

DIRECTOR'S GUIDE TO RISLEY THEATRE

By Ingrid Richter

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INTRODUCTION:

First of all, congratulations and welcome to Risley Theatre! Your play has been selected and budget revised through a Play Selection Committee. You should have a copy of your revised budget.

This manual was written to help you successfully perform your play in Risley Theatre. You have the support of the General Manager and all the members of Theatre-Sub Committee in your quest. Now, onward:

AUDITIONS:

If you wish, you may hold auditions in the Theatre itself if it is not being used. You need to attend Theatre-Sub, which meets every Sunday, at 7:30 p.m. in the Risley CLR (central room). If there are no conflicts, the General Manager will schedule you on the Theatre calendar.

If you do not wish to use the Theatre, or are unable to work out desired times, you may also allocate other rooms in Risley by going to Committee (which meets every Sunday at 9:00 p.m. in the CLR). You need to place yourself on the agenda posted outside the CLR any time before the next meeting (the sheet is posted Monday or Tuesday, the week before the meeting, and remains up until about five minutes before the meeting) under 'Space and Money Allocations' along with a brief description of what you will be asking for. Two suggested rooms for auditions are: Tammany and/or the Music Room. Both have pianos, if that is a factor. The piano in Tammany is the better of the two.

If you do not wish to audition in Risley, feel free to look around at other places. Classrooms in Goldwin Smith have been used before, and seem to work well. Talk with the General Manager for more information.

THEATRE-SUB:

You are required to attend Theatre-Sub and give a report as to the status of your play every Sunday at 7:30 p.m. The meetings are informal and brief, but important. If you are unable to attend, you must send someone (Assistant, Stage Manager, etc.) who knows how your play is going or contact the General Manager before the meeting.

All the major decisions on the Theatre are made during these meetings. The General Manager is the head of Theatre-Sub, and is in charge of the Theatre. Get to know your General Manager. If you have any questions, are running into problems, need workers or actors, are running out of money, you may ask for assistance at Theatre-Sub.

Theatre-Sub is concerned with successful completion of the season with as little wear and tear on the Theatre as possible. Theatre-Sub supports all shows, and will continually try to upgrade the Theatre. If you have suggestions for improving the Theatre, please bring them up. Do not feel that you are limited to your own show. By directing a play in the Theatre and attending meetings, you are also a member of Theatre-Sub during your season. And, of course, you are welcome to stay a member even when your show is completed. It is your choice.

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SCRIPTS AND RIGHTS:

You must pay all royalties on your play. This has been figured into your budget. If you are in doubt, look through the Samuel French or Dramatists Play Service Catalogue in the Theatre. To receive rights, contact either:

Samuel French, Inc.
45 W. 25th St.
New York, NY 10010
(212) 206-8990
FAX: (212) 206-1429 or

Dramatists Play Service, Inc.
440 Park Ave. South
New York, NY 10016

These addresses will also supply you with scripts. If your play is old enough that it does not require royalties - and please check into this - (i.e. Shakespeare), you may photocopy the play yourself, or have Kinko's (we have an account there) do it for you.

REHEARSALS:

The Theater space is allocated on a priority basis. Shows that are closer to opening have priority on the Theatre, whether for rehearsal or technical work. Please respect this - the same courtesy will be show for your play. A calendar of Theatre usage will be drawn up on a weekly basis at Theatre-Sub.

In addition, all plays are given a 'week-exclusive' on the Theatre the week before they open. This means just that - they have the Theatre exclusively for that week and for the run of their show. Any rehearsal time you wish in the Theatre during that time must be scheduled through the Director of that show. The Director has the final say in the matter and it is a favor that s/he is letting you use the Theatre. If the director approves your usage during this time, please inform the General Manager as to the hours you will be in the Theatre.

Other spaces in Risley to rehearse are: the Music Room and Tammany. Both spaces are allocated at Committee (see AUDITIONS) and are separate from the Theatre.

CONTRACTS:

You will be asked to sign a 'Memorandum of Understanding' (enclosed in this packet) for the duration of your exclusive time in the Theatre. This is binding; please read it carefully and sign. You will not be given keys to the Theatre until after you have properly filled out and returned this form.

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ACCESS TO THE THEATRE:

As Director of a play, you will be given two keys to the Theatre - one for yourself and one for you to distribute at your discretion (Stage Manager, Tech Director, etc.) You will also be given a set of keys to the Lighting Booth and keys to Theatre Storage and the Properties shop (same key). If you wish, you may also receive the key to the Costume Shop. However, along with these keys comes the responsibility of keeping these areas secured after you leave. If you are found in violation, your keys will be confiscated and you will need to find someone to check you in and out of these places.

In order to receive your keys, please fill out the enclosed form, have the General Manager Sign, and take the completed form to the Risley Service Center (right next to the Theatre) during working hours (about 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) You will need to sign a separate contract for your keys there.

Your keys will be issued as soon as you need them, provided that they are not in use. However, they must be returned at strike of your show; there are a limited number of keys to the Theatre, and we need to have them available to all groups needing them.

STAGE MANAGER:

Below is the information that your Stage Manager might find useful. You should also be familiar with this.

The Theatre has two exits, located at the front and back of the Theatre. The EXIT signs must remain in plain view and properly lit at all times. Nothing may obstruct these exits; this should be especially noted for the backstage doors. Life Safety can and will shut your play down if these exits are blocked.

The phone in the Theatre is wired for local calls. Feel free to use it to contact members of your cast. The phone number in the Theatre is: 255-9521.

Wireless headsets are generally worn by the Stage Manager and Board Operator during the show. There are rechargeable batteries in the drawers underneath the Box Office area, along with the recharger.

Noise backstage is heard extremely well from the audience. The 'green room' (I know, it's almost blasphemy to call it that) is probably the best place (least noisy) for your actors to hang out during the show. Feel free to encourage them to add quotes to the walls. The only rule: Do not cover anything another show wrote.

Wear all-black and have your stage-hands wear all-black during the show. Because we do not have moving curtains, scene changes are done in the dark or near-dark. Glow tape backstage is acceptable, as are dark or gelled lights that aren't visible to the audience.

Please be familiar with the PREPERFORMANCE and PERFORMANCE procedure detailed in this handout.

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TECHNICAL DIRECTOR:

The following notes are for your Technical Director. Be sure you have read and understand them.

Be familiar with the Risley Theatre Technical Director and the General Manager. These two people will be able to answer most of your questions about the Theatre.

Dimensions of the Theatre are enclosed in this packet. In addition, a larger drawing of the Theatre is available through the General Manager. If you wish to do anything drastic or anything that will change the Theatre (moving or removing seats, painting the actual walls or floor of the Theatre, etc.), you must come to Theatre-Sub and approve this well in advance. If you proceed to change the Theatre without going through Theatre-Sub, you will be asked to return the Theatre to its proper state and will be denied changing the Theatre again.

Power tools and paint are at your disposal. You may be given a key to the tool cabinet. Be careful, and do not damage the tools. It will be assumed that you know how to use them properly. If you have any concerns, or have never used any of the tools before, find the Technical Director or General Manager. They will be able to train you.

If you do not wish to use the Theatre supplies, or need to pick up more of your own, I would recommend:

Bishop's Home Center
430 W. State St.
273-3511

A gallon of paint will run you about \$15-20 there, depending. Their hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Ask for a blanket order from your director (see: FINANCE).

If you are building your set in the Theatre, please observe Risley quiet hours: after 11:00 p.m. on weeknights and after 1:00 a.m. on weekends. In addition, if any of the residents have noise complaints before quiet hours, you may be asked to quit working.

Be careful if you are painting in the Theatre. Try to get as little paint on the floor as possible. I realize that it is unrealistic to expect a pristine floor, but you will be required to paint the floor black during strike if the damage is noticeable. Fans for ventilation are on the side of the Theatre as well as backstage.

Also, if you wish to drill nails or screws into the Theatre walls, please tell the General Manager ahead of time. There is white plaster underneath the black paint, and the walls are crumbling in places and held together with paint in others. You will be expected to make repairs and cover any holes during strike.

Theatre Storage, in the Sub-Basement of Risley, is also at your disposal. However, please tell the Tech Director or the General Manager if you will be using any of the wood or props in there. We need to keep track of what is being used. Also, keep this area clean. A lot of time has been spent straightening it up, and you will be expected to keep it neat. Building in the sub-basement is off-limits: Public Safety claims that workers cannot hear the fire alarm from down there.

Life Safety must approve your set before the show opens. Please give them a call at least a week in advance at: 254-5407 or 255-8200 to make an appointment. They will be looking for anything that constitutes a hazard. They have it in their power to shut down the show entirely if they find anything wrong. You will often be given a chance to fix what has been deemed unsafe. Please allow time for this.

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TECHNICAL DIRECTOR (cont):

Common things to look for include:

- 1) Is everything fire-proof (especially near the lights)?
- 2) Are the exits clearly marked and accessible?
- 3) Are all instruments safety-cabled?
- 4) Are the fire extinguishers working and accessible?
- 5) Are all seats able to see at least one of the exit signs at all times?

And so on. We have had some problems in the past, and have even had a show shut down for a day. Please be careful and have your set approved.

LIGHTING DESIGNER/BOARD OPERATOR:

The information below is for your Lighting Designer and Board Operator (including sound). Please be familiar with this information.

Lights, gels, gobos and cables are at your disposal during the show. The gels are all filed away according to standard requirements. In addition, loose sheets and extra lamps may be found under the Box Office area. You may also order from other places:

Syracuse Scenery and Stage Lighting Co., Inc.
101 Monarch Drive
Liverpool, NY 13088
(315) 452-8096
(800) 453-SSSL
FAX: (315) 453-7897

Prices will be quoted on the phone to you. We have one of their catalogues in the Theatre to give you a general idea of pricing.

We are having some problems with a couple of lighting channels. Be aware of this. The lights are numbered from the Lighting Booth to the back of the Theatre.

Make sure all instruments are safety-cabled. Life Safety will check this. Lights may be hung with the parallelogram clamps or with C-clamps, whichever you prefer. In addition, portions of the lighting grid may be adjusted for you. Please contact the General Manager and/or the Technical Director for more information.

Our sound system is new. We are attempting to hook up the Theatre for surround-sound. Please feel free to use other channels on the mixer. Be careful with this equipment. You will be held responsible if any of it is destroyed or stolen. Lock the booth up when you leave.

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FINANCE:

Your budget has been approved. You should have a copy of any revisions made on the budget. The Theatre receives the money to put up the shows by approaching the SAFC (524 Willard Straight 255-9610) at the start of the Season, and makes budget cuts appropriately. We will later be reimbursed by the SAFC when we return receipts to them.

Lately, the Theatre has been getting less and less from the SAFC. If you do not receive all of your funding, we will review your budget, make appropriate changes and cuts, and put up the rest of the money. You will be notified of any changes in your budget.

Ways to make payment on items purchased within your budget:

- 1) Ask for a check for the appropriate amount from the General Manager. Keep all receipts.
- 2) Pay for it yourself, give the receipt to the General Manager, and receive reimbursement.
- 3) Check with the Risley Programming Assistant (room near the elevator on the First Floor) or Resident Hall Director (office in the Service Center) to see if the Theatre has an account at the place in question. Then get a Blanket Order for from the Theatre's H-90 account. This is the preferred method. Give the RHD sufficient notice to fill out the proper forms.

KEEP ALL RECEIPTS and hand them over to the Theatre's Financial Manager or General Manager from time to time.

PUBLICITY:

You must have anything with Risley Theatre's name on it approved by the Theatre or General Manager before you post it around campus. This includes audition posters and performance posters.

Performance posters must conform to the following specifications:

- 1) At the top of the poster, it must say: Risley Theatre Presents:
- 2) Any title/author requirements specified in the royalties agreement
- 3) The dates and times of performances
- 4) At the bottom of the poster: Funded in part by the SAFC.

Again, posters must be approved before they are allowed to be posted.

You may either use a copy center for your posters, or have the Print Shop Manager in Risley show you how to work the Offset Press. This will enable you to print up as many posters as you like for very low cost, and with a wide variety of colors.

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PUBLICITY (cont.):

Newspapers that are free advertising include: The Grapevine, The Ithaca Times and the Cornell Chronicle.

Grapevine
108 S. Albany
272-3470

Ithaca Times - Timetable
P.O. Box 27
Ithaca, NY 14851
277-7000

Articles must be in by Friday at 5:00 p.m.

Chronicle Calendar - Cornell News Service
Village Green
840 Hanshaw Rd.
Ithaca, NY 14853

Submitted ten days prior to the event.
Need contact name and phone number.
Subheading: MISC. THEATRE ARTS

Reservations may be made on the Theatre Answering Machine at 255-9521. These will be taken down by the House Manager before the Box Office opens.

RESERVATIONS:

It has been the procedure in the past to take down reservations for specific nights of the show. If you wish to continue this practice, please hand the House Manager or Box Office worker a comprehensive list each night.

Risley Theatre has 78 seats available (81 total seats, with one for the House Manager, one for the Usher, and one for the Box Office worker). You may wish to keep some seats open to sell at the door; we have had enraged patrons unable to see the show because of excessive reserves. Be cautious.

SEASON TICKETS:

Risley may start experimenting with Season Tickets during the run of your show. You do not need to worry about this; just keep it in mind when taking down reservations. More on this issue will be discussed at Theatre-Sub.

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COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS:

This is a slightly touchy subject. There is no set policy as of yet for comps. What has been done in the past include:

- 1) The Director has two free comps per show to disperse as s/he sees fit.
OR
- 2) All actors and workers on the play have been given one free comp.

Talk with the General Manager as to how you wish to work your comps. However, remember, the Theatre does wish to break even and/or turn some profit on your show (all money made in excess of your budget will go into the Theatre account, used for repairs and upgrading). Take this into consideration.

Reviewers are always given comps, on the house.

RISLEY-FREE:

The final dress rehearsal of your show is what is called a 'Risley-Free'. It means just that. All members of Risley are encouraged to sit in on your show at no cost. The reasoning behind this is two-fold:

- 1) To give you and your actors a sampling of how audiences will react to your show, and the chance to make appropriate changes, if necessary
- 2) To benefit Risley members.

In addition - and this is a fairly well-kept secret - Risley members are allowed to see any show of yours that hasn't sold out for free. The reason we keep this a secret is that we need people to volunteer to work for all the shows (see: PERFORMANCES). The added Risley members in your audience will enable you to have as close to a full house for your actors as possible.

PERFORMANCES:

You will be supplied by Theatre-Sub with a House Manager, Usher and Box Office worker each night of your run. These will change continually. In addition, the Box Office Manager will print up tickets for your show and drop-off and retrieve the cash box each night. You will be given an update, if you wish, as to how much money your show has taken in.

You will need to take care of printing up programs; often times your Publicist will do this. On your programs, you may do as you wish - there are no Theatre requirements.

The house, by policy, will open as near to 7:30 p.m. (for an 8:00 p.m. show) as possible. Reservations may be claimed from 7:30 to 7:45 p.m. and remaining seats will be sold during this time. A waiting list will start once the seats are full. At 7:45 p.m., all unclaimed reservations will be sold off. Anyone who had a reservation at that time is now in the same place as those without - they must wait in line for a ticket. At 7:55 p.m., the house will close temporarily and the empty seats will be counted. The empty seats will be reported to the people waiting to get in, and the waiting list will be read. The house will then close at 8:00 p.m.

If there are any delays, the Backstage Manager must contact the Board Operator in the Lighting Booth, who, in turn, contacts the House Manager. All information should be kept flowing between these three people. The three of them should know the status of the house at all times.

If you wish to change the timing or procedure, you must come to Theatre-Sub.

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PERFORMANCES (cont):

At 8:00 p.m., once the House is finally closed and locked, the House Manager will walk out on stage and give the Fire Speech. We are required by New York Law to give this. The Fire Speech goes: "Good evening, and welcome to Risley Theatre. The exits are located at the front and rear of the Theatre. There is no eating, drinking, smoking or flash photography allowed while the show is in progress. Enjoy the show!"

At this time, your show starts.

If you wish, an actor of yours may give the Fire Speech instead. You may also add changes to the cast, intermission notes or any other pertinent information to this speech. Be sure you let the House Manager know ahead of time of any changes.

PROBLEMS:

During your show, there should be few to no problems. However, some problems that we've dealt with in the past include a blackout and/or lights flickering out.

In case of a blackout, emergency lights will automatically flick on. The House Manager will escort all patrons out the main doors, while the Stage Manager will escort all actors out the back door. If the lights do not return within 15 minutes or so, we will either refund the patron's money or give them a complimentary ticket to any other show. If the lights do return, patrons will file back into the Theatre and your actors can pick up at an appropriate place in the show.

If a fuse has blown all the lights, do not evacuate the house. The House Manager will give a brief speech explaining the problem (blown fuse) and either the House Manager, Stage Manager, Board Operator or you will go to the fuse box, located conveniently in the bathroom near the Theatre (across from the Service Center) and flip the fuses.

If channels have flickered out during your show, rely on your Board Operator to make appropriate last-minute patch jobs with other lights, and try to fix the problem during intermission or after the show.

These are all relatively unlikely occurrences, but they have all happened in the Theatre before. Don't lose your head and inform the General Manager of the problem as soon as possible afterwards.

POST-SHOW:

Make sure you and your Stage Manager remain after all the patrons, workers and actors leave. Flip the seats back up, pick up used programs, make sure all the lights are off, the Tech Booth is locked, and the Theatre is secure. You may then lock up and leave.

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STRIKE:

Strike commonly occurs after your final show and before the cast party. Because the Theatre is so small and your work crew generally consists of 3-5 people, you may wish to have your actors help with the strike.

The purpose of Strike is to return the Theatre as close as possible to how you found it. This means taking all your flats, platforms and large props to Theatre Storage, all your small props to the Prop Room, all costumes not rented or owned to the Costume Shop, and all rented material to its proper place. The house floor should be vacuumed, if need be, and the stage floor swept. If there is noticeable damage to the floor or walls, you must make appropriate repairs. The Theatre has been painted in flat black latex paint.

Backstage must be cleaned of all garbage, and make-up must be properly cleaned and put back. The Lighting Booth must be straightened and the lights returned to a common plot. Often times, your Lighting Director or Tech Manager may wish to consult with the Lighting Director of the next show to see what they wish to keep up. This will save work on both sides. Gels must be removed and thrown or filed, depending on their state.

The General Manager and/or Technical Director of the Theatre will stop in during Strike. The final state of the Theatre must be approved by these two before strike is considered complete. At this time, you will turn in all keys you have to the Theatre or related shops.

If you fail to complete a satisfactory strike, you will be given the opportunity to correct your mistakes the next day. If you fail to do so, your name will go on a permanent blacklist and you will not be allowed to use the Theatre again. Additional ways to be put on the blacklist: excessive problems with cast, crew or Theatre members, or putting any of your cast or crew in danger at any time during the production. Please do not put yourself on this list.

CAST PARTY:

If your group decides to have a cast party, please do not hold it in the Theatre. Several reasons:

- 1) It is illegal to serve alcohol in the Theatre and we may be closed down permanently.
- 2) No eating or drinking in the Theatre.
- 3) It is bound to go past quiet hours.

And on that note, this manual is complete. Please attend Theatre-Sub for any updates or changes in this manual. This manual is intended as a guideline: please do not let it override common sense. Keep the General Manager informed of everything and keep all receipts.

Enjoy your show and thank you for performing in Risley Theatre. You will be a valuable and integral part of our season.

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Memorandum of Understanding

Preamble: The Risley Theatre Subcommittee and the Risley College Committee require that any individual or group wishing to use Risley Theatre facilities read and sign this agreement.

I/we, _____, agree to be responsible for any unusual damages caused to Risley Theatre facilities or property from the date of _____ until _____.

I/we agree to be responsible for any necessary set-up, and to return the facilities to their original condition, and to verify compliance with the above terms with a representative of Risley Theatre.

Should I/we desire to use Risley Theatre lighting equipment, I/we agree that the equipment will be set-up, operated, and returned to the original condition by a technician authorized by a Risley Theatre Technical Manager or General Manager. This technician need not be a Risley member.

Life-Safety requires that they be contacted to inspect and approve Risley Theatre facilities before any event. I/we agree to do this.

Risley Theatre agrees to provide access to the facilities, Risley Theatre equipment, and advice, if requested.

Date _____

Risley Theatre Manager _____

Date _____

Individual or Group Representative

Risley Theatre

RISLEY COLLEGE, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

ITHACA, NEW YORK 14853-5801

(607) 255-9521

KEY CONTRACT

This is to inform the Service Center that the following person is authorized by the General Manager of Risley Theatre to possess the following keys:

NAME: _____

OFFICE/REASON: _____

DATES: _____

KEYS (and amount):

_____ Theatre Key

_____ Treasury

_____ Lighting Booth

_____ Costume Shop

_____ Theatre Storage/Prop Shop

_____ Tool Cabinet

Please issue these keys to the appropriate person, in accordance with policy.

Thank you for your time.

GENERAL MANAGER OF RISLEY
THEATRE: _____

RISLEY THEATRE



Box Officer: _____

Total Available Seats: _____

Cash Sales at Full Price:

Risley Free:

A hand-drawn site plan of a rectangular plot. The overall dimensions are 32'0" in width and 11'0" in depth. The plot is divided into several sections by a central horizontal line and two vertical lines. The top section is 19'3" wide. The bottom section is 2'4" wide. The central horizontal line is 9'4" wide. The two vertical lines are 2'3" apart. The plot is surrounded by a boundary line, with a wavy line indicating a road or path on the right side. There are some small structures or features indicated by dashed lines and symbols.

RISLEY THEATRE

RISLEY RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE
CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, N.Y., 14853

RISLEY THEATRE



CORNELL UNIVERSITY
ITHACA, N. Y. 14853

Risley Theatre

RISLEY COLLEGE, CORNELL UNIVERSITY
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(607) 255-9521