

## LAPWORTH PLAYERS – JOB DESCRIPTIONS

### PRODUCER

#### CHOICE OF PLAY

Find a play that you would like to produce. Local libraries have a vast selection to choose from. Run your choice past the LP committee. You will need to apply for a 'licence to perform' from the publishers. Also check to see if your choice of play is currently being performed professionally. If it is you may not be able to perform it at the Village Hall  
Try and choose it well ahead of time. You of all people will be expected to know the play inside out and upside down by the time you begin rehearsals.

#### WHEN CHOOSING A PLAY CONSIDER OUR RESOURCES

- Our stage is not enormous
- Do you need a box set - will people be available to build it
- Would your play be better suited 'in the round'
- Do we have the right costumes in the loft – if not they may need to be hired which can be expensive, or they may need to be made. (Willing sewers are becoming a rarity).
- Do we have enough people to cast it? The LPs tend to have more active females than males.
- Consider if your play offers an opportunity for new members and first timers
- If you are producing for the first time, consider a production assistant who has produced before, they will be of good use to you. Similarly if you have produced before, consider a production assistant who has not.

#### BUDGET

- Talk to the treasurer about costings – he/she will have records of similar past productions to refer to, and will be able to give you a guide as to what your expenses may be.
- Your costs will hopefully be recovered by ticket sales, so consider how long your play will run and how many seats you are likely to sell. 'In the round' performances cut down on seating space.

#### CHOOSING YOUR TEAM

- To achieve the final result you will need a team of people to help, some will volunteer, some will need asking. You will probably need all of the following;
- Production assistant
- Stage manager
- Set design
- Set building team
- Props team
- Wardrobe team
- Lighting and sound technicians
- Prompt
- Printing – (Programs – Tickets – Advertising)
- Front of House – (Tea, coffee, biscuits and squash)

- Catering. It's possible a meal will accompany your production. This will be arranged by the committee via a sub committee. You will need to liaise with them over timings.
- All of the above roles have duty sheets. It may help to read copies of these in order that you fully understand what to expect from each team. Clarity should avoid the cry of "*it's not my job*".
- Appoint your team asap. You will need to know what your set designers ideas are in order that you can block moves, and they need to be in place for your first rehearsal.

## BLOCKING MOVES

- Moves should be decided upon before you begin rehearsals. They can be done by ones self or with help, possibly the PA.
- Each producer has his or her own way of blocking moves, however if you haven't done it before a few pointers follow.
- Make a ground floor plan of the set showing windows, doors, furniture and other obstacles. If you have several items alike such as chairs, give them a number.
- Stage right and stage left refer to the actor's right and left as they stand on stage facing the audience. Down Stage is nearest the audience, Up Stage furthest away from the audience. Centre Stage is as it suggests.
- Copy and enlarge the script to A4. Set each page in a ring binder with a blank sheet opposite.
- Make or choose something to represent each character (Monopoly pieces can be useful)
- Read the script and move the characters around the stage plan. Moves may already be indicated in the script and can be fine. However they may not sit well with alterations you may have made to the set. Each time you decide on a move, number the line or position in the script that the move occurs on. Cross reference that number to a corresponding number on the blank page opposite and detail the move to be made against it. For instance, from where, to where, and what to do when in place, stand, sit, pick up phone, drink tea, pick nose, etc.,
- The moves should be clearly written as the PA will have to follow the instructions and make sure the actors are in their correct positions. Actors can move quite quickly, so your script must be easy to read and clearly marked in order that your PA can keep up with them and correct them if wrong.
- It is usual for the producer to go through the moves with the cast at the beginning of the run. Each actor should make a note of the move in his/her script **WITH A PENCIL**. (All scripts have to be cleaned before returning to the library). Take extra pencils to the rehearsals, there is always someone who hasn't got one. Once the moves have been run though with the producer the script is taken on by the PA. He/she will check that everyone is in the right place at the right time, thus leaving the producer free to see that the moves allocated work well and that all the characters are developing.
- Alterations will invariably have to be made. Always amend the main script, date the amendment if necessary.
- Along with blocking moves, you will have some ideas on lighting and sound, and how a scene will be changed and whether blackouts are required etc., all of this should be marked in your main script too. Inform the Prompt if you have cut or changed the dialogue.

## REHEARSAL DATES AND BOOKINGS

- Make an appointment with the Village Hall caretaker giving as much time as possible to book your rehearsal dates. Take your diary. Book your casting evening and your rehearsal/performance dates. These will consist of evening rehearsals and Sunday afternoon rehearsals for technical and dress runs. You will also need the Hall for set building sessions, generally Sunday mornings before the rehearsals.
- Other people use the hall as well as us, so to avoid complications it's a good idea to confirm your dates in writing. You may have to use the committee room occasionally, depending upon demand. If your cast is small, and one of you has a large sitting room, consider it as an alternative solution to the occasional non availability of the Hall – with no cost involved.
- Prepare a rehearsal schedule and print off enough to cover everyone who is involved. Print extra, some will get lost. This a job your PA may be willing to take off your hands.
- Have them ready to distribute at your casting.

## CASTING

- Circulate the date of the casting, by way of the LP News Letter, and e-mailings. This can be done two or even three times if you allow enough time. Give a brief synopsis of your play to encourage interest.
- On the night of your casting make sure you've chosen at least two other members of your team to sit with you. Usually your PA with possibly the stage manager or music director – anyone whose judgement you trust. The final word will be yours, but having someone who's opinion you value will help you make that decision.
- At the casting talk the play through and talk about the characters – not everyone present will have seen a copy of the play.
- Invite people to read, swop and change them about, listen carefully and make notes.
- A simple written table with characters marked across the top and readers listed to the side can be useful. Write in your readers name, tick the character they are reading for, and give points out of ten. By the end of your casting you should have useful graph showing who read best for what part. However, having found your best readers, deciding whom to pair them with within the play poses your next problem. Ages, temperaments, relationships, appearances etc., this is why having help is essential. All the hopefuls will be in the kitchen awaiting your decision. You'll have twenty to thirty minutes to decide.

## BACK STAGE MEETINGS

- Ask your PA to arrange back stage meetings on non rehearsal nights, this does not have to be in the Hall, a front room will usually suffice. Invite all your back stage team together at the first meeting, this way everyone gets an overall picture of what is to be achieved. Subsequent backstage meetings can be split into smaller groups, i.e. Wardrobe and Props. Set design, Stage Manager and building team. Lighting and Sound. These meetings are important to both you and your back stage team. Not all of their questions can be answered at a rehearsal, the time goes very quickly and your attention will be mainly on the action on stage.

## REHEARSALS

- Tell the cast when they will be expected to 'drop books' Make this as soon as is do-able. You need them to rehearse with props asap, and they can't do that with a script in their hand.
- Get the set in place as soon as possible, this will help the cast enormously.

- Certain items of costume can be useful during rehearsals. A long flowing skirt for instance, even if not the actual item, can help an actress to move in character. Some actors find their characters when they find the right shoes! Indulge them.
- Split the play between the rehearsal schedule.
- The first two will probably be taken up with blocking as this can be quite slow.
- Thereafter split the evenings into getting through scenes, then Acts, first half, second half, culminating in the whole play.
- Your Sunday rehearsals usually consist of one technical rehearsal, one dress rehearsal and one final dress rehearsal when the whole play should come together faultlessly!
- Make notes during rehearsals and discuss them with the cast or individuals during the coffee break and at the end of the evening.
- Don't overrun if you can help it. Members often like to wind down in the pub, and this can be a good forum for discussion and analysis.

## PERFORMANCES

- Your job is now done. You will have written each member involved a 'thank you' note and placed them in the committee room on the first night. A large tin of toffees goes down well too, after all, bribery is all you have left now. Wish everyone luck, hand over to your SM and retire to the back of the Hall to bite your nails.

## LAST NIGHT PERFORMANCE

- After the performance it is usual for the producer to visit the committee room and congratulate everyone – even if you don't feel like it!

## USE OF THE HALL

- If not oneself, appoint someone to collect the Hall key and return it to the caretaker at the end of each rehearsal and performance.
- Check that everything has been cleared away, lights and heaters are off, and that everyone has left the Hall before locking up. Check the loft in particular, and check that no-one is in the loos at either end of the Hall.

## POST PERFORMANCE CLEAR UP

- With your PA arrange for all involved to help clear the Hall the day after the final production. The Hall must be returned to its former state, and ready for occupation by other users.

## GENERAL

- If in doubt about anything contact a committee member or an experienced producer for help.