THTR 368: Theatre Sound Board Operation

Richard K. Thomas

Instructor’s Contact Information
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Course Information
Course Number: THTR 368,
Section 46, 47 (1 cr); 76, 77 (2 cr)
Fall, 2012
Callboard:
http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~rdionne/cal.php
B185 (Sound Studio)

Website: Blackboard Vista

Stage Manager
Name:
Phone:
Email:

Production Sound Engineer
Name:
Phone:
Email:

Sound Designer
Name:
Phone:
Email:

Course Description
This is a class for students who have well-developed technical, aesthetic, interpersonal and professional skills, and desire to gain experience practicing these skills under production circumstances. Although it is understood that students of the class will learn a great deal along the way, it is also understood that by undertaking the course, the student has made a very real and important commitment that affects not only the sound area but every person involved in the production, and the audience that sees the production. Successful accomplishment of the objectives of this course will also lead to the development of important resume experience and a strong portfolio. Theatre productions simulate quite closely the actual workings of professional theatre. Inasmuch as this is true, the more production experience a student acquires, the greater their chance of finding employment in this and other related fields.

You should understand that being offered the opportunity to operate the sound system for a theatre production is a privilege and not a right of every student. There will be many other people counting on you to give your best effort to your responsibilities in the production, so that they can give theirs. Because of the potential impact you may make on other people’s work, this opportunity is only offered to the best, most promising students. You have been offered this opportunity because you show great promise in theatre, and we, as a department believe that you will make major positive contributions to the production, and eventually to the larger world of theatre.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives
After you have completed this course, you should
1. Understand the complex process of integrating sound into a theatre performance,
2. feel more comfortable using production sound systems in realized performances,
3. have read the user manuals for all equipment you use during the production,
4. add an important credential to your resume and portfolio.

Policies

General Course Policies
1. I generally only answer emails from 7:30 – 8:30 in the morning, Monday through Friday. It is not always possible for me to answer the volume of email I receive
every day during this time. Do not expect that you will be able to reach me with less than 48 hours notice, or on weekends.

2. Arriving late, leaving early.
   You are expected to arrive at all meetings, rehearsals, performances, etc., five minutes before your call time. If you have been in an accident, you are expected to contact the Stage Manager as soon as possible to keep her/him informed of your status. Remember that the entire production depends on you, and, in theatre, “the show must go on.” Do NOT violate this fundamental rule, and become the person that causes the rehearsal or the performance to be cancelled! Failure to follow this policy may result in your failing the class.

3. Cell phones and laptop computers are not permitted to be used during class, rehearsals, or performances without prior approval from the instructor and the stage manager.

4. Backup of Show Files: You are responsible for backing up files (i.e., Studio Manager, DP, QLab, etc.) required to run the show every time they are changed. Use the thumb drive in the gig bag.

5. Technical issues
   If you encounter technical difficulties with the sound system, it is your responsibility to resolve the problem (NOT the stage manager’s). Note that it is not your responsibility to fix the problem, but your responsibility to resolve the problem. You should, of course, see if you can fix the problem on your own. Remember the physician’s motto, however: “Do no harm.” Don’t get in over your head, and make the problem worse. If you feel comfortable troubleshooting and fixing the problem, go ahead and fix it.
   If you cannot troubleshoot the problem or fix it, contact the Production Sound Engineer for your production. Make sure you know how to contact this person, and make sure that you have talked to this person about how to get in touch with them should a problem arise, before the problem arises. In the unusual event that a problem arises, and you cannot contact the Production Sound Engineer, you should contact the graduate assistant in the sound area in charge of the theatre facilities. Make sure you have this person’s contact information. Follow the same precautions that were just outlined for the Production Sound Engineer.
   In a very real emergency, such as one that would prevent the show from going on, and in the extremely unusual circumstance that you were unable to contact either the production sound engineer or the graduate assistant, you should attempt to contact the faculty supervisor directly.
   Once the problem has been resolved, remember to report all problems to the Production Sound Engineer, who will report them to the Graduate Assistant.

6. Participation and Preparedness:
   You are expected to come to class, rehearsals and performances prepared to give the show your best effort. Grading (see below) is primarily based on the quality of your participation. In accepting responsibility for a sound position on a production you are making a very specific time commitment that must be given priority above all other commitments with the exception of regularly scheduled classes.
   Specific production responsibilities vary from production to production. The Sound Designer will advise you of your specific responsibilities regarding the operation of the sound in the production, and the Production Stage Manager will advise you of your specific responsibilities regarding the relationship between the operation of the sound to the rest of the production.
There are some responsibilities that apply to all sound run crew members regardless of your position on the production, however. You are responsible for maintaining communication with the stage manager, checking notices on the Callboard and emailed rehearsal schedules and reports, and keeping current on the status of the production.

During meetings, rehearsals and performances, you are expected to
1. dress appropriately (ask the stage manager);
2. be ready to go when you are needed;
3. treat everyone politely, with courtesy and respect;
4. always give the show your best effort.

No one expects that you will perform without error; but everyone expects that you will give the show your best effort.

You are responsible for the sound system—that is the soundboard operator’s responsibility in professional theatres, and it is no different in this academic simulation of the operations of a professional theatre. It is extremely important that you participate in the sound load-ins for your show, as this is where you will
1. learn how the system is connected and installed;
2. how to test the system for problems;
3. establish contact with the appropriate supervisors in case you run into a problem later on that you cannot resolve.

On closing night, you are responsible for working out the details with the Production Sound Engineer and graduate assistant in sound regarding the procedure for striking the sound for the show, and helping them strike all audio equipment, reset the sound system, etc. as appropriate.

**Grading**

The grading of the course is designed to reflect the professional attitude, timeliness, and skills of the student. The stage manager distributes call times for rehearsals and performance after consulting with the Head Sound Engineer. The Head Sound Engineer determines call times for all other calls and informs the sound team directly. You are expected to show up at least five minutes early for any call you receive from the stage manager or the head sound engineer. You are expected to participate in the class discussions of the show for which you are operating the sound board. You are expected to generally support the work of the designer and other members of the production team. Finally, you are expected to give your best effort to all aspects of the production with which you are involved.

The grading for the course is quite simple:

Students who make outstanding contributions to the production will receive an ‘A’ for their efforts—this means not only enthusiastic, whole hearted participation in all of the commitments mentioned above, but regular and enthusiastic going “above and beyond” the “call of duty” for the purpose of creating a better production.

Students who make above average contributions to the production will receive a ‘B’ for their efforts—this means not only enthusiastic, whole hearted participation in all of the commitments mentioned above, but occasionally going “above and beyond” the call of duty.

Students who make average contributions to the production will receive a ‘C’ for their efforts—this means completing the requirements outlined above in a professional and workmanlike manner.

Students who make below average contributions to the production will receive a ‘D’ for their efforts—this means failure to enthusiastically and whole heartedly participate in the requirements as outlined above, including tardiness, indifference, sloppiness, etc.

Students who jeopardize the success of a production by failing to enthusiastically and whole heartedly participate in the requirements outlined above, including absences, chronic tardiness, chronic indifference, etc. will fail the course.
If all of this sounds a bit harsh and intimidating--RELAX! There are seldom students whose contribution to the production is perceived as less than outstanding or above average. You were invited to do this because we believe that you “have what it takes” already. Note that the grade is not based on how well you “execute” cues, or “know” how to run/operate sound systems--that is what you are here to learn by experience. Your grade is based on how much you contribute to the overall production, through your attitude, dedication, discipline, and desire to help create a successful production. Ultimately, what we are looking at most closely is your level of commitment and attitude towards the production. We also feel that it is through this commitment that you will not only realize the most benefits from the experience, but have the most fun and enjoyable experience! Good luck!

Academic Dishonesty

Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [Part 5, Section III-B-2-a, University Regulations] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972]

Attendance:

Typically, a production will require your participation at the following times:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Rehearsal Show and Tell (Pao 2164, 6:30 p.m.)</td>
<td>2 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rough Sound (Sound Studio)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crew Watch</td>
<td>3 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sound Load-In</td>
<td>5 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>System Check Out and Equalization</td>
<td>2 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Sound Levels</td>
<td>4 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsals with Sound</td>
<td>0-12 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;10 out of 12&quot; Tech Rehearsal</td>
<td>10 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech Rehearsal (1@4 Hours each)</td>
<td>4-5 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dress Rehearsals (2@4 Hours each)</td>
<td>8-10 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preview</td>
<td>4 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance (6 @ 4 hours each); includes pickup rehearsal during second week.</td>
<td>24 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post Opening Discussion (Wednesday after opening in Mallet Theatre @ 3:30 p.m.)</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strike</td>
<td>4 Hours</td>
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You are responsible for finding out, directly from the stage manager, all call times and changes to the rehearsal schedule. Before accepting an assignment as a Sound Board Operator for a production, you should

1. Go to the Production Calendar at http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~rdionne/index.php; Note: once you get to the site, click on the link for “Calendars” at the top of the page, and then the link for the theatre in which your show will be produced;
2. Locate the date, time and location of all meetings, rehearsals, performances, etc., detailed in the spreadsheet above;
3. Confirm the dates and times you will need to participate before the first preview or performance with the Sound Designer, and from the first performance or preview to the close of the run with the Stage Manager;
4. Resolve any conflicts in the production schedule with both the Sound Designer and the Stage Manager.

If possible, attend the THTR 597 Production Seminar Meetings involving your show (see show production calendar) on Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m. in the sound studio. Participation in these meetings will help you learn more about the production process both at Purdue University, and in the professional world, and will help prepare you to accept advanced responsibilities related to Purdue Theatre productions. You should verify these times with the sound designer for the show, and resolve any conflicts with the instructor before accepting a sound position on a show.

In the event that production commitment conflicts with a regularly scheduled class, exam, etc., you can get assistance in getting the class or exam rescheduled—however, it is your responsibility to discuss this with the stage manager for the production well in advance of the conflict. You should expect all calls to last 4 hours, except where specifically noted. In rare circumstances a call may last longer than four hours, and you are expected to cooperate. However, if you feel that long calls are becoming a problem, you should contact the faculty adviser in your area immediately.

An absence from a rehearsal or performance is an extremely serious problem as it puts the entire production team, and the Theatre program in jeopardy. Absences, extremely rare as they may be, are individually evaluated, and may lead to dismissal from the production and failing the course.

**Missed or Late Work**
There can be no missed or late work in production. As we've said before, “the show must go on.” See attendance policy.

**Students with Disabilities**
Purdue University is required to respond to the needs of the students with disabilities as outlined in both the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 through the provision of auxiliary aids and services that allow a student with a disability to fully access and participate in the programs, services, and activities at Purdue University.

It is the student's responsibility to notify the Disability Resource Center of an impairment/condition that may require accommodations and/or classroom modifications.

**Health and other emergencies**
According to a memorandum by the Provost Office (August 11, 2009), special care has to be taken to minimize the effect of Pandemic Influenza A (H1N1). In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor’s control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructors or TAs via email or phone. Remember, you are responsible for finding out, directly from the stage manager, all call times and changes to the rehearsal schedule.