

Etiquette for Theater Artists

In an age where tradition and etiquette have been losing ground, it is important to underline the basic guidelines for conducting yourself as a theater professional. These are just the basics regarding courteous behavior and theater tradition. If you have ideas about other issues that should be addressed in this document, please let us know.

Technology

- Posting complaints or online comments (about your casting, rehearsal, the play, someone's behavior in rehearsal or at tech, etc.) is self-destructive. It will inevitably be seen by people who will make presumptions about your attitude. Begin to treat your online communications like you will treat them when you are a professional.
- Your O.U. email address is your professional contact for your term of residence in the BFA or MFA program, and it must be checked at least once a day. If you prefer to use your personal e-mail address, you *must* create a forwarding link to it from your O.U. e-mail address.
- Respond to emails from faculty, directors and the stage management team as soon as you receive them, but always within 24 hours.
- Cell phones and computers must be turned off in all professional environments unless you are given permission by the director or stage manager.
- Cell phones must be turned off back stage while on any run crew.
- Cell phones must be turned off while in the booth.
- Cell phones must be turned off during costume fittings or in rehearsal.

Auditions

- All BFA and MFA performance students are required to audition at the General Auditions and Callbacks.
- All BFA and MFA performance students are required to attend callbacks for any show for which they are called back.
- If you have to miss any audition or callback because of illness, a family emergency, or an observance of faith, you *must make arrangements ahead of time* to be seen at another time.
- Prepare your callbacks.
 - Coming in and reading is not preparation.
 - Read the entire play before you audition. The choices you make should be informed by the whole play, not just the sides.
- Show up early and be ready to work when you are called.
- Have an up to date resume for generals.
 - If you don't know what an acting resume looks like, look online. The U/RTA website has a good example for young actors. This website also has great guidelines for general auditions.

- Have a headshot for general auditions. For freshman, sophomores, and juniors, these needn't be professional, but should be a clear image that represents you well.
- Seniors and MFA's should have professional shots or be saving for them. These can be 'bridge shots' to get you through a year until you figure out where you want to begin your career or continue training.
- Dress appropriately for auditions and callbacks
 - Not too dressy, not too casual. Avoid sandals, cargo pants, ballcaps, etc.
 - It is appropriate to wear a suggestion of character clothing (clothing that helps you to feel like the character) for callbacks.
 - Spike or stiletto heels for women are too hard to work in and to walk in. They aren't sexy under these circumstances – they are hazardous.
- Respect other people's preparation for auditions and callbacks.
 - Keep sound to a minimum.
 - Find a place to be alone if that helps you to focus.

Rehearsal

- Once cast, you are expected to be available for every scheduled rehearsal.
 - If you have any conflicts, you must let the director (and stage management if they are already in place) know as soon as possible.
 - Do not wait until the first day of rehearsals. Conflicts impact all scheduling.
 - Performance is curricular, and your attendance is required in the same way that it is required for your studio classes.
- Turn in your bio on time. You should have one written in a Word file, and be ready to update it and turn it in on the first day of rehearsal.
- Do not give notes to other actors. Ever.
- Never change or cut a line in rehearsal of a new play without permission from the playwright.
- The same goes for ad-libbing and paraphrasing unless it's rehearsed or in line with the nature of the show (i.e. *The 39 Steps* or *Complete Works of Wm. Shakespeare (abridged)*).
- Arrive at least 5 minutes before your call time, so you can be ready to work the moment rehearsal begins.
- Let stage management know if you're going to be late for any reason.
- Appreciate everyone – stage managers, dressers, runners, designers, etc. You are no more or less important than anyone else involved.
 - Dressers are in a particularly sensitive position, so be sensitive to them.
- If you're in the rehearsal room, you're working.
- No whispering or doing anything distracting while others are working.
- Watch rehearsal, but don't respond inappropriately.
- If the stage manager says something, acknowledge it.
- Always let the stage manager (or an ASM) know where you are.
- Go to the bathroom during break, not when it's time to begin work.

- Be prepared. Don't come in at the exact same point at which you left the last rehearsal. Progress should be made *between* rehearsals. That is your job, your homework.
- Dress in ways that are helpful for you.
- No open-toed shoes in rehearsal (unless you will be wearing them in performance).
- Make sure you know when and if it's appropriate to eat and drink.
- Turn off cell phones.
- If you use technology during any rehearsal, use it away from other people (particularly directors and the stage management team) so that it is not distracting.
- Hygiene is crucial. Don't go too heavy with colognes, brush your teeth, etc.
- In intimate scenes, make extra sure. Particularly if you're a smoker.
- Shower or bathe every single day. This is intimate work.
- If you have physically intimate moments, prepare your scene partner if you're going to do anything new.
- Don't cross between (in front of) the director and the work the director is watching.
- If you have an issue with another actor, deal with it directly and diplomatically. Or privately to the stage manager or director.
- Don't bad mouth anyone. It WILL get back to them.
- Always bring a pencil with an eraser.
- The stage manager is the liaison between actor and management, not your mother or maid.
 - Pick up after yourself. That means fast food bags, drink cups or plastic bottles, and so forth.
 - Hang up your rehearsal costumes.
 - Return your rehearsal props to where you found them.
- Warm up. Be ready to work.
- If you have costume and prop issues, speak to the director, not the designer.
 - The director will effectively represent you.
 - Be patient as costumes and props are integrated. It takes time to get accustomed to new elements.
- Costume fittings:
 - Show up on time (or early) for costume fittings.
 - Wear appropriate underclothing to fittings.
 - No cell phone during fittings (it bears repeating).
 - Be respectful and patient during fittings.
 - Always shower on the day you have a fitting.
- Tech rehearsals:
 - Being on time for tech is as important as being on time for other rehearsals.
 - Never wear white or light colors or black to tech.
 - Stay focused and don't goof off when you're on hold.

- Even though tech is the time for the integration of technical elements, there is plenty for you to learn, so use it as an opportunity to specify things like spacing, staying in your light, etc.
- Keep talking at a low volume and to a minimum. Directors, designers and stage management are all working as quickly as they can, and need to be able to concentrate to work.
- Don't say the name of or quote from "The Scottish Play" or whistle in a theater. You may think it's all a lot of hooey, but theater has its traditions. Acknowledge that you are now part of those traditions that go back for generations and respect them.
- No running in the theater, backstage or otherwise.
- There is always a brush up line-through on the second Tuesday of the run (if it is a two week run)
- There is absolutely no leaving the theater once you are in costume or if you have 'tech gear' on your person (for example, a body mic).

Performance

- If you experience any emergency, you must call the stage manager's cell phone.
 - You should program the SM team's cell phone numbers into your phone at the first rehearsal.
- Sign in.
- Warm up.
- Take care of your health.
- Give yourself all of the time you need in the theater.
- Check your props before half hour.
- Arrive at least five minutes early for fight calls, dance calls.
- Be ready when 'places' is called.
- No peeking through curtains to see who is in the house.
- Respect other actor's privacy. Respect other actor's preparation. Everyone readies themselves differently for performance.
- Hang up your own costumes.
- Don't eat or drink (anything other than water) in costume.
- Don't try to crack anyone up on stage. Or from the wings. Or by slipping the wrong prop to an actor. Be professional and find your joy in the work.
- Perform as directed, even when the director isn't there. There's a certain amount of natural growth, as long as it doesn't go against what was rehearsed.
- All stage violence and physical contact with another actor has to be thoroughly rehearsed and never improvised. Even things as simple as an arm twist.
- Don't grab focus or upstage your fellow actors.
- No extraneous attention grabbing extra business.

- No inappropriate crowd responses and behavior. Even these elements of performance need to be organic and truthful.
- Don't let a dull, quiet or disruptive audience affect your performance. Pushing will prevent you from telling the story.
- Maintain integrity in the curtain call. And after.
- No curtain calls 'in character' or in your 'moment' of pain, unless directed to do so.
- It's the stage manager's job to stop a performance, not yours. Unless you or another actor are in physical danger.
- Treat back stage crew with grace and equanimity.
- Beware cutesy program bio stuff.
- Don't leave the theater with any costumes, props.
- Don't let side coaching from anyone affect the integrity of what you rehearsed.
- Never bring in or discuss reviews or opinions of the play, whether it's a teacher, other students, another director or your mom.
- There is always a photo call.
 - Take a look at the list of photos being shot, and anticipate the next photo – especially if you have a costume change.
 - Pay special attention to tracking and hanging up costumes during photo call.
 - Listen and don't goof off.

Dressing Room Behavior

- Sign in immediately upon arrival.
- Keep your dressing room area neat and well organized.
- Respect the preparations of your fellow cast members.
- Check your costumes:
 - Are all the pieces there?
 - Are they pre-set where they need to be?
- Treat your costume and running crew with the utmost respect and gratitude.
 - It is customary in the professional theater to tip your dresser
 - While we do not encourage that here, letting them know how much you appreciate their work is a great substitute.
- Don't warm up in the dressing room.
- Don't sing in the dressing room.
- Don't talk loudly or dominate the dressing room.
- Don't play music in the dressing room.
 - If you want to listen to music, use ear buds or headphones.
 - Keep your music low enough that you can still hear the intercom.
- Report any violations to your stage manager.
- Clean all of your personal belongings out of the dressing room after the final performance. Items left behind will be thrown away.

Strike

- Strike is the final element of your acting assignment on any given show.
 - Arrive on time, and be patient while you wait for guidance.
 - If you have a conflict with strike, you must notify your SM at the beginning of your rehearsal period.
 - There can be unanticipated challenges during strike.
 - Keep a good attitude.
 - Bring homework in case you have a period of time when you are not working.

Some thoughts about ‘half hour’:

Half hour is not just the time at which you have to arrive at the theater in order to be ready for ‘places’.

HALF HOUR IS THE POINT AT WHICH EVERYONE SHOULD BE FOCUSING ON THE TASK AT HAND! Which is, of course, the readiness to perform.

You should have already warmed up and checked your props. But now, getting into costume and make-up, you have an opportunity to check in on your internal readiness. It’s a time to leave the world of Kantner and O.U. and enter the world of the play.

All actors prepare differently. Some need silence, some need to listen to music (use ear buds if you do), some want to chat with friends to stave off nerves or just check in. **BUT THE DRESSING ROOM AT ½ HOUR NEEDS TO BE FOR EVERYONE**, and it is important that your way of getting ready doesn’t impose itself on your peers. Just because you want to goof off doesn’t mean everyone does.

At a professional union-contracted theater, half hour is considered **sacred**, and everyone in the dressing room is expected (in fact obligated by contract) to respect everyone else. This extends to all of the crew. From here forward, please bring your most respectful and professional self to everything you do, and most particularly the production environment.