

# So You Want To Be a Technical Director...

Mark Rousculp '94

Alex French '05

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This document is being written as a companion to the Producer's Guide. It covers some of the things a Technical Director should know to do, be aware of, and prepare for. It is, and will always be, an incomplete work in progress. Please add liberally as new wisdom accumulates. Remember that the list of things to do is not exhaustive and the directions may require adjustment for specific circumstances.

## **Time Requirements: How much time should you expect this job to take**

You will have an initial flurry of activity immediately after the prod staff is finalized that will absorb a few hours during the week for about two or three weeks. After that, your Saturdays are pretty much a wash. Afternoons from 1pm to 5pm are given over to set builds. Expect to have to make several shopping trips to Home Depot, Backstage Hardware and the like as well. These can often be fit into the 11am to 1pm timeslot before builds. Dinner after build is a great time to cement relations with the cast and crew. If you're really cut out for this, you'll start losing sleep to worrying and redesigning things about a week after you've designed anything. The week before Move you may have a few nights' work in space to do preliminary rigging, and to organize the shop for Move. After Move day proper, your life belongs to the show. Take a week off work, and expect to spend 16 hours a day in space until opening.

## **Two months before opening**

- Get involved in the interview process for Set Designer, Lighting Designer and Sound Engineer if you can. You will want to know early on whether these are people you can work with easily, and you will want to build a good rapport. You also want to know early whether any of them are likely to flake out on you. You should be involved in Costume Designer and Properties Manager also, though you'll interact with these people less (as long as they do their jobs well).
- Hold a preliminary design meeting with the Director, Set Designer, probably the Lighting Designer, and as few other people as possible. Have the Director come with a written description of what they want and what the show needs technically before this meeting, and have designers present thoughts and ask questions at this meeting. Have another small meeting in about a week for designers to present initial ideas.
- After that first meeting, lay down the law on a timetable for designs. This is especially important for sets. You should have a preliminary set design in your hands within two weeks,

which should include a summary of the major pieces to be built and the basic mechanics of the set.

- Find out now if you are working with an artistic designer or a mechanical designer. Each has pluses and minuses. An artistic designer will provide all the detailing to make a piece pretty, and you just need to get it built, but you will probably have to do most or all of the design drawing and all the effects planning yourself. A mechanical designer will provide you with design drawings and will probably think through effects carefully, but you will have to keep in mind facing details, artistic considerations, and niggly bits. In short, you must compensate a little for what your designer is not.
- Get yourself a floor plan of the space you'll be working in and get familiar with it. Alex French can produce CAD plans in VectorWorks or .AutoCAD format for either Sala or KLT, or can make PDFs at whatever scale and with whatever information you'd like.
- Arrange with the Set Shop Manager to schedule a set shop cleanup. Spam heavily for it. As well as getting the shop organized, use this time to get familiar with it yourself and start to learn about the folks (cast members) who will be working under you.
- Get a budget from the Producer. Don't let the Set Designer run his/her own budget. One third of all expenditure is miscellaneous, and occurs during prod week. This is one of the most-forgotten realities about sets budgeting. If you are given \$600, plan out how the show will be built for \$400, and watch the rest vanish into all the things that come up during prod week. Even the smallest show will need about \$100 for paint.
- We have a lot of parts in the shop that can and should be reused. That's why we keep them around. A new coat of paint, some fresh facing, and voila! Free set piece.
- When asked for your preference as to prod staff meeting scheduling, keep in mind that every Saturday for the next two months or so (more in summer, less during IAP) will be given over to the show. Keep this especially in mind when someone suggests Sunday as a good day for meetings. Then do what you must.
- Assign cast members to tech crews for the production process. There should be an option on the audition form that allows them to specify preferences. Sit down with the Stage Manager and get everyone assigned, then make sure email goes out to let them know. Start making sure everyone in the cast knows their responsibilities for builds and Put-In.
- Set crew will always need the most people, but almost any cast will have people that won't do anything for the set crew. These people may be able to help better on publicity or costumes.

## **Six weeks before opening**

- You should have the preliminary design. If you don't, lean on the Set Designer daily until you get it. Remind them that the later you start, the more you'll have to cut from what they want. Review the design carefully, keeping in mind scene changes, crew requirements, and storage space backstage. Don't forget about sight lines. Do all the moving pieces fit in the wings? Do they fit around the fixed pieces? Don't forget to factor in height and overhangs.

Especially if you're in KLT, remember that lights and sets may have to fill some of the same space.

- Meet with the Designer and explain patiently any changes that will need to be made. Negotiate and compromise where you can, but do not bend on the most important changes. Try to suggest solutions rather than cuts.
- Show Paul Buckley at CAC or Dave Kemp's replacement early set designs as early as possible. Keep in touch about changes throughout the process.
- Insist on a "final" design within two weeks.
- Start building pieces you know you'll need, and about which there is no argument. If there is complex effects tech, start working on this now. You may have to fine tune it in space, but get as much preliminary work out of the way early as you can.
- You may get a burst of early set shop volunteers, especially when you have the least to do. Go out of your way to keep everyone busy, and feeling important. If you don't, the cast will come to the insane conclusion that tech is so on top of things that they aren't needed, and will never be seen again. Even if you don't touch a tool for weeks on end, but only manage others, make this a priority.
- Keep track of who comes to set builds. It will keep the cast honest, and the producer will love you later when it's time to assign (or withhold) comps.
- Make and keep up-to-date a build list. Indicate who has been working on each project, and note at the end of each build how it's coming along. Check up on project progress at least once per build per project.
- Encourage your best carpenters, Director, and Designer to drink, and go out to get dinner and beer with them after set builds. Encourage the other folks even more, they're the ones you really need to convince to keep coming back. The Cambridge Brewing Company and The Asgard are close and convenient.
- Bug the producer about reserving some time in the space during the week before Move. An evening or two is usually all that's really necessary, but if you have any rigging or other space-intensive work that should happen before cluttering the place up with set pieces and sawdust, it's a tremendous help to get it done ahead of time.
- Spam show lists regularly with build announcements. If the producer hasn't, create a show-ninja e-mail list for folks who aren't on the prod staff but might help out.
- If you are doing a summer show, reserve a truck for Move and Strike. Budget has 15' trucks at reasonable prices. You must do this early, or risk not getting a truck, because summer show Move often falls very near the busiest moving day of the year. Driving the truck is lots of fun, but getting somebody else to do it for you will let you be much more effective managing Put-In and Strike.
- Have your Stage Manager make sure that anyone new to the Guild is absolutely clear on their technical requirements- builds, Move, Strike, any other specifics.

- Constantly talk to the Stage Manager and Director about what set changes need to be fast, what needs to be done while a scene is going on, what can be done in blackout with cover music. Compare this to your plans, and adjust the plans accordingly.

### **Four weeks before opening**

- You should have a final design. If you don't, you run the grave risk of a very long prod week, rebuilding set pieces. Debug the design. Check it against your script, scene notes, and wing dimensions again. Do not be afraid to make cuts, but try not to get into an antagonistic relationship with the Director or Designer if you can help it. Rethink through every place one scenic element connects with another and whether there's a better way. If anything has been built incorrectly, fix it now instead of waiting until you're in space.
- If there are major changes that still need to be made, meet with the Director and Designer and make your case clearly and completely. There may be options you didn't consider that they can point out to you. Consider asking for outside advice. If there are effects you have been putting off thinking about, finalize them now, and prototype them. If they don't work, you'll want to know now, not during prod week.
- Start scheduling when certain pieces can be finished.
- Start painting or at least priming anything you can. This is a great way of finishing pieces that would otherwise stand around the shop, 90% done, waiting for some final touch that will never come.
- If you're using blank firing or other realistic prop guns, get a gun handler and have him/her talk to Paul Buckley or Dave Kemp's replacement, Dave Barber, and the CPs now. The Guild has developed a formal Gun Policy. Edmvd Golaski, Alex French or Todd Radford should have the most recent version.
- Make sure you're still keeping up with your build list.
- Figure out how much you're going to need to spend on paint, and purchase what you don't already have. Backstage Hardware is the cheapest place you can get Rosco paint, and lots of other things.
- Make an inventory of any special hardware that the guild does not own and can't be purchased locally. Order now. McMaster Carr and Rose Brand between them should be able to provide most things you need. If you think some piece of hardware doesn't exist, keep Googling. It probably is out there somewhere.
- Attendance to builds may be flagging a bit. Bug the cast, and make sure that folks who show up feel well used.
- If you are doing a Fall, IAP or Spring show, reserve a truck for Move and Strike. Budget provides 15' trucks at reasonable prices.
- At a prod staff, meeting hammer out the prod week schedule as much as possible. Make sure to allow time for sound work if you're using body mics. Coordinate every detail with the Stage Manager, and make sure you're both prepared to adjust on the fly.

- Coordinate with SM and Orchestra Director what you'll need for monitors- audio, vocal only, video, etc. Delegate dealing with this, and with communication equipment, to your Sound Engineer if possible. If not, either find someone else or make sure you have time to deal with it- this is just as important as any technical effect for the success of the show.

## **Two weeks before opening (one week before Move)**

- Make sure that departments have finalized arrangements for rentals, borrowing, or purchasing. This includes especially lighting equipment, props, and batteries for sound (purchasing) if you're using mics. Don't let people wait until prod week to deal with things they can pick up now.
- Start keeping an eye on the weather for the day of Move, and think about how you'll deal if there's rain, snow, or locusts. Waiting until the weather gets better probably isn't an option, no matter how bad it is.
- Find time during the week to make a Move list. Make an exhaustive list of everything that needs to come over from the shop. This list should include, but is far from limited to:
  1. Tools. Pack small power tools in the red roly chest, just about everything else in the large black chest. Make sure you have drill bits (countersink and for carriage bolts) and any saw blades you might need.
  2. Spare dexion (at least 30# of assorted short pieces, at least 20# of assorted medium pieces, over and above anything you think you'll actually use). Bring all dexion nuts and bolts. Deciding how much spare dexion to bring is an art. Bringing too much will make cast members complain, but bringing too little could waste precious hours of your time late in prod week. Err on the side of caution.
  3. All milk crates and buckets in the Cage. You never know when you'll need some random hardware. This includes carriage bolts, dexion twerps, pulleys, casters, hinges, rope and string, door hardware, brackets, and several containers of random hardware.
  4. Facing. It's painful, but bring twice as much as you think you'll need from the pile atop the lumber bins. Sort this out if you can before Move day. It will save time and splinters.
  5. Spare lumber. Bring several dozen 7-8' lengths of strapping, a dozen shorter lengths, some 2x4's of various lengths, and a sheet or two of lauan, beyond what you know you'll need.
  6. Pippin boxes. Bring 8 or so more than you think you'll need. These are always useful, and you'll be glad you did.
  7. Painting supplies, including brushes, rollers, handles, drop clothes, stirrers, tupperware containers and lids, and a straight-edge. You (or your set painter) should have gone through the paint cabinet and marked all paint cans to be used ahead of time. Remember any bare wood, anywhere in the set, needs a coat of paint on it to be psuedo-fireproofed.
  8. All furniture and platforms you will need. Check your list twice. Bringing extras is in this one case not worth it, because of the bulk and labor involved.
  9. If you're legging platforms, don't forget the legs.

- If you have preliminary rigging to do, get it out of the way during the week sometime. If you have to hang the traveler in Kresge Little, get somebody who's done it before to help. A little work with ropes and pulleys can make your life much easier. Coordinate this with lights, to make sure that if you are forced by space availability to conflict with light hang, you can work in a way that won't hinder them too much.
- Make sure that the cast is clear on their Put-In requirement. In your email announcing Move, make sure you mention that it is an all-day commitment, and that people should dress to work. Mention work gloves and water. Make it clear that you'll work regardless of weather.
- Check that design again. Second guess your debugging of it, to look for more holes. Kill lots of trees with sketches, musings, and design drawings. You won't have much time for this once Put-In starts.
- You should have extensive plans for how Move and Put-In will work, and you should be prepared to adjust them on the fly. Don't forget to think about where everything will go in between getting carried over and where it ends up- moving things two or three times in space can waste a lot of energy.
- If the Stage Manager starts referring actors to you with Move day conflicts at this late date, be brutal, abusive and express thinly-veiled threats of violence to their families. Make it clear that if you should deign to accept their immortal souls instead of their time, you'd be doing them a favor. If you do let anyone out of Move, document it, exact a specific term of alternate service out of them (two specific long afternoons before rehearsal, ferrying service at your beck and call for the entirety of prod week, or one specific late night of your choice in space from the end of rehearsal until whenever you leave yourself, are standard collateral), and if they don't fulfill this, make sure the producer finds out and withholds comps. You want a reputation as a bastard in this regard.
- If your spouse, s.o. or family is not directly involved in the show, kiss them goodbye, and tell them you'll see them again after opening night.
- Start recruiting crew heavily. You should know by now how many you'll need. Talk with your SM about whether you'll want a run crew chief (and get one) or if the ASM will be in charge of scene change work. If you're using guns, all gun handling details should be pinned down by now.
- Make sure a Paper Tech has been scheduled and that the Stage Manager is comfortable running it. Make sure the relevant people will be there, and others won't. You should not need to be there yourself as long as your Stage Manager, designers and possibly a crew chief are on top of things, but being a fly on the wall may help.
- Make sure that you know whether there will be restrictions on how late you can stay in space. Just asking CAC probably isn't a good plan, but do everything you can to investigate.

## **One week before opening (Prod Week)**

### **Saturday – Move.**

- Have your truck driver pick up the truck as early as possible. Pick up three dozen donuts and few boxes o' joe from Dunkin Donuts and get back to Walker a little early if you can,

say 8:45 a.m. to get everything unlocked and ready. The entire cast and prodstaff should be present at Walker Memorial by 9 a.m. Be ready for them. Ask the SM to show up with a cell phone, to harass late-comers.

- You should not touch a tool, and you should rarely lift anything yourself during Move. Delegate specific tasks (like pulling platforms) and give people lists; keep yourself free to float, manage, and find and fix bottlenecks.
- Put two people you can rely on into the back of the truck to direct loading and packing. Make sure they are fast as well as efficient. Edmvnd, Mark, Monty, Steve Peters, Greg Pollock: they're all good people for this.
- Encourage people to take water breaks, and if it's winter outside, encourage people not wearing enough clothes to cover up. You don't want them getting sick.
- If you find bottlenecks, do what you can to resolve them, or redistribute people to other tasks that are slowing down.
- Platforms and flats go out first, then dexion, then geometrically compact pieces, then furniture, then odd pieces, then paint, then odds and ends. This makes it easy for the loaders. Stage to the lawn, load to the truck from there.
- Be present in person when tools and painting supplies are taken out.
- Make sure people know about the coffee and doughnuts.
- Keep a list of major pieces, and check them off as they go out, or delegate this to someone appropriate- if you've got someone who's 5' tall, weighs 95lbs soaking wet and is technically savvy, this is a great place for them.
- Be encouraging, cheerful, and positive at all times. Positive attitude can overcome even the worst conditions- cite the blizzard of 'aught five frequently.
- Once the truck is almost loaded, send the bulk of your crew to space so that they'll be there waiting when it arrives. Send a reliable person with them to coordinate.
- Lock up the shop when you leave.
- When unloading, put the same two loaders in the truck.
- Again, you should not touch anything but your clipboard.
- Supervise the placement of everything. Get tools to a good, out of the way corner where they will be accessible later but not in the way now. Do the same for paints. Stack things neatly and make sure everything's accessible and not in the way of your first few construction projects.
- Stay cheerful, keep being encouraging and friendly.

- After unloading, give everyone a break for lunch. Half an hour to forty-five minutes is enough. Use this time to get your wits about you and plan out Put-In. Have someone bring you food, and remember to eat it. If you haven't already talked about things you're delegating, gather people who will be in charge of projects now and tell them what they need to know while others eat.
- Think about staggering lunch breaks to get some work done- such as laying masonite in Sala- that will slow down other things.

### **Saturday – Put-In**

- Again, do not touch any tools. You will never have this many ready hands again, so use them as efficiently as you can. Platforms should go in first, then fixed flats. Every set is different, so you'll have to improvise after this.
- Keep moving, encouraging and helping with advice and kind words. Do not stay still any more than you can help. Delegate to your more clueful people as much as you can. It saves you grey hair.
- Keep everyone busy all the time. It is discouraging to people working to see others slacking in the house. People who need breaks should be sent away to do so. LaVerde's and the Coffeehouse are good places. Have them bring things back for you and others present. This will keep everyone honest.
- The cast is generally released between 5 and 6PM.
- It is tempting to knock off at dinner time, but a tremendous amount of work can be gotten out of the way by pressing on as late as possible. Stay in space as late as you can. Keep anyone who is willing and able to help working as long as you can bear it, and can keep them busy. You'll appreciate this time a lot more as prod week advances. You can start using tools yourself after 6 or 7, too.
- As people leave, remind them that you will be in space building all day Sunday, and that they should come help, but be nice about it. Let the Stage Manager be the hard case here.

### **Sunday – Build**

- Show up as early as you can. This is your chance to tinker with those pesky technical effects you haven't been able to delegate as well as you'd hoped. As people show up, put them to work.
- Set up and stick with specific stations for dust-intensive work like dremeling, routing, panel-sawing and the like, and keep this area far away from the painting area. Your scene painter will love you for this.
- Set up and stick with specific stations for painting work when possible.
- Make sure you occasionally sweep unused tools back to the main tool area. Don't be too anal, but get into the habit. Take some time each day to organize tools and hardware just enough that you know where everything is.



- Coordinate with the Stage Manager when the stage needs to be clear. Stick to that time.
- If you're using vocal mics and there's a Sunday afternoon sing through, it will need to be in space. Otherwise much of later rehearsal time will get taken up dealing with mic issues unnecessarily.
- Work as late as you can. Keep all volunteers busy. At the end of the night, lock all power tools up if you can (in the electrics room in Kresge), or put them out of sight.

#### **Monday – First orchestra (usually)**

- Show up as early as you can and work on the set.
- Make sure you have a playing area for the orchestra done and clear by whenever the Orchestra Director wants to start setting up.
- Do everything you can to help your sound engineer be ready for this rehearsal, if you're using body mics.
- Do everything you can to have the acoustic environment set up by this time- hang blacks, put up large flats, anything that will change how the orchestra sounds and what they can hear.
- After rehearsal, work as late as you can. Keep all volunteers busy. At the end of the night, lock all power tools up if you can (in the electrics room in Kresge), or put them out of sight.

#### **Tuesday – Tech Night**

- Make sure that your SM or crew chief has prepared a Run Plot: Where do all the set pieces live and move to during scene changes, how many crewies should be needed for each scene change, what can actors do to help.
- Work on the set until 5 or so. Get everything cleaned up and organized as best you can before rehearsal. Your priority is to have as many technical effects as possible operational, not pretty or perfected, by rehearsal time.
- Either the SM or you will run this rehearsal. Make sure who, and how it will go, is agreed upon ahead of time. Make sure you get all scene changes ironed out to the point that practice will get them where they should be come opening. Zub any scene that does not involve a tech cue, light cue or quick costume-change.
- Do not be afraid to run a scene change two, three, or six times, until it's right. That's your prerogative, and you won't get another chance to do this before you open. A stopwatch may be handy.
- If you see something that simply will not work, tag it as such, and move on. You'll have to fix it this week, but do not pull out any tools now. You're just wasting everyone's time, and spending good karma points for no reason.

- Make no promises about when you'll be done. Actors should not make any plans. Some tech nights run an hour shorter than a regular rehearsal, some run two hours long. Prepare for the worst.
- Try not to yell too much. You'll just lose your voice. When you do yell, it should be enough of a surprise that people will listen to you. Having your sound engineer create a "God Mic", even if you're in Sala, will help a lot.
- Sit in the house, near enough that you can confer with the Stage Manager, Lighting Designer, and Sound Engineer.
- Keep your script handy, and take copious notes.
- When you're done, make absolutely sure you really are, but then say so. Declare the rehearsal over and let actors get some sleep. Stay organized and in control. Everyone will thank you for it later.
- Work as late as you can. Keep all volunteers busy. At the end of the night, lock all power tools up if you can (in the electrics room in Kresge), or put them out of sight.
- If you haven't already hung soft goods (blacks, cyc) get to work on that now and have them mostly up for first dress.

#### **Wednesday – First Dress**

- Show up as early as you can and work on the set.
- Anything that will effect actors should be done before this rehearsal. Make sure actors get specifically informed about anything they interact with that changes after this rehearsal.
- Try to clean up as many tools as you can yourself. The cast will gladly help around 6:30, but you may have trouble finding things that were "cleaned up" in this way once rehearsal is over, and 6:30 is probaly too late to get started if you're SM is running a good, tight schedule.
- This is often an exhausting night. For some reason Wednesday is the hardest night to stay motivated. Burn-out will hit almost everyone around 2 A.M. Be willing to knock off early, or bring in some surprise refreshments to perk your crew up. Food is good. At the end of the night, lock all power tools up if you can (in the electrics room in Kresge), or put them out of sight.

#### **Thursday – Final Dress**

- Show up as early as you can and work on the set.
- Anything that will affect actors should REALLY be done before this rehearsal- if you're painting the stage, have the first coat down so actors know what it'll look like. Blacks should be up, glow tape should be out, spikes should be set, ANYTHING that could affect an actor. Make sure actors are explicitly informed of any changes that occur after this rehearsal.

- It does not matter how on the ball you were, expect to be in space until dawn. Little things will just keep popping up. Clean up tools and paints before you leave for the night. Do everything you can to have all large painting done before you leave. There is no better feeling than leaving the space knowing there is nothing more you can do, and there is no worse feeling than opening night on a tacky stage that stinks of latex.
- If you're in Sala, get the cast to stick around and finish setting up the audience this night. Hopefully you've had time to get much of that done already.

### **Friday – Opening**

- Show up as early as you can make it back to the space and give everything a good once-over. Check all lines and travelers to make sure there are no snags or tangles. Run as many special effects as you can. Then relax and enjoy the show.

### **First week of the run**

Unless you have taken on additional responsibilities, such as run crew or operating special effects, you have no responsibilities at all. It's a good idea to arrive a little early to check over the set though, and to ask your crew if they had any problems operating set pieces or effects, and to check whether anything broke. You'll have to fix it if it did. If you haven't already, line up a location for the crew party. Make sure the Producer knows this is your responsibility, while the strike party is his or hers. Your location should be someplace you can bring alcohol, and arrange with the last TD to pick up the crew bar. Clear it with the landlord, the neighbors, the cops, and whoever else might care.

### **Second week of the run**

#### **Crew Party**

This takes place the night before closing night, so if you close on Saturday, this will be Friday after the performance. Only the prod staff, production crew and stage crew are invited. No actors! There is some argument as to where actors who also hold prod staff positions fit in, and you have final say in resolving this question.

You are responsible for finding a location for the party, and for organizing the festivities. There should be warm food, beverages, and drinks. MTG keeps a Crew Bar which is stocked with the leavings of previous crew parties (some of the bottles in there have been around for decades) which is supposed to travel from crew party to crew party. We've also established a tradition of show-related alcohols. During the night you'll get to toast to several recent shows.

Ideally, you should have hot food ready within fifteen minutes of everyone arriving. You have a lot of work to get through.

Get a copy of the Award List. This should be available from a recent TD. Alex French currently maintains a master copy updated regularly. Tell stories. You're the TD, you get to decide what gets told and who gets to tell what. Spreading stories out over multiple tellers is generally a good plan. Skip lots of stories. Don't worry about awards being given in bad humor now. You can always change awards before the Strike Party tomorrow.

*Suggestion from Stephen Peters, who's sat in on way too many deathly-long crew and cast parties:* Better yet, just glance over the award list beforehand, and do the ones you can remember. Let people call out award names and suggestions, and tell the stories as they're brought up. Fewer awards will be given, but you'll get the major ones, and you're also more likely to only give out awards that actually make sense for the show (rather than having everyone rack their brains trying to find something that cries out for the "Dim it, Dammit" award).

Before the party breaks up, talk to heads of each department and have time estimates and plans for anything that requires coordination (use of ladders and scaffolding, removal of set pieces to access lights)

Get good and drunk, and make sure you need help getting home.

### **Closing Night – Pre-Strike**

- If possible, spend the afternoon in space organizing things for Strike and possibly returning some material to the shop. You'll hate this at 6PM when it's just you and one helper unloading the truck in the rain while the cast warms up, but if this saves 30 minutes later that night, it will be worth it.
- Paint and hardware, as well as scrap materials, can go back to the shop now. Every nut, bolt, caster and bracket actually used in the show can go in two or three buckets during Strike to get sorted at the next set shop cleanout.
- Assign cast and crew members to various areas- Lights, Costumes, etc,- and make sure the department heads are happy with these people.
- Discussing tricky details of deconstruction with a few savvy people now will save you time later. If you go so far as to let people know what they're doing at the beginning of Strike and who's in charge of them, you can save yourself a lot of work during the first 40 minutes of Strike. But after the first 20 or so you'll need to start adjusting no matter how precise your plans were.
- Figure out the order that Strike will need to occur in. This is vitally important, as early bottlenecks can take the wind out of the whole enterprise. In general, take the set apart in the opposite order it went in. Every set is different though so there's nothing I can tell you beyond the most general observations.
- Make note of borrowed items, and where they need to be returned to. Budget time and people to get this done. Items that need to be returned on campus during business hours, or that were borrowed from non-MIT groups, can live in the office for a few days until transport can be arranged. Each department (lights, props, etc.) should return things they borrowed, but you're ultimately responsible for everything getting back.
- Keep your notes on a sturdy clipboard, and keep it with you at all times during Strike. Check off tasks as you complete them.
- Have your truck driver pick up the truck. You can usually leave the truck in Kresge Lot until it's needed, since this is a free lot on Saturdays (IF you have card access). Be careful when parking though. You want to try to squeeze into a normal spot if you can. Don't block any loading dock ramps until after the show when you're actually loading.

- Prepare tools for Strike on a table or cart you can drag onto stage. Keep one of every hand tool (dex tool, 1/4" nut driver, adjustable wrench at the least) on your person to give out when someone needs it.
- Get a good, hearty dinner, and enjoy the show.

### **Closing Night – Strike**

A little Strike theory. There are two schools of thought on how many truck loads should be sent to Walker. One school holds that everything should be packed into one load, and driven over together. The other claims that two loads are more efficient, and more complete because the little things that always get forgotten the first time can go over with the truck rather than being carried by tired actors. I am a firm proponent of the two loads theory, and this description assumes that you will probably be making two loads to the shop. Note that some shows will be two-loaders no matter what you do, based on pure size.

- Under no circumstance should you ever touch a tool during Strike! Your job is to manage, to keep idle hands working, and to assign people to tasks. If a task seems likely to start forming a bottleneck, assign more people to it, or different people depending on the problem. Keep all available tools working, and the most appropriate hands. We have maybe nine full dexion tool sets, and all should be working all the time that there is dexion to disassemble. Same for drill drivers. If there is a screw in a piece wood, all drivers should be in operation. Set out these tools ahead of time, untangle all the extension cords, and place them where you can hand them out like party favors. If there's lots to disassemble, you might consider setting up disassembly stations. Have one crew bring set pieces to the station, where another crew tears them apart, and a third crew carries the parts to the loading dock. Never answer the question "How long do you think Strike will take?" unless the person asking has a reason for the answer (cooking for the party, running light strike).
- The instant the curtain falls, get backstage and start the run crew striking furniture and dressing as close to the loading dock as you can. Actors will be changing, greeting family, and otherwise useless for at least twenty minutes. Prod staff will usually trickle in a little sooner, but not much. Stage crew is there now, and reliably wants nothing more than to get started immediately. Use them.
- Start the loud, upbeat music as quickly as possible. It's going to be a long night (even for the shortest Strike) and that'll help with energy (and it'll help clear the last few audience members out). Just keep an eye on the volume- make sure it doesn't interfere with general communication, and that you can control it easily for making announcements or coordinating large moves.
- Use space wisely just like at Put-In. Stage dismantled parts to collection areas. Move every object as few times as possible. Spread out- in KLT you can disassemble some things in the hall and send props to a corner of the lobby while sound coils cables somewhere else entirely, keeping the stage as open as possible.
- As soon as the theater is empty, get ladders into the sky, put Monument together, and get blacks down and folded. Blacks cannot be allowed to touch the floor, ever!

- Do everything you can to expose platforms that will require disassembly. These will be a tremendous bottleneck, and the sooner you can get them started the better. In Sala, you may have to tear up the stage first also.
- If you need to throw away large items, you'll have to cart them to a dumpster (NOT the Student Center compactor), chop them up into small pieces, or take them back to the shop to be dealt with later. Don't leave things outside dumpsters and assume they'll get dealt with.
- The orchestra is responsible for clearing the orchestra space, but they are not required to stay for any more of Strike. Encourage them to, but do not pressure them.
- If anything was borrowed from WW15, get it out pronto and send it away before you want to load the truck with everything else.
- Stay alert for idle hands. Do not be afraid to interrupt people to ask if they are idle. If they are, get them onto a task – any task – immediately.
- Be everywhere at once. No one should go more than ten minutes without seeing your smiling face.
- Get a crew of two strong backs to be your truck loading crew. They must be people who can load efficiently, but also quickly. The same people who loaded and unloaded at Move are good choices. Once they are in place, start staging to the truck. Let the truck crew determine what gets loaded when, and give them as many people as they can keep busy. They will want platforms first, then flats, then anything else large and flat.
- Insist that dexion travel to the set shop organized by length. It is possible to keep it that way in transit, especially if you use plastic wrap. This is tremendously helpful and will save you a lot of time and stress on the set shop end of things.
- Once you have the first load in the truck, select 6 or 8 people to be your set shop crew, and send them over on foot. They will stay there the rest of the evening. Also, in the set shop crew include a set shop manager to run things on the Walker end.
- The first load in the truck will generally include:
  - As many platforms as possible
  - All flats
  - All full lauan, plywood and masonite sheets
  - Painting supplies (unless they went back before the show)
  - Music stands

The first load should not include any tools.

Other than that, take anything you can, and go once you have a relatively full vehicle. Having the first load leave quickly is probably more important than having it all the way full.

- Instruct the truck crew as follows: The truck must be unloaded as quickly as possible. Stage onto the lawn by Walker. Do not get bogged down while the ground crew carries things into the theater, just get the truck unloaded and get back to the theater pronto. The ground crew can worry about staging from the lawn to the shop once the truck is gone.

- Make sure there is a cell phone number you can call for progress reports from the Set Shop.
- When the second load is ready to go, assign a crew of 6 to 8 people to stay in the theater and clean up, and get any rigging or pipes out of the sky that you may have put up. Make sure the person you leave in charge is trustworthy and knows what all still needs to be done.
- Stay mobile, and do not lose your cool. Praise work well done liberally. Do not answer the question “how long do you thing Strike will take” unless it’s from the person cooking at the party.
- You should go to the Set Shop with the second truck load. Ride in the truck; don’t waste your time walking.
- Leave the truck crew to get the truck unloaded, and leave the set shop manager to deal in the shop (provided a glance leaves you with the impression that all is still well). Instead, manage the step in between. Get the lawn cleared, and make sure that items go into the shop in an order that’s useful. Keep an eye out for people not wearing enough layers (if it’s winter), or not drinking enough water (if it’s summer) and get them to correct this. This is the stage where people are the most likely to get hurt.
- Call the Party Crew, and give them a heads-up warning.
- Keep everyone working as best as you can. This will get trickier the closer you are to done. Call the theater, see if they need people. Do not be afraid to send some bodies back. You must avoid at all costs having one crew finish noticeably after the other!
- When you’re done, find a nice color of spray paint, locate a cool section of wall, and paint the show name on the wall. Gather everyone around, and announce the location of the party. Congratulations, you’re almost done.
- At the party, after you’ve gotten yourself a couple of beers and a good meal, read the awards. You should cut probably two thirds of the awards you gave the night before. Cross them off your list while you’re eating and drinking. Awards were assigned in anger at the crew party, but should be given in fun at the cast party. Just make sure you tell some good stories, and be done. Any gripes can be happily ignored later. Awards given, you are done. You survived!

Well, mostly. You’re still responsible for making sure that anything borrowed gets returned, especially to Theater Arts. If anyone complains about something you did to the theatre, be honest and deal with it immediately. Go to the next set shop cleanout and help the shop get back in good shape. Take some time to think about how the show went, and learn from it. Update and add to this guide. Come back and do it all again, but a little bit better.