

<https://soundcloud.com/jenelle-7/hogan-interview>

J: Jenelle

H: Hogan

J: Hello Mr. Hogan

H: Hi Jenelle. How are you?

J: Im good how are you?

H: Im good.

J: So my EQ is How can a stage manager ensure a show runs smoothly? Do you have any initial thoughts on how I can answer that question?

H: I think the best thing a SM can do is to have their hands in everything, meaning they know how to do a little bit of everything. That way they can make sure that things are going according to plan. I think being able to wear many hats and being detail oriented are a big part of that as well. I also think that the difference between a good show and an amazing show is in the details.

J: That's a good point. I really like that idea. So, you talked about having your hands in everything and knowing a little bit of everything, are there any other qualities that make a good stage manager

H: Definately detail oriented,being able to wear many hats. A stage manager has to be kind of a harmonizer. Someone that knows when to put their foot down and be strict, but at the same time knows when someone is having a bad day and needs an gentil approach. Or when someone is having a really bad day a lot and it is time to say okay something has to change. So that is really the social part of being a stage manager. But I think a big part of stage management that isn't focused on much in school, especially college, is that there is a lot of patience. So there is a lot of patience needed to fill out all of the union paperwork and be

basically the book keeper so that all of the people can get paid at the right time, and that you keep time and that all of the blocking is correct. So just being able to multitask and keep track of things is a big skill you will need.

J: Okay perfect! So you talked about how you need to know when someone is having a bad day, is there any way to judge how strict you should be and a way to make sure one person doesn't think you're picking on them more than the others?

H: A lot of it is self monitoring, so if i realize I have been correcting a student a lot, there has to be a moment after class where you talk to the student and say look, I know there has been a lot of issues today, but it is nothing personal, I just really need you to do x y or z. Or at the same time, making sure you are giving as much positive feedback as negative feedback that way they don't feel like they are getting picked on.

J: \*writes down notes\* Okay, on a different note, is there any such thing as the perfect show?

H: There is a yes answer, and a no answer. The no, is there is never going to be a show where everything goes absolutely right, there is always going to be something, **but that is what makes life in theatre fun, the fact that every night is something different.** So the perfect show is one that feels good when it is done. So when you feel like most the cues when perfectly, and most of the actors remembered their lines, and even if they didn't, they were so connected with their partners that it felt organic. So everyone comes off the show going I think that went really well. I think that is how you determine what a perfect show is, it isn't in the technical part of the show that went perfect, but in how everyone feels like a show went well that makes a show so perfect.

J: That was beautiful. I have asked this question to other stage managers and they all say no that there isn't such thing as a perfect show, but it is the sms job that when something goes wrong, they have to be on their feet to fix it so that it can be perfect to the audience.

H: I think that is another job that a sm needs to have, is not to take everything on themselves because you can't force it to be perfect and that is how people burn out, they feel like they can't just have their hand in everything, they feel like they have to control everything then all of a sudden you can't get everything done because you are out of energy because you didn't trust other people to get it done.

J: okay, talking about rehearsals, how do you keep track of time and make the most of the time you are given?

H: The biggest thing is knowing what the director wants to get done. Directors are big personalities and I think the ones that are teachers are more patient and nurturing and tend to walk you through what they want. Once you get out into the real world, directors are just as much artists as the actors are and performers have the reputation of having big personalities, but directors have just as big personalities as the actors, so if you have a director that has to have this one thing done every time or they won't be happy, then it is the sm responsibility to have that done every time within union rules. And that is the key, you're the mediator between all of these people, but the director is telling you what to do, but isn't technically your boss. Yeah they can control if they want to hire you again, but at the end of the day you have to make sure that everyone is running by the rules and if a director asks you to do something outside of those rules, you have to be able to say i'm sorry, but I can't do that. So to make a rehearsal efficient, you have to know what the director expects, so that the actors don't feel like they have to negotiate it and the director feels like they always have to ask for what they want. Does that make sense?

J: Ya it does, especially having worked with a professional director and a student sm, I saw a lot of the director really wanting the scenes blocked one after another after another at a fast pace,

but the sm wouldn't send out the asms early enough to find the next group of actors and the director got frustrated a lot. So I really understand that.

H: Yeah, like the director might say they want to run this again, but the sm needs to be able to say that there isn't time because the union said they need a break now so they need a break now.

J: yes yes. When you ran your theatre company, you hired sms right? So when you go to hire one, did you look for something in particular in the sm you interviewed?

H: In all honesty, we just hired people my business partner had worked with prior to the opening of our business. I also think that it is a personal connection that is going to get you hired. It is important to make connections with people because, especially in theatre, no one wants to work with someone they don't like, so there has to be a certain kind of networking thing that has to go on in order to get hired. You can't only be good at your job, but you also have to be personable. There are some sms that directors love because they are just cold and blunt and efficient and that is how they are comfortable. But most directors, because they are artistic, want someone that can make a joke and that person not be offended by. Or be able to make a snide comment and that person be able to respond to it because that eases the stress of putting on a production. So I would say that yes, you are looking for efficiency, you also want someone that you can connect with on a personal level and enjoy working with.

J: Okay, so I forgot to ask you this at the beginning, but can you tell me a little about how you got into theatre and your background on the subject?

H: When I was little, I always wanted to be an actor. And my freshman year of high school, the elementary school started doing plays. So the way I got my service hours was to work curtain for them. All I cared about in high school was theatre and I mean that is ALL I cared about. And the director liked that I was there, so the next year they trained me to be a sm. Then by the time

I was a senior, I was an assistant producer, set designer, stage manager, I had a team of parents working under me as stage crew, and I had helped in costuming. I had like an army of parents under me and I had not wanted to be in technical theatre, but it was how I could be there and learn. So when I went to college at USC I took a lot of general theatre classes so that I could know a little bit of everything.

J: This has been an amazing interview Mr. Hogan, thank you for doing this.

H: Cool, thanks.