

STAGE MANAGER

Currently we are in cast change rehearsals so today I started by coming in and setting up the stage along with some of the ASMs (Assistant Stage Managers) to prepare the space ready for rehearsals.

This includes setting up the rehearsal sound system in order to hear piano and the beats system along with setting the stage for whichever point the creative team (which on Hamilton is made up of the Director, Choreographer & Musical Director) would like to rehearse from. Knowing the show very well is so important for this as you often jump around sections of the show and so as an ASM you need to be able to work out where props are set along with their traffic and knowing where the cast enter and exit so you can help aid the new company learning with all of this information.

As the Stage Manager I will oversee and run the rehearsal, so in terms of Hamilton either the Director or Choreographer will decide which section they need to do or go back on I will then communicate this to the stage management team and all technical departments i.e. if we needed to move the revolves to the correct place or put us in the correct lighting state. I then communicate this to the cast or anyone not wearing comms (communication system). Then I will call out to stand everyone by and start the section needing to be rehearsed. This is a very rewarding part of the job as you need to be able to work quickly, communicate well with all departments and use your knowledge of the show to help aid a smooth rehearsal process.

On a normal day we start by getting the covering which is the information given by the company manager as to which cast members are covering which roles for the performance that day. On Hamilton this can make a difference as to how and where we set certain props along with working out whether there are any elements of the show that may need to be rehearsed prior to the performance.

We then do all of our pre-show checks and pre-set, this means moving all of the props and set into its starting positions for the top of the show whilst also checking that everything we use is in correct working order. There is some time to then repair items of props if needed or clean the backstage wings and surrounding area. We also take this time to check the marks on the stage then oversee the cast warm up so do a register to make sure everyone needed has turned up on time and then following this we can then rehearse any moments as needed for safety precautions

Following this we then prepare to open the house and the ASMs will do a 'shout check' making sure everything is set as needed to start the show. We give the Front of House manager the clear to allow the audience in and at this point the DSM (Deputy Stage Manager) starts a series of backstage and front of house tannoy calls indicating that the house is open along with various timed calls which notify the cast of how long we have until the shows starts.

The Stage Management team is made up of 5 people. (SM, DSM, 3 x ASMs) to run the show itself and I will oversee the entire show. Here at Hamilton there are two ASM plots which takes 1 ASM in each wing (side of the stage) to manage in terms of cast members and making sure the correct set and props are set and used at the right time.

The DSM calls all of the technical cues in the show along to the music which takes a good level of concentration and ensures that all the lighting, automation, cast entrances all happen consistently and as per the creative team's decisions when putting the show together.

As the Stage Manager I have some cues during the show but on the whole keep myself available so I am able to solve any problems that may arise which could be anything from a prop not being brought on to a member of the cast that gets injured so can't continue performing. In which case this would mean working out how we get their cover or replacement ready to take over and whether we need to stop the show. All of this makes the job very exciting. Having the responsibility to make quick decisions is the backbone of the role and needs good clear communication throughout to all of the departments involved with the show.

At the end of the show I then fill out a report which documents all the vital information about the show including start, finish and interval times, anything that has happened incorrectly and how the audience reacted. This information gets sent out to all technical and creative departments along with the general managers and producers.

It can be hard work and you do work long hours but all of this is worth it as it's a very rewarding job, you get to be a part of an incredible show and work alongside many individuals who are at the top of their game. I certainly feel part of a unique team of people and thoroughly get pleasure each time the audience give a standing ovation knowing that I have been a part of giving them that experience.