

## Customs and Traditions of Professional Theatre and of the HSPVA Theatre Department

### A. REGARD FOR STUDENT LEADERS

Assistant Directors, Technical Directors, Stage Managers, and Crew Heads represent the Faculty Supervisors and will receive our complete support. These positions demand the respect of all members of the company and are expected to conduct themselves with integrity.

### B. COMPANY ASSIGNMENTS

Theatre majors accept as a matter of course any company assignments in a production or acting company. Of course, students are encouraged to make their crew preferences known to the appropriate faculty supervisor the first week of school. Requests for company changes can only be considered under unusual circumstances. After posting, only faculty members will make company changes, which are made for the best interest of the students, of the company and of the department, i.e., **you cannot replace yourself on a crew without faculty approval.**

### C. STRIKE

All members of the company of any production are required to attend and work the strike for that production.

- Receiving credit for strike will depend on your signing in at the beginning of strike and signing out when you have been dismissed.
- Unexcused absence from strike is a serious offense that may result in the failure of your RPC.

### D. ACTOR / CREW / AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP

“The willing suspension of disbelief” is a convention we must establish to maintain traditional aesthetic distance between the company (including the performers as well as crews) and the audience.

- Actors and crew members report for performances through backstage doors and not through the house. Under no circumstances do we go through the house to or from the stage or backstage.
- Company members other than house crew will not mingle with the audience during intermission.
- Actors will remove stage make-up and costumes **before** leaving the theatre at the end of a performance.
- No one other than company members is allowed backstage at any time during or after a performance.

**E. BACKSTAGE PROTOCOL**

- Actors are expected to go into character at least 30 to 45 minutes before curtain.
- Running crew members must be sensitive and respectful of the actor's preparatory process. Crew members should ask whether or not they might speak to an actor who is in character.
- In turn, actors must be positive and respectful of the work that crew members must accomplish.
- Be safety conscious all the time.
- Persons carrying loads have the right of way.
- Never move set pieces, props, use equipment, etc. unless it is your assigned duty.
- Never cross between a director and the actors.
- Don't play in areas where others are working.
- Be courteous and positive always.
- Unless your opinion is solicited, never give directorial suggestions to directors or actors. Wait until a director is no longer working with actors before talking to him/her. Address concerns to the Stage Manager first.
- Acknowledge the calling of announcements such as "house opens" and "curtain" and "places." A clear "Thank you" is appropriate.
- Fill out a self-evaluation form immediately after strike, along with one each for persons under your direct supervision, and one for your immediate supervisor.
- Always use your initiative and common sense.

**F. TOOLS, EQUIPMENT, PROPS, AND COSTUMES**

Assume a personal responsibility for the equipment you use as a member of a production company. Report lost, broken, or damaged property to the Stage Manager or appropriate Faculty Supervisor. Students will be charged for tools props, costumes, or equipment damaged or lost through their negligence.

**G. PROPERTIES**

- Preferably supply your own hand props for use in acting scenes.
- Special hand properties for use in acting scenes may be checked out from departmental prop storage. See your prop storage liaison for check out procedures.
- While the props are in your possession, store them properly (in a box that is labeled with your name, scene title and performance date) either in the space provided in the rehearsal hall or in your locker.
- Props left lying around will be taken up and put in lost and found, and eventually, thrown away.
- A financial deposit may be required to check out some props.

**H. GENERAL BEHAVIOR**

Some theatre students are prone to carry their acting to extremes. Posturing, gesticulating, emotional outbursts and loud displays of histrionics are easy to fall into but do not present us as professionals in our field. We conduct ourselves in a manner that will always reflect credit upon each of us and upon our department.

**Values and Emotional Safety First:**

- There are times and places for strong emotions. However, we are responsible for the emotions we leave in your wakes.
- Uncontrolled emotional outbursts are unprofessional. We learn to contain and channel powerful emotions in a way that is healthy and appropriate to time and place.
- Be more interested in learning than in being right.
- Being talented doesn't make us good people. We need to have enough humility to understand that the gift of our talents does not indicate any superiority over others.
- Our personal integrities are reflected in your ability to give, to compromise and to be flexible according to the needs of the greater good.