



## MUSIC THEATRE WICHITA USHER HANDBOOK

To ensure that the volunteer program runs smoothly and efficiently, this guidebook of policies and procedures, helpful hints, and general information has been created to help everyone achieve this goal. You will be able to master many of these items while performing your duties during the summer shows. Reading the manual is **REQUIRED** before working your first performance of each season. We hope this handbook will serve as a handy guide whenever needed.

The Music Theatre Wichita (MTWICHITA) patrons are special people; they are the reason for us being here. Patrons should never see or hear anything which might disturb or upset them. Exceptional customer service should always be our goal. From the moment of their arrival until they are on their way home, our patron's visit to the theatre should be pleasant, memorable, and magical. This magic is a result, not only from the performance, but also from you and our entire volunteer staff. No matter what your assignment may be, our attitude, friendliness, and willingness to help will always be crucial. For a vast majority of our patrons, you will be the only person with whom they interact. Their impression of you will often be their impression of the theatre.

Not everyone who applies to be an usher is selected. There are many more applicants than openings. You were selected to be a part of MTWichita because we believe that you will be an excellent usher or ticket taker. We also feel that you have the integrity to follow through with your commitment to work on the days assigned and are willing to abide by the volunteer policies and rules. This manual has been written with one purpose in mind: to help you become that volunteer who will make a positive difference in the theatrical experience of each of our patrons.

Because of your importance to MTWichita, your regular attendance is vital to the success of our program. Patrons and co-workers alike are relying on you. Undoubtedly, there will be shows that you personally do not enjoy and for which you would prefer not to work; however, keep in mind how your absence will increase the workload of those ushers who do attend. We need you to make a commitment to fulfill your obligations to the volunteer program, and the most important obligation is punctual attendance. In order for the volunteer program to succeed, a program made up of over 400 ushers, the attendance policy must be strictly enforced. If you do not believe that you can make this commitment, we understand. The MTWichita volunteer usher program is not for everyone. If you are willing to assume this responsibility, we believe that your association with us will be enjoyable and worthwhile.

All ushers must comply with the physical requirements as specified in the information included on the last page of this document.

## FRONT OF HOUSE

**Front of House Manager:** This person is primarily responsible for all house operations, functions, and activities immediately prior to, during, and immediately after a show. He or she conducts pre-show meetings informing the ushers of all pertinent information about the performance and about managing the house. The House Manager also coordinates with the Stage Manager to open the. The House Manager may deal with patron complaints, ticket problems, double-seating, accidents, falls, and maintenance concerns.

**Concert Hall Lead Usher:** During some performances, experienced ushers are chosen as head/lead ushers to directly supervise other volunteers, deal with double-seating issues, answer questions, and problem solve. This person is the first and primary contact for ushers in order to resolve any problems.

**Lead Ushers** should meet the following requirements:

1. Have ushered for a minimum of 2 summers
2. Have excellent communication and customer relations skills
3. Have a good rapport with other ushers
4. Have knowledge of the theatre
5. Must be able to remain on duty for the entire performance

Any usher who is interested in becoming a **Lead Usher** should contact the **House Manager**.

**Ushers:** To a majority of our patrons, the ushers are Music Theatre Wichita; therefore, they are primarily responsible for patron satisfaction, thus making this position one of critical importance. Ushers are the first, and sometimes only contact for patrons. As such, they need to present the most professional image they can. Ushers greet patrons, give directions, seat patrons, answer questions, provide hearing devices, and perform various other assigned duties.

**Box Office Staff:** Box office personnel are always present before shows and until the end of the intermission. They oversee all aspects of the theatre dealing with tickets.

## THEATRE INFORMATION

*(Concert Hall seats 2,200 and was built in 1969)*

**Restrooms:** Concert Hall Orchestra level restrooms are located in the lobby of the first floor. Women's restroom are on the inside lobby wall and Men's restroom on the outside lobby wall. Upper level restrooms are located on the second floor. Both levels have Accessible Restrooms. There are no restrooms in the Balcony.

**Drinking Fountains:** Drinking fountains are located on the inside lobby wall of the main floor next to the concession areas on house left and right, and also on the second floor in the same areas.

**Accessible Entrance:** The Main Entrances to the Concert Hall have push button doors, however, those in wheelchairs and/or walkers will probably need additional help.

**In the event of a Tornado:** It has been determined that the safest action in the Concert Hall is for audience members to remain in their seats. However, people in the balcony area should move to the house left or right access hallway and then move inside the main floor Concert Hall area. If no empty seats are available, patrons should stand near the wall. The House left and right ramp entrances on either side of the main seating are not considered safe areas! People in the Box Seats should remain there with the doors closed.

**Founders' Room:** The Room is located on the second floor on Concert Hall left. Occasionally throughout the season, there may be a private party or reception either prior to the performance or immediately following. We will make every attempt to inform you of this. If for some reason you are not informed and patrons are wanting to know about such events, please notify the Front of House Manager and we will find out the information you need.

Our Patrons who have contributed annually at the \$250 level or above to MTWichita are invited to the Founders' Room on the 2nd floor during intermission.

**Parking Lot:** The Main Parking Lot is South of the Concert Hall. A smaller parking area on the West side of Century II which only accessible parking. A quarter will give you 1 ½ hours. The meters can be checked until 11pm, 7 days a week.

**ATM Machine:** The nearest ATM Machine is located at INTRUST Bank.

**Elevators:** Elevators are on both left and right sides within the Concert Hall.

**Concessions:** Concessions are available before the show and during intermission and are located on both the left and right sides on the main floor. Both cash and credit cards are accepted at the concession areas. Beverages with lids may be taken into the Concert Hall.

**Box Office:** The Music Theatre Box Office is located in the outer lobby of Concert Hall. The Box Office is open from 10am to 6pm, Monday through Friday on “Dark” days. During show days the box office is open 10am to intermission, Wednesday through Saturday, and on Sunday Noon to intermission of the evening performance.

**Lost and Found:** Found items should be delivered to the House Manager as soon as possible with information as to where the items were found. If items are not picked up, they will be stored in the Box Office until the end of the season.

**Emergency Phone number:** The emergency phone number for MTWichita is (316) 261-3839 and is only answered during performance times.

**Hearing Assist Devices:** Hearing devices are available at a table near the center of the inside Concert Hall lobby. There is no cost to the patron, but we will ask for a Driver’s License, phone number, and a seat location.

**Interpreters for the Hearing Impaired:** An interpreter for the hearing impaired will sign in American Sign Language (ASL) at each Saturday Matinee performance.

**Accessible Seating:** There are designated areas in the theatre for our patrons who cannot get out of a wheelchair (main floor and second floor.) Prior arrangements must be made when purchasing their ticket to ensure such locations. When a patron is able to sit in a theatre seat, the wheelchair or walker will be kept at a safe convenient place for use during intermission and after the show. Seating is available on the main floor (rows M and S) and on the second floor in the box areas for those patrons with limited mobility or with special needs. Such seating should be requested when tickets are purchased.

**Wheelchairs:** Music Theatre Wichita also provides several wheelchairs for the use of our patrons. Please request a wheelchair from the **Box Office, House Manager** or the **Lead Usher**. We ask that the volunteer be responsible for helping the patron find the correct wheelchair at intermission and after the show and then return the wheelchair to the Box Office.

## THEATRE POLICIES

**Smoking:** Smoking is not permitted in any area of the theatre. Patrons are allowed to go outside the front concert hall doors to smoke or outside on the second floor balcony. Patrons should be cautioned that they may need to show their tickets to re-enter the theatre.

**Cameras, Phones, and Recording Devices:** The use of cameras and cell phones or any other type of audio/video recording devices are **NOT** permitted in the Concert Hall. Photos may be taken by patrons only in the lobby area or on the ramp before the show or during intermission...**NOT IN THE CONCERT HALL SEATING AREAS**. Texting is also distracting to other patrons, as well as the performers on stage. Photos of the stage are strictly prohibited at all times during Music Theatre Wichita performances. When you notice a patron with a camera, recording device, or cell phone, please **KINDLY** inform the patron of our policy. *(The policy is printed within each playbill.)*

**Food and Beverages:** Food and beverages will be allowed in the Concert Hall. Alcoholic beverages should **NOT** be taken outside of the building before the show, during intermission, or after the show. Smokers who want to drink may go to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor outdoor balcony. Typically, the drink is placed against the glass windows inside the Concert Hall near the smoking area so they are responsible for watching their own drink(s.)

**Tickets:** Every patron, regardless of age, must have a ticket to enter the theatre. Patrons attempting to enter the Concert Hall with children under the age of five (5,) will be asked by the ticket taker to go to the Box Office. The Box Office personnel will try to make arrangements with the patron to attend a different performance.

**Babies and Toddlers:** In consideration of our performers and patrons, and due to the length of the performances, babies and toddlers (*ages 4 and under*) will **NOT** be allowed in the Concert Hall.

**Seating Patrons:** Every patron should sit in the seat for which he or she is holding a ticket. Only the House Manager or Box Office personnel may relocate a patron. Never place a patron in any seat other than the one for which they hold a ticket without contacting the House Manager. Never encourage a patron to move on his or her own to improve seating location.

**Special Need Patrons:** Please do not treat these patrons any differently than other patrons. No overt or highly visible attention should be given to these patrons without their request for it. You may kindly offer assistance to patrons who appear to need help, but never assume that your help is needed.

**Service Animals:** These animals are always allowed in the theatre. There are federal laws protecting the rights of patrons with disabilities and their animals. (You do have the right to ask the patron if it is a service animal.) **NEVER** touch or speak to a service animal. The animal may lie under the patron's chair, in front of the patron's chair, or to the side of the patron's chair in an aisle.

**Assisting Physically Impaired Patrons:** We expect most of our patrons who will need assistance with wheelchairs or walkers to have someone with them who will be able to care for them. We always pride ourselves for being caring, accommodating, and helpful to our patrons; however, in today's litigious society, we must try to limit our exposure to helping push wheelchairs.

## USHER INFORMATION

### **Important Things to Remember:**

- Only authorized staff are allowed to enter the theatre before the “house is open.”
- The House Manager will “open the theater” when it has been released by the stage manager.
- Patrons must be seated only according to the information on their tickets.
- Patrons may only be relocated by the House Manager or Box Office staff.
- No one is allowed backstage. ONLY authorized staff with credentials may escort someone to the backstage areas.
- Employees and volunteers must be drug and alcohol free. Alcoholic beverages cannot be consumed while ushering.
- Century II is a smoke-free environment (this includes “vapor” devices.)
- When seats are available, ushers are permitted to sit to watch a performance in designated areas only (behind row “S” and at the end of a row.) Do not climb over or cross in front of patrons to sit down in a seat.
- A positive attitude is a must.
- Be kind, courteous, helpful, and cheerful. Greet patrons with a smile. Look patrons in the eye.
- Encourage verbal exchanges and make yourself available for questions.
- Be on time for the pre-show meetings.
- At the end of the performance, ushers need to stay in their assigned area until patrons are safely out of the Concert Hall.
- Ushers must be at least 18 years of age.
- Ushers must be able to tell patrons to put cell phones away if they are in use during the show.

**Pre-Show Meeting:** The usher meeting is very important and attendance is necessary. The meetings begin 1 hour and 45 minutes before the scheduled start of the show. Since all pertinent information about the performance is given at that time, attention to the information given is important.

At the conclusion of the meeting, all volunteers are to report to this assigned work area. When reporting to our areas, you are not to take food or drink. Personal cell phones should be used only in an emergency and should be turned off while working. (See Accidents and Medical Emergency, pp 9-10.)

**Playbills and Stuffers:** Each production will have playbills for distribution, which will be found on the ramps, in both lobbies and in the balcony. If you find no playbills, or run out, please tell your Lead Usher or House Manager immediately.

# Active Shooter Training

Century II

May, 2016

Please click on the “link” below and watch the six (6) minute video (an overview is provided below)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VcSwejU2D0>

Why do they do it?

- o Workplace/school problems
- o Criminal intent
- o Ideological

What is known about this type of individual?

- o There is a trigger.
- o Planning occurs.
- o There are targets.
- o They have fantasized about it.
- o They have scripted it out in advance.
- o The script almost always ends in their death.

Where do they strike?

- o Business - 40%
- o Schools - 29%
- o Outside - 19%
- o Other - 12%

Common Sense Rules

- o **RUN**
- o **HIDE**
- o **FIGHT**

**RUN**

- o Inform
  - Receive and give information over your radio.
  - Use plain language.
  - Talk to patrons in plain language.
  - Use a public address system if available.
  - Call 911 informing them of what’s happening.
- o Evacuate
  - Intelligent escape.
  - Lead patrons toward exits.
  - Listen for information/updates.
- o To help, or not to help? That is the question!
  - Use common sense.
  - Will your action endanger you or anyone else?



## HIDE

- o Close Doors
  - Secure with locks.
  - Secure with objects.
  - Distance yourself from door.
- o Turn Off Lights
  - Make room appear unoccupied – don't be a target.
- o Turn Off Phones
  - Even the vibrate mode is a giveaway.
- o Close Blinds
  - They are looking for a target. If they see you, they will likely act on it.
- o Be Quiet!
  - Crying, whispering, talking, etc. can attract unwanted attention.

## FIGHT – for your life!

- o Moving target
  - Flee from assailant if you can.
  - Move erratically.
  - Use cover and concealment.
- o Improvise Weapons
  - Anything can be a weapon.
  - Distract, confuse and damage.
  - Disrupt the script.
- o Use your knowledge of the building to your advantage.

## Law Enforcement

- o They have come to put an end to the situation.
- o They may yell commands at you.
- o They are not going to stop to help the injured.
- o They do not know who the shooter is and will treat everyone with suspicion.

## How Should I React to Police?

- o DO NOT argue with them.
- o DO NOT point.
- o DO NOT yell or scream at them.
- o DO NOT attempt to stop and interact with them.
- o DO comply with their commands.
- o **DO keep your hands up and fingers spread.**
- o DO only answer questions asked.
- o DO move past them and continue away from building/site of incident.

## You Are Out! Now What?

- o Rally Point
  - Mutually agreed upon location where you will gather for a head count.
  - Far enough from building/site that you are safe.
  - Out of line of site.
  - Behind protective cover.
- o Determine if anyone is missing.
  - Let law enforcement know if someone is missing.
  - Don't start calling their cell phone! May place them in danger.
- o Arrange for staff to receive counseling through City Employee Assistance Program!

# FRONT OF HOUSE PROCEDURES

## Specific Duties

**Ticket Takers:** Ticket takers will begin admitting audience members at one hour and 15 minutes prior to curtain – or when the orientation meeting is completed. You will direct patrons to the RIGHT or LEFT. Please let patrons know that the balcony is on the third floor and they can take the elevator as indicated on the ticket. Box seats are on the second floor. Please pay careful attention to **time and date of ticket**, tearing ticket evenly and depositing the audit stub into the collection box. Please also be aware of the potential problems (unruly children or inebriated adults) that may be coming through the door and save the ticket stub for the Front of House Staff. Please accompany patrons to the box office if there is any dispute. You will continue taking tickets at your assigned entrance until the Front of House Staff dismisses you, at which time you will enter the ramp area and wait until the appropriate time to enter the hall. Once inside, please stand along the outside wall, evenly spaced so as to not block an entrance, until the next applause break so that you may help any latecomers. When all latecomers are seated, ushers and ticket takers will find a seat behind row “S” near the aisle (do NOT climb over patrons). If no seats are available, you may stand near an entrance against the wall. Ticket takers will also be asked to help monitor the crowd at intermission. Please stand near the glass doors in the lobby or near the ramp doors. If cell phones are being used during the performance, get up and ask the patron to turn it off.

Once the performance has concluded and the lights are “up”, open all entry doors, wait near the ramp area to be sure all patrons have made it out safely. Return the MTWichita Usher Lanyard to the hearing device table and “check out” with the Front of House Manager. Report any issues and return lost/found items at this time.

**Ramp Ushers:** Ramp ushers will begin distributing programs in the lobby in front of the ramp doors at one hour and 15 minutes prior to curtain or whenever the orientation meeting is completed and the lobby doors are opened. **ALL RAMP DOORS AND ELEVATOR DOORS ARE TO REMAIN CLOSED AT THIS TIME** and should remain closed until the Front of House staff notifies you otherwise. **PLEASE DO NOT OPEN** these doors until given directions to do so by the Front of House staff. While waiting for the Hall to open, ushers should guard the ramp doors, the elevator doors, and the doors to the second floor and balcony. No one, with the exception of staff, will be allowed in the house. When the signal is given, you will open the ramp doors permanently and move to your designated work areas. Ramp ushers should position themselves at approximately rows N, R and AA on the ramp and continue to assist patrons seating. One usher should be stationed at the first set of steps to remind patrons to “Watch the steps.” Two ushers will be assigned to distribute Playbills. These two should NOT be distracted by also helping patrons find their seats. Please direct the patrons to other ushers who are assigned that duty. All OTHER USHERS should be helping patrons find their correct row and seat. When the overture begins, or when the designated time has been given by the Front of House Manager, ushers should shut all entry doors (1

through 10.) All ushers will remain in the ramp to assist latecomers. The latecomers should only be seated at an applause break. Be sure to place the poster at the top of the ramp area indicating that “latecomers should wait for an applause break before entering.”

Once the lights come “up” for Intermission, ushers should immediately see that all Entry doors are opened and move the sign and easel out of the traffic area.

When Act II begins – or as instructed during the orientation meeting, please shut all entry doors and wait along the wall until all latecomers are seated. Once the performance has concluded and the light are “up,” open all entry doors, wait near the ramp area to be sure all patrons have made it out safely. Return the MTWichita Usher Lanyard to the hearing device table and check out with the Front of House Manager. Report any issues and return lost/found items at this time. Return the First Aid Kit! NEVER hide the First Aid Kit in the cupboards. It should always be visible and easy to locate.

**Balcony Ushers:** Balcony ushers will stand in front of the elevator doors on the first floor until the Front of House Manager indicates that the “House is Open.” Please guard the stairway doors as well, making sure patrons do not enter until the appropriate time. You will be distributing playbills with the other ushers at this time. When the House has been opened, you will take the first group of patrons in the elevator to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor where you will continue assisting patrons with seating and playbills just inside the wooden doors. Close doors when the overture begins and remain outside the doors to assist latecomers. Latecomers should be seated at an applause break. Balcony ushers may find an aisle seat behind Row “E.”

Once the lights come “up” for Intermission, ushers should immediately see that all Entry doors are opened.

When Act II begins – or as instructed during the orientation meeting, please shut all entry doors and wait along the wall until all latecomers are seated. Once the performance has concluded and the lights are “up,” open all entry doors and wait near the ramp area to be sure all patrons have made it out safely. Return the MTWichita Usher Lanyard and First Aid Kit to the hearing device table and “check out” with the Front of House Manager. Report any issues and return lost/found items at this time.

**Box Seat Ushers:** Box seat ushers will help guard the elevator or doors to the stairs before the House is open. Please help distribute playbills to patrons by standing at the top of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor entry that leads down to Entry 10. Patrons may use the stairs or elevator and may not encounter an usher on the ramp. They may also need help finding the Balcony on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. The patrons in the box seats may need extra assistance. The usher will need to stay in the room with the patrons throughout the performance. The doors will need to be opened and closed at the appropriate time and because of the acoustics in this room, you will monitor the talking by reminding those in the room that the noise is carried out into the Concert Hall.

## ALL USHERS/TICKET TAKERS/VOLUNTEERS

All ushers and ticket takers arrive at 5:45pm on Wednesday and Thursday evening, 6:15pm on Friday and Saturday, and 5:15pm on Sunday or 12:15pm for the matinees for a brief informative meeting prior to each show.

All ushers and ticket takers are asked to stay for the entire performance to assist patrons in and out of the theatre. Please sit in the area you have been assigned since patrons may need your help during the performance.

**Dress Code:** Dress appropriately for the theatre. Please no jeans, t-shirts or shorts.

**Substitutions:** If you are unable to work when scheduled please notify the **Front of House Manager** as soon as possible. Arrangements for a substitute will be made by the **Front of House Manager**.

**Seating Disputes or Duplicate Tickets:** If someone comes to you with the complaint that “someone is in my seat!” please follow this procedure: Check the ticket stubs of BOTH parties to determine seating, performance and date. More often than not, it is either a wrong row, wrong seat (i.e. 121, 21) or Front Orchestra versus Balcony. Encountering two patrons with identical tickets for one seat happens very infrequently. **Very carefully** check both tickets for the correct date, the correct time, the correct section, the correct row, and the correct seat. Whenever you believe that two tickets have been issued for the same seat, it is extremely important that you **bring both sets of tickets** to your Lead Usher, the House Manager, or Box Office. Be sure to not forget which patron has which ticket. **WITH BOTH SETS OF TICKETS IN YOUR HANDS, ALLOW THE PATRONS ALREADY SEATED TO REMAIN IN THEIR SEATS.** Have the other patrons wait out of the way on the ramp while the tickets are brought to the Box Office. The Box Office will try to resolve the issue and if possible assign new seats for the patrons.

**Sound and Temperature Complaints:** Whenever you receive a sound or temperature complaint from patrons, thank them for letting you know, find out the nature and location of the complaint, and tell them that you will immediately inform the House Manager about it. Then, do just that. Be as specific as possible when reporting it. NEVER make derogatory remarks about the sound or temperature to anyone. This will only make them more upset. **Listen, respond, and report.**

**Patron Misconduct:** Try your best to politely rectify the problem. If you cannot solve the problem easily, report it to your Lead Usher or the **Front of House Manager**.

**Accidents or Medical Emergencies:** When any accident occurs, tend to the patron’s needs immediately. Offer to call for an ambulance. One usher needs to stay with the injured patron and other will get the **Front of House Manager**. **Notify the Front of House Manager/Lead Usher Immediately.**

It is very important that the Front of House Manager be told the exact location of the accident (inside or outside, left or right ramp, balcony, box, or orchestra and what row) and what type of injury has occurred. If you do not encounter the Front of House Manager, go directly to the Box Office – they will contact the Front of House Manager. Before you leave the Box Office be sure the box office staff has repeated the information correctly and wait to see if there are any questions. **Do not attempt to move the injured patron. Do not offer advice (medical or otherwise.)** Keep bystanders, including other ushers, away from the accident area. Make a mental note of anything overheard. You may be asked for a brief statement for the accident report. Pay particular attention to patrons who may fall, people who appear to be intoxicated, or someone who needs medical attention. **Even if you think it is “minor” please notify the Front of House Manager.**

**Emergency Evacuation:** In the event that the theatre must be evacuated because of an emergency situation, your job is to remain calm, listen to and follow instructions as given.



Dear Friends of Music Theatre Wichita,

We appreciate your willingness and desire to usher for MTWichita. This year Century II went through a major reevaluation of the safety standards and protocols throughout the building; we at MTWichita decided it was time to likewise evaluate and investigate our responsibilities to our patrons. Below we've outlined details about the duties we must require of all ushers at Music Theatre Wichita. Please initial by each item and sign and print your name at the bottom. This form needs to be turned into Cathy before any ushering dates are assigned.

We couldn't do what we do without our wonderful volunteers! Keeping our volunteers and patrons safe is one of our highest priorities. Many aspects of the work you do requires high level of physical activity. These physical requirements exist specifically for your safety, and for the safety of our patrons.

- \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to stand for approximately 2 hours.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to lift a box of playbills from the floor to a bench or table.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to walk up and down two flights of stairs in order to assist patrons in case of an emergency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to assist patrons with mobility issues, and those using wheelchairs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have read and understand the other requirements and expectations in the MTWichita Usher Handbook (available at [MTWichita.org](http://MTWichita.org)).

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Print name above

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Signature above

If you find that you are unable to meet the requirements above, we hope you might consider continuing your relationship with our organization in some other way.

Our **Music Theatre Wichita Guild**, for example, provides many volunteer opportunities.