

House Management and Ushering Procedures Manual for Performances

I. The Role of the House Management Staff

The house management staff is an essential part of the sales force for the Center. Think of house management as sales, because after the box office staff makes it possible and enjoyable for a patron to attend the first time, the house management staff makes it enjoyable and likely that a patron will attend again.

This is accomplished through efficient, courteous, and professional supervision of the activities surrounding the performance. A patron who enjoys the performance but has an unpleasant experience with the seating, lobby, restrooms, or parking is much more difficult to convince to attend again. Conversely, a patron whose entire experience is one of convenience, comfort, and enjoyment is certain to come back.

In a society that does not emphasize customer service, an organization that puts the customer first will be remembered and rewarded. The Glassboro Center for the Arts strives to be that kind of organization.

House managers and ushers have direct contact with the audience, and consequently have a tremendous influence on that audience's impression of the Center. House management and ushering is much more than tearing tickets and handing out programs; it's developing a positive rapport with the public, and demonstrating reasons for that public to come back in the future.

II. Various Tasks of House Managing and Ushering

All house managers and ushers are expected to have a working knowledge of the Center's facilities and procedures as detailed in this manual. Further, it is expected that all staff have been trained in their particular task and in the several types of emergency procedures (prior to working a performance).

At all times, house management is expected to be friendly, courteous, informed, and cooperative with all patrons. The staff should think of itself as it were working in a luxury hotel with an emphasis on manners, decorum, and ambiance.

A. House Manager

The house manager is in charge of the lobby and house before, during, and after the performance. He/she is the person who schedules, trains, assigns, and supervises the ushers, and is a liaison with backstage and box office staff.

Any patron problem that cannot be handled by an usher is referred to the house manager. Notices announcing unusual effects such as strobes and pyrotechnics must be posted by the House Manager near the entrances to the house. The house manager is also responsible for lobby security: unlocking all appropriate doors prior to the performance and insuring they are all locked again following the show.

B. Ticket Takers

The ticket taker staffs the entrance to the auditorium, taking tickets and detaching audit stubs. The taker checks each ticket for the correct date, time, and event.

The ticket taker also controls unauthorized entrance to the auditorium, limiting access to approved staff and patrons with correct tickets. The ticket taker greets the patrons, making them feel welcome and comfortable. Since food, beverages and cameras are not allowed in the auditorium it is the ticket takers responsibility to inform patrons of this restriction.

C. Aisle Ushers

Aisle ushers distribute programs and any other materials provided by the marketing staff. They welcome patrons and determine if any need assistance in finding their seats, directing them as necessary.

Aisle ushers staff the auditorium doors to assist latecomers and assure that seated patrons are not overly disturbed by entrances and exits. They also monitor the auditorium during the performance, anticipating for potential patron problems (talking, cameras, food).

D. Appropriate Dress

All house management staff must dress well to represent the University well. The object is to look nice, and yet not be a distraction moving around in the house during a performance.

Women wear black dresses, skirts, or slacks and white blouses. Men wear black pants, dark suits or sport coats, white shirts and neckties. (Seasonal or holiday attire within reason)

E. Flashlights and Name Tags

Ushers obtain flashlights from the house manager prior to opening the house. Please return them to the house manager after the performance.

All staff will wear appropriate identification. The Center provides personalized name tags for ushers who work performances regularly. Other may wear standard usher tags.

III. Performance Procedures

A. Prior to Performance

1. Set-up

The house managers arrive at least 75 minutes prior to the curtain time, check in with the box office and staff for introductions, information on running time and expected situations that might have an impact on the orderly management of the performance.

The house and lobby is inspected for trash, missing or broken equipment, unanticipated obstructions to seating. Stanchions, ropes, ticket collections boxes are put into place.

The house managers check to make sure that a sufficient quantity of programs are available. There is a copier available for emergencies. If there are inserts, the programs are stuffed. Any special arrangements (signage, tables, displays) needed for the performance are set up.

If there are any significant problems or issues that require greater authority, the house manager notifies the House Operations Manager, or box office staff(whichever is most appropriate).

When everything is in order for the performance, all three sets of exterior doors to the Concert Hall are unlocked. (As the box office opens two hours prior to the performance, the center doors may be already partially unlocked).

The ticket takers monitor the doors to prevent unauthorized access.

The exterior doors remain unlocked until after the performance for events with no intermission, or until after the final intermission when there are one or more breaks.

The house managers and ushers must be aware of patrons who may have arrived early. Loud conversation or shop talk is inappropriate in front of the public, Artists or Artists staff.

Any differences of opinion between staff persons must be conducted discreetly and privately.

2. Training

The ushers arrive one hour prior to the curtain time. When all are assembled, the house manager instructs new personnel on policies and emergency procedures and briefs them on the performance. If all ushers are experienced with procedures, the house manager still goes over expected attendance, length of show, intermissions for the performance.

An occasional short quiz on emergency procedures may be an effective tool in preparing the ushers for any unexpected events. Once training and review is completed, the house manager makes assignments for the performance and has the ushers stuff programs (if necessary).

B. Pre-Show

1. Opening House

The house is opened only at the consent of all department managers. Immediately prior to opening, the house managers check all ushering personnel for appropriate dress, and to insure all have name tags and flashlights.

The house is opened to patrons approximately a half-hour prior to curtain time. If there is to be a substantial delay beyond that time, the house managers and ticket takers should inform patrons (particularly those near the house doors) of the delay, including a simple explanation of the cause.

2. Ticket Taking

The ticket taker staffs the entrance to the auditorium, taking tickets and detaching the appropriate stub. The taker should check each ticket for the correct date, time, and event. Persons with incorrect tickets are referred to the box office.

The ticket taker also controls unauthorized entrance to the auditorium, limiting access to approved staff and patrons with correct tickets. The ticket taker should greet the patrons, making them feel welcome and comfortable. The ticket takers also check for food and cameras and inform patrons that these items are not permitted in the auditorium. Items may be checked with House Operations Management.

3. Seating

If patrons are familiar with the auditorium and their seat locations, they may be simply directed towards them. If they are unfamiliar with the facility, they are led to their row and directed to the correct seats. Always offer to assist patrons and be aware of persons already seated who may be having a problem.

When there is a question or problem about seating (two people wanting same seat, etc.), the usher

asks to see both parties' tickets. Improperly seated patrons are directed to the right seats politely. Duplicate tickets or other more complicated problems are handled by the house manager, working with the box office. The house managers will have emergency house seats to accommodate last minute seating problems.

The house in the Concert Hall is divided down the middle into odd- and even-numbered sections. Adjoining seat numbers are not consecutive. The odd-numbered seats are best accessed from the left side of the lobby; the even-numbered seats from the right.

The house in the Recital Hall is divided into 100-series seats in the center, odd-numbered seats house left, and even-numbered seats house right.

The house in Tohill Auditorium is divided into 3 sections
In the orchestra section and in 2 sections in the mezzanine. The center orchestra section is 100 series numbers with odd number seats house right and even on house left.

4. Start of Show

The house manager coordinates the actual curtain time with the box office and production staff. Although it is a policy to start promptly, lines at the box office, technical or artists' problems backstage or inclement weather and parking problems may require a delay. The stage manager, in consultation with the house manager, makes the final determination when to begin the performance.

The house manager rings the curtain bell 5 minutes prior to curtain and again 2 minutes prior to curtain. As curtain time approaches, ushers inform patrons moving about or leaving the auditorium that the show is starting. When the house lights go to half, the main doors are closed. From this point, all patrons are considered latecomers. They will be admitted as soon as possible.

The doors into the house from the lobby will remain unlocked, with the ticket takers monitoring for unauthorized access.

Once the performance begins, the house manager returns the stanchions and ticket collection boxes to their proper storage place.

C. During Performance

1. Latecomer Seating

The house manager remains in the lobby to take care of latecomers. An usher is assigned to stand inside the house by each main entrance to assist with latecomers, prevent gate-crashing, and stop doors from slamming as patrons move in the auditorium and up or down to their seats.

Latecomers are seated at appropriate points in the performance, pre-determined by the artists, stage and house managers. Avoid interrupting quiet musical or dramatic moments; seat latecomers between musical pieces or at movement breaks.

Latecomers are seated in the closest available sections to the door. Inform them they can move to their reserved seats at intermission.

Because of unfamiliarity with the campus or trouble parking on week nights, people may be legitimately late through no fault of their own. Patrons, even ones in error, are treated with courtesy and politely.

If latecomers are to be held for a significant time, make them comfortable, offer programs to read, or allow them to stand near the closed door to hear the performance. If patrons are standing by doors, advise them not to talk loudly and to be prepared for the possibility of exiting audience members.

2. Flashlights

The house manager and usher teams on both sides of the auditorium must have flashlights accessible for emergency use and to assist seating latecomers in a dark theatre.

When using a flashlight, keep it pointed at the floor in front of the patron so they may see where they are going and minimize distraction.

D. Intermission

The house manager establishes the intermission length with the stage manager. As the

intermission ends, the house manager sounds the curtain bell in the same sequence as before the performance. Polite reminders to stragglers may be necessary. The house manager also collects the identification from the box office that has been left for assistive listening devices to return at the end of the show.

E. Post-Show

1. House

Ushers must not open the doors until after the final curtain, or in the instances of concerts, until after the final encore.

While patrons are leaving, ushers check for trash or personal items left behind. Lost items go to the house manager immediately. Once the auditorium is clear, the house doors are unpropped, locked, and closed. Flashlights are returned to the house manager; mention weak batteries, faulty switches, etc.

Assistive listening devices will be returned to the house manager who will return the identification left by the patron.

If the box office is closed and the manager on duty does not have a key, lost items and flashlights are given to the House operations manager.

2. Front-of-House

The lobby and restrooms are checked for personal items and trash. When the lobby is clear, the exterior doors are closed and locked. The house manager checks out with Theatre Arts Management.

IV. General Policies

A. Smoking, Food, Beverages

There is no smoking in Wilson Hall. Food and beverages are prohibited in the auditoriums but not the lobbies.

B. Recording Equipment, Cameras

The use of cameras or recording equipment is strictly prohibited. Persons found using such equipment are asked to stop. If they continue, the house manager should take the equipment away until the end of the performance. The patron should be informed that the equipment can be claimed from the house manager after the performance. Such material can be stored in the house managers' supply box in the concessions room during the show. The house manager can also enlist the aid of public safety if deemed necessary.

C. Handicapped Patrons

House managers seat any handicapped patrons. Persons in wheelchairs are seated in the open sections of Row M. Persons who have difficulty with steps are seated on the aisle near the main house entrance. Ideally, such persons will have requested special seating in advance. If not, the house manager may need to make some adjustments to make the handicapped persons comfortable. Patrons in row N may complain of obstruction which will be handled on a per show basis.

In the event of an emergency, One usher will be assigned to remain with handicapped patrons and assist as necessary until the emergency is resolved.

D. Beepers, Pagers

Pagers checked with the house manager are to be left in the concessions room supply box.

E. Children

The University offers many programs especially selected for children and families and urges that children younger than 5 years be brought to those events only. To assure safety and fairness, all children other than babes-in-arms will be required to have seats. While we welcome children 5 years and older to all other performances, the length and content of some programs may not always be appropriate for children.

V. Where Everything Is -- Common Questions

A. Restrooms

The restrooms are located in the center of the Wilson Concert Hall lobby: the Women's Room is directly to the left of the concession stand; the Men's Room is directly to the right of the box office.

There are additional restrooms in the lobby of the Recital Hall (right across from the hall entrance doors) and to the left at the end of each hallway in the academic wing beyond the Recital Hall.

B. Telephones

There is a pay phone in the Recital Hall lobby past the restrooms and around the corner.

C. Water Fountains

There are water fountains on either end of the Concert Hall lobby. The water fountain in the Recital Hall lobby is between the two restroom doors.

D. Lost and Found

The lost and found is in the box office. Items found by the house management staff are taken there immediately if the box office is open. If not, they are left with the House Operations Manager.

E. Concessions

The concessions stand is directly to the left of the box office in the Concert Hall lobby. Concessions are usually offered prior to the performance and at intermission. The house manager confirms this with the box office staff prior to the performance.

F. Box Office

The box office is located in the center of the Wilson Concert Hall Lobby, directly opposite the main exterior doors. The box office is open 1.5 hours prior to the performance and at the intermission. Before a show, the box office sells tickets for only that event. Future events can be purchased at intermission.

The box office for Recital Hall events operates from a table set up in the lobby directly in front of the auditorium doors. It opens prior to performance and is not open at intermission.

The box office for Tohill events is located in the lobby to the right of the house doors. It opens prior to the performance and is not open at intermission.

VI. Emergency Procedures

(If campus phones are dead: Dial 863-5134 on pay or cell.)

A. Injury

1. Call for assistance (activate EMS) 4911
2. Assess the nature of the injury.
 3. Clear the area of other patrons.
4. Reassure the victim and protect him/her from further harm. If the victim has fallen, keep him/her from moving until emergency assistance arrives to begin preliminary treatment. If he/she decides to move, do not attempt physical restraint, as that might cause further injury.
5. Have another staff member take a list of witnesses to the accident, noting their observations and understanding of what occurred. Have the statements signed (they will be attached to the accident report).
6. Fill out an official accident report with the house manager or theatre arts manager on duty and public safety. Forms are available in the production office.
 7. At all times, remain calm, in charge, and reassuring.
8. Do not attempt to administer first aid unless you are certified.

B. Fire

1. Call for help: Campus public safety 4911
 2. Activate the building alarm. Notify the stage and house managers.

The stage manager will take control of the evacuation once the curtain is lowered and the house lights are up.

[There are panic switches - that bring up the house lights immediately -- by the main doors on either side of the auditorium in the Wilson Concert Hall and by the entrance doors in the Recital Hall. Do not activate these lights unless requested by the stage or house manager.]
 3. The stage manager will make an announcement and direct the evacuation from the stage. Assist in the orderly and calm procession to the outside. Give particular attention to the elderly and handicapped.
 4. Know the location of all interior and exterior emergency exits, as well as the shortest route to them.
 5. Know the location of fire extinguishers and how to use them. Know

which extinguishers are used for which kinds of fires. Fire extinguishers are located on both sides of the lobby directly under the stairway up to the Section II doors. There is another extinguisher on the north side of the lobby outside the door to Rows A-B. In the house, there are fire extinguishers hung on the wall opposite Row A on both sides of the auditorium.

6. If the fire is minor and may be put out with an extinguisher, direct the discharge at the flame base.
7. Do not use water on a fire near electrical equipment to avoid a potential electrical shock.
8. Once outside, direct patrons to a clear, safe area away from the building. Be available to assist campus police when they arrive. Keep walkways and drives clear for emergency vehicles. The last staff leaving the building should look out for persons not yet evacuated.
 - a. Wilson Concert Hall evacuates to Robinson circle lawn and parking lot M.
 - b. Wilson Recital Hall evacuates to the lawn west of the building.
 - c. Tohill Auditorium evacuates to the Green in front of the building or oak grove across from the parking lot.
9. Do not return until given the all-clear from Public Safety.

C. Acts of God (Tornado, Severe Storm, etc.)

1. Do not endanger yourself.
2. Notify the house and stage managers.
3. Keep patrons away from windows and glass doors in case of breakage. (Especially Recital Hall Lobby)
4. If evacuation is necessary, coordinate with public safety for safest route.

D. Disruptions

1. If anyone attempts to disrupt a performance, notify the house manager.
2. The house manager first asks the person to leave quietly, offering to discuss the problem in the lobby. Once out of the auditorium, attempt to calm the person and avoid a scene.
3. If the person refuses to leave quietly, contact public safety. Do not attempt to physically remove the person yourself.

APPENDICES Theatre Layouts

- A. Standard Rows, Seats
- B. House Charts

Wilson Concert Hall

Standard Rows, Seats

STAGE

ORCHESTRA:

House Left (ODD Numbers)

House Right (EVEN Numbers)

1 - 31	Row A	2 - 14
1 - 33	Row B	2 - 16
1 - 33	Row C	2 - 32*
1 - 35	Row D	2 - 34*
1 - 37	Row E	2 - 36*
1 - 39	Row F	2 - 38
1 - 39	Row G	2 - 38
1 - 41	Row H	2 - 40
1 - 43	Row I	2 - 42
1 - 43	Row J	2 - 42
1 - 45	Row K	2 - 44
1 - 47	Row L	2 - 46
1 - 35 **	Row M	2 - 48**
	MEZZANINE:	
1 - 51	Row N	2 - 50
1 - 51	Row O	2 - 50
1 - 53	Row P	2 - 52
1 - 55	Row Q	2 - 54
1 - 55	Row R	2 - 54
1 - 55	Row S	2 - 54
1 - 57	Row T	2 - 56
1 - 51	Row U	2 - 52

*In Rows C,D,E, seats 22-end are considered obstructed

** Handicapped seats: M 19, 21, 23, 25, 37, 39, 41, 43
20, 22, 24, 26, 36, 38, 40, 42

Wilson Recital Hall
Standard Rows, Seats
STAGE

<u>Left (ODD Numbers)</u>		<u>Center (100's)</u>		<u>Right (EVEN Numbers)</u>	
A	1 - 7	A	111 - 101	A	2 - 8
B	1 - 7	B	111 - 101	B	2 - 8
C	1 - 7	C	111 - 101	C	2 - 8
D	1 - 7	D	111 - 101	D	2 - 8
E	1 - 7	E	111 - 101	E	2 - 8
F	1 - 7	F	111 - 101	F	2 - 8
G	1 - 7	G	111 - 101	G	2 - 8
H	1 - 7	H	111 - 101	H	2 - 8
J	1 - 7	J	111 - 101	J	2 - 8
K	1 - 7	K	111 - 101	K	2 - 8
L	1 - 7	L	111 - 101	L	2 - 8
M	1 - 7	M	111 - 101	M	2 - 8
N	1 - 7	N	111 - 101	N	2 - 8

Tohill Auditorium
Standard Rows, Seats
STAGE

ORCHESTRA:

<u>Left (Even Numbers)</u>		<u>Center (100's)</u>		<u>Right (Odd Numbers)</u>	
B	2 - 12	B	101 - 114	B	1 - 11
C	2 - 18	C	101 - 114	C	1 - 17
D	2 - 18	D	101 - 114	D	1 - 17
E	2 - 18	E	101 - 114	E	1 - 17
F	2 - 18	F	101 - 114	F	1 - 17
G	2 - 18	G	101 - 114	G	1 - 17
H	2 - 18	H	101 - 114	H	1 - 17
J	2 - 18	J	101 - 114*	J	1 - 17

* Handicapped Seats: J 101, 102, 103, 104

MEZZANINE:

<u>Left (Odd Numbers)</u>		<u>Right (Even Numbers)</u>	
K	21 - 45	K	22 - 46
L	21 - 45	L	22 - 46
M	21 - 45	M	22 - 46
N	21 - 45	N	22 - 46
O	21 - 45	O	22 - 46
P	21 - 45	P	22 - 46
Q	21 - 45	Q	22 - 46
R	21 - 45	R	22 - 46
S	21 - 45	S	22 - 46
T	21 - 45	T	22 - 46
U	21 - 45	U	22 - 46
V	21 - 45	V	22 - 46
W	21 - 35		

Rental Usher Guidelines

This document outlines the basic operating procedures for ushers in the Pfleeger Concert Hall. These are guidelines to help volunteer ushers working with rental events.

There are 2 types of usher:

1. **Ticket Taker:** A person stationed at an entrance to the theatre for the purpose of receiving tickets.
Responsibilities include: **Greeter:** Greet patrons as they enter
Control access: Only admit those patrons with tickets
Confirm Ticket: Check ticket for correct time & show
Stuff patrol: Inform patrons of restrictions:
 1. No food in auditorium
 2. If cameras are allowed:
No Flash Photography
 3. If cameras are not allowed:
No Photography

2. **Aisle Usher:** A person stationed within the door for the purpose of handing out programs and guiding patrons to their seat.
Responsibilities include: **Greeter:** Greet patrons as they enter.
Programs: Hand out programs to patrons
Seating: Assist patrons in locating their seat
Latecomers: Assist latecomers and minimize disturbance to other patrons
Monitor; 1. monitor for flash photography
- Ask patron to stop using flash
2. monitor for disturbances
- Ask patron to be quiet
3. monitor for food
- Ask patron to take it out to the lobby

When an usher encounters a situation in which they need assistance - See the House Manager for help or guidance.