

STAGECRAFT NOTES

Stagecraft is the difference between a boring item and an entertaining one. It is a way of making the audience enjoy every song and sketch and of making the show look polished and professional.

These are the rules of stagecraft. If you learn them and follow them you will look good on stage and you will have done your part to make the show a top standard one.

READ, MEMORISE and PRACTISE these rules everyday until Opening Night. If you THINK about them and REHEARSE them you will find yourself doing them automatically by the time you get to the performance – and that's the way it should be.

Try some of them in front of a mirror and see for yourself how they work.

A THE THREE GOLDEN RULES – ON STAGE

- 1 SMILE** from the moment you step onto stage until you step into the wings again, unless the item specifically calls for you not to. This is the **MOST IMPORTANT RULE OF GANG SHOW**. If you look like you are enjoying yourself, the audience will too.
- 2 FACE THE FRONT**. Our necks have been made so that we can turn our heads without turning our bodies. Keep your **HEAD UP** and **FACE THE FRONT** especially when delivering or singing lines and when moving across the stage.
- 3 PROJECT YOUR VOICE**. Keep volume up for the first word of every chorus and at the end of every line in sketches. Don't rush your words but say them clearly and distinctly. Proper breathing will help. Always project your voice to the balcony seats as this will give the best vocal coverage.

B MOVEMENT ON STAGE

- 4 USING YOUR ARMS**. If you need to indicate something on stage, don't look at it; use your body, arm and hand to show what you're talking about. If you turn your head away, the audience loses all your lines. In sketches, you can often show who you are speaking to by glancing at them **BEFORE** you deliver your line. Otherwise, try to position yourself upstage of the person you are talking to (even if only one tiny step) so that you can face the audience as you speak.
- 5 KEEP IN STEP**. **Always** step onto stage with your upstage foot (the farthest from the audience). This is particularly important for the first person in a line to enter. If the first person is right, all the line will be. This automatically brings your front to the audience. Then, as you move across the stage, keep your head to the front and never turn your back to the audience.
- 6 WATCH THE SWAY**. **When** called to do so, please go in the same direction as everyone else. Don't get carried away and find yourself out of time with the music. Watch the Producer in the pit or the people in front of you if you are confused.
- 7 MOVE QUIETLY ON STAGE**. Don't stamp feet or walk heavily as it will be picked up by the microphones. Never speak a word on stage, unless it is part of the item. This includes behind a closed curtain or (very importantly) in the wings.
- 8 NEVER FIDDLE AND SCRATCH** or adjust costumes, or look around, rub your nose, etc. It will stand out like a beacon.
- 9 IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG, KEEP GOING**. The secret is not to let the audience realise anything is wrong. Pretend it was all part of the act and **RECOVER QUICKLY**. Listen for the Prompt if you forget your line and **KEEP CALM**. If you drop something, ignore it and carry on – don't pick it up until after the curtain shuts.

C *IN SKETCHES*

- 10 **THINK AHEAD.** Start thinking of your first lines halfway through the dialogue before yours. This makes the sketch flow faster and better.
- 11 **CUE LINES.** Sketch characters should always make sure the last words of each dialogue are absolutely correct. This is the cue for the next person.
- 12 **DON'T ANTICIPATE.** wait until the other character actually says his words before you react to them.
- 13 **IF YOU FORGET YOUR WORDS** listen for the Prompt – he or she will be in the pit.
- 14 **ACT YOUR PART.** Keep up your character all through the item but don't move unnecessarily while others are delivering lines. This is called upstaging and detracts from the performance.

D *IN THE WINGS*

- 15 **SILENCE IS GOLDEN.** Remember that there is ABSOLUTELY NO TALKING anywhere on stage or in the wings until you are back in your dressing rooms. Any sound made backstage can be heard by the audience.
- 16 **LEAVING THE STAGE.** Move quickly and quietly as soon as the curtain closes. NOT before. Hold the final pose until the curtain closes. When waiting in the wings always leave a clear passage for those leaving the stage in a hurry.
- 17 **THE STAGE MANAGER** is in charge of the whole stage area, including all cast and backstage personnel. Listen to the directions he gives and co-operate with all backstage teams. In particular, don't hinder the stage crew in their work. Keep out of their way.
- 18 **HANDPROPS.** A hand prop is anything you carry onto the stage. Remember to collect and return props to the same place. Do not take them from the stage area. Also, do not handle any props you are not required to use on stage.

E *COSTUMES and MAKEUP*

- 19 **COSTUMES ON STAGE.** When you are told how to wear a costume by the wardrobe department, do as you are asked. The costume team watch the dress rehearsals from the auditorium and know what you look like. YOU DO NOT so do not think you know better. Not conforming makes the show look unprofessional.
- 20 **MAKEUP.** Don't forget to bring a towel to put round your shoulders whilst having your makeup put on. Everyone will wear the same unless it is for a specific item and then you will be made up by the make-up department. If you have a skin problem and need special makeup make sure someone in the make-up department is aware of this before the show moves to the Theatre.

FINALLY, REMEMBER THE THREE GOLDEN RULES WHEN ON STAGE

- 1 **SMILE!!** until your face cracks....
- 2 **FACE THE FRONT!!** and keep your head up....
- 3 **PROJECT YOUR VOICE!!** Singing or speaking.

Do these three simple things and the item will shine.