help with setup and show your operator how to use our equipment. We do not need a script at this time but you should have already filled in Form E and returned it to us before 23rd January. Please tell us your requirements at the Open Meeting. If you want to use your own equipment, please mention it and if you have any unusual requirements we may suggest further contact between your sound expert and ours to resolve them.

USING YOUR STAGE TIME AT THE TECHNICAL REHEARSAL

You are allocated 30 minutes on a day of the technical rehearsals prior to your performance (you will be notified of the date and time at the Open Meeting) when the stage and facilities are yours. You may deliver and prepare scenery in advance of your time. These sessions are run to a very tight timetable and if you are not there you will lose the time. Promptly on time, you will be told the stage is yours and you must leave the stage promptly at the end of your time. This 30 minutes is your stage time and there are two things that **MUST** be done during it if you are to avoid disaster:

- Set up your lighting cues
- Check and record your sound levels so that they can be repeated accurately on the night.

Both of these must be done during your stage time. The time is yours to do as you wish, but we advise you to plan what you want to do and organise your team in advance. Your Stage Manager can practice setting/striking and the 101 other things that Stage Managers do - your Prompt can check where to sit - and all this can be done in parallel with the lighting and sound. You will not be able to rehearse the production but you may be able to practice the opening and closing sequences with curtains, sound and lights if you have sufficient time left.

LIGHTING

During your stage time it is essential that we get all your cues set up, tested and entered. Specials will be in place at the start of your stage time, but they still have to be set and focused in the 30 minutes, **(in our experience groups with 3 or more specials as well as a lot of cues may be hard-pressed to complete in the time available)**. The time needed for this and for plotting the cues makes it essential that we start to look at lighting at the beginning of your stage time. Do not leave it to the last ten minutes.

To set up each cue, your lighting technician (preferably not the Producer/Director who tends to be worrying about other things) works in the auditorium with our Lighting Director and tells him what areas, colour, brightness and fade times are required. These are adjusted until it is as you want. We then go on to the next cue. The whole sequence may be played back as a check (with the Producer/Director present too) if there is time at the end. Once recorded, the settings cannot be altered at the time of performance.

DELIVERY

All scenery and props will have been brought in through the steel shutter on SR and got ready in the wings before being needed on stage. When stage time starts they will be taken on from the wings.

SOUND

Your Sound Operator should bring the CD or laptop to the sound box in the gallery. We will be around to help, but **NOT** to operate on the night. He/she should familiarise themselves with the controls and write down the switch positions and volume settings. You can talk to the Sound Operator by using the intercom headsets from the SM position on stage. If there are a lot of effects, each one should be checked individually. As with lighting, do not leave this until the last 10 minutes. If you want to use your own equipment from the stage you may find it difficult to judge levels, so the same principles apply. (On the night the equipment must be set and removed within normal setting and striking times).

ON THE NIGHT OF YOUR PERFORMANCE

SETTING

Setting will start when everybody is ready, leaving a pause for breath before the curtain goes up. The 10 minutes starts when we say GO and we will warn you if you are in danger of over-running your setting time, thereby losing marks. This has been known to happen, though very rarely.

STRIKING

Your 5 minutes striking time starts when we say so, **NOT** at the end of the play. Please wait for our signal before starting to strike so that we can make sure that doors are open, workers on, and cables out of the way. No one has lost marks for exceeding 5 minutes, yet!

THE PERFORMANCE

Your Sound Operator can go to the box, but please do not move any switches until we are there. We need someone to cue the lighting since we will not know where the cues come in the script. Lighting **MUST BE CUED FROM SM POSITION ON STAGE** and is to be cued with a 'standby' cue given about half a page in advance, followed by the word 'GO' at the appropriate time. Without the word 'GO', nothing will happen! The intercom allows your Stage Manager to talk to the Lighting Operator, Sound Operator and follow-spot(s) from the stage. When all is ready on stage, in the audience and in the lighting and sound boxes, we can start.

RUNNING TIME

This is measured from the opening of the curtains to the final closing of them (suitably adapted if you want to play with open tabs). There are penalties for not complying with festival timings as set out in the Festival Rules.

ADJUDICATION

All the plays on one night are adjudicated at the end of the matinee or evening, starting as soon as the stage is clear after the end of the last play.

DRESSING ROOMS

There are four dressing rooms. A notice showing which dressing room you should use will be on the dressing room doors. Members of your cast and backstage crew can watch from the gallery only, without charge, the other plays on their evening, subject to there being empty seats. If they wish to do so, they should speak to the front-of-house staff who will tell them where to sit to avoid seats already sold.

AND FINALLY

Our object is to help you, and so produce a successful and happy Festival, subject to constraints imposed by the theatre, safety rules, finances and the need to be fair to everyone. We aim to help you have an enjoyable experience, so please do ask if you are not sure about even the smallest point.