

Abbey Theatre

Volunteer Handbook



Managed by Nuneaton Arts Council

www.abbeytheatre.co.uk

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Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to work at the Abbey Theatre.

To help us to ensure that your time with us is as enjoyable for you and your colleagues along with delivering the best service to our customers, please take some time to familiarise yourself with the contents of this booklet.

It will set out what we expect from our volunteers, and what you can expect from the management committee.

This is not intended to be an all-encompassing 'bible' but should be treated as a general guide to volunteers.

All volunteers should have attended a Basic Fire Awareness training session at the theatre. This training is a requirement of our fire risk assessment to ensure regular volunteers can provide effective evacuation and management in the event of an emergency situation.

First Aid training will be available at selected times during the year for those who may wish to take this up as an option.

Training is provided free of charge by the theatre and takes 2-3 hours.

Attendance and dress code

If you have been scheduled into a slot for a specific job for a performance or event, please ensure you arrive at the theatre at the appropriate time. If for ANY reason you are unable to make that time, please make sure that you advise one of your colleagues as soon as possible to allow us to try to cover the slot. This also lets us fulfil our duty of care to you as a volunteer if we know that you won't be on site when expected to be.

It is also important that you don't turn up for a shift unannounced, even if you think we are short staffed. Too many staff behind the bar for example is almost as bad as not enough.

Dress code will of course vary depending on where you will be working:

Bar staff - black trousers/skirt with theatre polo shirt if possible, or plain black or white shirt/blouse if not.

Front of House – Dress suit if appropriate for gents, smart dress for ladies.

Technical – full blacks, with theatre shirt if available, especially if representing the theatre rather than working direct to the performing company.

Dress code particularly on FoH/bar duties includes good personal hygiene at all times

Technical - General

All theatre technicians should make themselves aware of, and follow, the various safety policies and procedures, most of which can be found on the Abbey web site.

They should be aware of the location of each first aid kit, and also identify any members of staff or user group who are first aid trained

Note – pyrotechnic effects may only be used on stage if approved by the stage director AND there is a trained/approved pyro technician on duty on stage.

All technicians working with outside hiring groups have a responsibility to contact the hirers direct well in advance of performance/rehearsal dates to arrange for details of tech requirements for the show. This may include securing a final running order for dance/singing shows, to obtaining music tracks/VT in order that these can be vetted for quality etc.

Contact information is usually posted on the Tech Roster page on the theatre web site.

Complaints from Volunteers

The NAC takes its volunteer workforce very seriously, so should there be occasion for ANYONE to have an issue with any other member(s) of the team or management we have a documented Complaints Process and Policy which can be found on the web site under the Policies section, or a copy can be provided on request to the Chairman, trustees or admin, by e-mail or hard-copy.

Complaints from Customers

Should any member of the public complain to any member of NAC staff, that member of staff should make every effort to resolve the issue at that time. If necessary, the matter can be referred to the lead bar person or a committee member on site. If no appropriate person is on site at the time then it may be referred by telephone if appropriate to a committee member, trustee or Chairman.

Should the customer wish to put their complaint in writing, they can be referred to the Complaints Process and Policy which may be found on our main web site under the Policies section.

Technical - Sound

The Sound Technician should arrive at the theatre at least 45 minutes prior to curtain for basic shows, earlier if needed for show prep work

The Sound Technician is responsible for the planning of any sound requirements for a show or rehearsals. They will acquire and/or record all sound effects needed for the production in advance of the first rehearsal and using an appropriate software program or media option (CD/MD etc) prepare for playing those effects on demand

The Sound Tech will either load an appropriate patch build onto the house desk or create a new patch as appropriate to allow for the use of microphones, audio content or live musicians, connect the equipment as required, then during pre-rehearsal/show checks, balance the levels of all audio sources to deliver a quality presentation to the audience

Where radio microphones are used, the Sound Tech will be responsible for issuing these to cast members, and ensure that each wearer is fully aware of the correct use of mics.

The sound technician has specific duties during an emergency evacuation of the theatre. All sound operators must be familiar with the evacuation procedure which is displayed above in the sound control room

Technical Show Reports

On completion of every show, each department should compile a show report and send, by e-mail, information to Tony Deeming comprising:

All extras used by show (eg radio mics, pyro, star cloth etc)

Times of arrival/departure of user group for rehearsals and performances and which rooms upstairs (if any) were used and for how long

Any issues/faults that arise during their time on site, including damage to or failure of NAC equipment

Car Parking

If you are working *on behalf of the NAC* and due to a lack of free spaces on the roadside have to park on the pay and display area during charging hours, present your car park ticket to the lead bar person who will refund the price of parking for the event.

Please DO however try to park on the roadside if space available.
Users and customers must be discouraged from parking in the Lidl car park.

Web Registration

To keep track of who is working in what slot, we operate an online roster for the bar, tech and front of house and keyholder teams. These tables list each show or event on the calendar and either spaces where staff are needed, or names showing who has committed on each one.

To be able to view these you will need to register via the theatre web site. Either scroll down from our main home page and click on the staffing link, or go directly to www.staff.abbeytheatre.co.uk/login

When first using this page, type in your name in the simple format forename-surname (eg – '*craig-barnes*'), enter a password of your choice and click '*register*'

Once approved by the site admin you will receive an e-mail confirmation and the next time you log in you will have access to view the rosters.

Should you encounter any login problems, then please drop an e-mail, detailing the issue, to craig-barnes@hotmail.com and he will look at resolving it for you.

Volunteering for Shifts

If you see a vacant space against any of the performance dates on any of the rosters, and you are able to work on the dates required, send an e-mail to the relevant head of department stating your availability.

Bar – Tony Deeming – deeming.tony@btinternet.com

Front of House – John Fletcher – johnfletcher36@hotmail.com

Tech – Tony Deeming – deeming.tony@btinternet.com

You will then receive confirmation that you have been accepted for the slot(s) unless more than one person has volunteered for the same space, in which case the HoD will decide who will take up the slot and advise.

Once confirmed, the spaces on the online calendar will be completed so everyone can see where there are gaps to be filled. However, PLEASE don't assume that you're in a slot UNTIL you have had confirmation.

Keyholders

There should always be a nominated keyholder on duty during performance dates – please ensure that you know who this is for safety/security reasons.

Some volunteers have limited keys to internal doors (eg bar/tech areas).

Keyholder info can be found on the schedule on the staffing pages of our web site

Lead Volunteers

For the bar team, there will also be a nominated lead person who should arrive at least 60 minutes prior to curtain-up to begin prep before the shutters are raised and service to customers begins at 45 minutes before curtain.

There should also be a lead technician who is responsible for ensuring the stage and control room are ready for audience to enter at the relevant time – ideally 20 minutes before curtain.

If the NAC is providing FoH staff, these should be on duty by 45 minutes prior to curtain, welcoming audience at the door and preparing to open the house.

Alcohol Policy

When working on behalf of the NAC in ANY capacity at all, we expect volunteers to adhere to a strict no-alcohol policy whilst on duty. This is because we all have a duty of care towards both the users of the venue and the audiences/customers we serve.

Any volunteer who disregards this policy may well be deemed to be negligent and even responsible in the event of any incident which occurs under their duty of care.

Any volunteer who does disregard this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

Gratuity

As a small gesture of thanks to those who are working *on behalf of the NAC* we do allow staff who are actually on duty during performances free coffee, tea or soft drink (within reasonable bounds). Also, any staff working on behalf of the NAC can if they wish partake of an alcoholic or other drink at the END of their full shift.

Senior NAC staff may also grant additional gratuities as and when they see fit.

Technical - Lighting

The Lighting Technician should arrive at the theatre at least 45 minutes prior to curtain for basic shows, earlier if needed for show prep work
Follow spot operators should be on site by 'the half' (35 minutes prior to curtain) unless agreed with the Lighting Tech in advance

The Lighting Technician is responsible for planning, plotting and focussing all available lighting instruments including any additional 'specials' requested by the company and then operating the lighting desk for all rehearsals and performances

On arrival the Lighting Tech will open the control room if needed, turn on the lighting desk and perform a lamp check to ascertain whether any lanterns in use are not in service and require maintenance/attention. If necessary, they will effect any repairs/lamp replacement to ensure the show can proceed

Turn on the auditorium air conditioning – if needed, run fans at high speed up to 5 minutes before audience are let in, then turn down to low speed for performance. Note – if adjustments need to be made during the performances these need to be SUBTLE rather than extreme – eg if auditorium is perceived as being cold, DO NOT simply ramp-up the temperature and increase fan speed.

Maximum temperature 21 degrees.

Ensure air conditioning is switched OFF before leaving post performance

The lighting technician has specific duties during an emergency evacuation of the theatre. All lighting technicians must be familiar with the evacuation procedure which is displayed above the lighting control desk.

Technical - Stage

The Stage Manager should arrive at the theatre at least 45 minutes prior to curtain for basic shows, earlier if needed for show prep work. All crew engaged on stage should be on site by 35 minutes prior to curtain unless agreed with the SM in advance

The Stage Manager is responsible for:

- Running the show from dress rehearsal through performances
 - The safety of both cast and crew
- Coordinate with all other technical depts. throughout the production process
 - Coordinating with Front of House where required
 - Organising and managing stage crew as needed
- Monitoring the activities of cast/crew during rehearsals, set up and performances to ensure safe working practices are observed
 - Delivering an appropriate safety talk to full cast and crew

On arrival the SM:

- Checks the backstage area for safety issues
- Checks all exits backstage are clear of obstruction as per theatre policy
- Ensures working lights and walkway lights are on until stage lights take over
 - Ensures that the stage floor is swept of all rubbish
- Ensures that the wing space is clear of unnecessary obstruction

Post show, the SM:

- Checks all dressing rooms lights are off, rear doors properly closed
 - Turns off working lights on stage
- Checks all non-essential equipment is powered down on stage
- Checks with LX that air conditioning is off in auditorium and control room
 - Checks air conditioning is off in Green Room

The Stage Manager must provide a full safety brief before any rehearsal on stage by the company or organisation. This briefing must be recorded as being given by the Stage Manager and the responsible person of the company or organisation. A standard brief and recording sheet is provided in the Stage Managers safety folder located in the stage managers corner.

The Stage Manager holds the responsibility of deciding on the evacuation of the theatre in case of emergency. Specific duties of the Stage Manager are detailed in the evacuation procedure and a copy if provided in the Stage Managers Safety Folder.

Policies

ALL volunteers should make themselves aware of the various policies governing the different areas of responsibility at the theatre. These include:

Health and Safety

Fire and Safety

Evacuation Procedure

First Aid during Performances

Working at Height

Pyrotechnic Safety

Child Protection

Front of House

Copies of these can be found/downloaded for reference from the theatre web site.

ALL staff must be familiar with the evacuation procedures and the two alarms in use for the building:

ALL staff must also make themselves aware of the location of the first aid kit(s) for their area of work.

Alarms

Fire Alarm – sounders and beacons in every area (except no audible alarms on stage/in auditorium)

Security alarm – sounder in bar area only (no visual signals) which is activated in the event of either rear dressing room doors, Etone Lounge side door or front technical doors being opened without being isolated.

If the security alarm is activated this can ONLY be reset by an official keyholder by using their alarm reset fob.

The doors may be disabled on request to a keyholder or responsible volunteer, but this must be done in advance of the doors being opened.

The alarm bell in the disabled toilet for patrons who may experience difficulties is operated by the red pull-cord inside the facility. To silence this alarm, simply pull on the cord again.

Bar Staff

All bar staff to be on site and ready to open the shutters by 45 mins prior to curtain.

Bar Specific Jobs – pre-show

60 mins prior to curtain:

Switch on dish washer (don't forget to insert drain plug)

Switch on water heater and coffee machines

Tidy bar if needed, wash up any odds and sods

Check fridges and re-stock

Put some coffee through

Top up milk, cream and sugar

Put out drinks order forms

Fill ice buckets and water jug

Open shutters 45 minutes prior to curtain up

In foyer:

Check all ceiling lights on

Turn on five standard lamps

Check both inner swing doors unlocked

Turn on presentation screens

Turn on air conditioning if needed (max 21 deg, low fan speed)

Check all toilets for tidiness, and paper goods

Remove any cleaners' signs (stored in gents vestibule)

When time to let audience in, check security latch off on main doors

Other tasks:

Put music on CD player under bar

Check amp to feed toilet speakers also on

Check with sound tech – if they are providing house music then change to tech feed when appropriate

Also check whether sound tech will be using pre-show calls into foyer

If non NAC staff are manning front of house, introduce yourself and ask if assistance will be required. Ensure that non-NAC FoH staff are aware they must check with SM when doors may be opened to admit audience into theatre

Once audience in place, switch bar PC to stage feed from presentation

Bar Specific Jobs – during first half

Stock fridges/ice buckets

Wipe tables and wash up crockery/glasses in glass-washer

Tidy bar area

Use battery sweeper on carpet

Re-stock sweets, crisps etc

Prepare trays for interval drinks

Check estimated interval time with tech or company to allow time to set out interval orders – if necessary request sound or lights to call down with 10 minute warning

Check whether sound will still be sending house music to bar amp during interval

Switch bar PC back to presentation before interval starts

If required, assist front of house with opening auditorium doors at start of interval

Check all toilets for tidiness and paper goods

During second half

Re-stock fridges etc

Wipe tables and wash up crockery/glasses in glass-washer

Tidy bar - Use sweeper

Switch bar PC back to presentation before doors open at end of show

If required, assist front of house with opening auditorium doors at end of show

Check all toilets for tidiness and paper goods

Post-Show

Re-stock fridges etc

Ensure all washing up done

Ensure bar surface cleaned down

Empty ice buckets – lids off to ventilate

Check drip trays – wash if needed and leave to drain over sink

Dirty tea towels in dirty box

Turn lights off behind bar and drop shutters

Ensure glasswasher is turned off and drain plug is out

Lead bar person to cash up each till after every performance/event and deposit takings in safe

Bar Staff have specific responsibilities during a full theatre evacuation. All bar staff must be familiar with the evacuation procedure which is located on the wall behind the bar area.

