

SPECIAL EFFECTS

PLANNING

1. Become thoroughly familiar with the play. Mark each effect in your script for subsequent discussion with director.
2. Attend planning meetings with producers and crew heads to discuss basic production schedule and deadlines. The producers and crew will be the most readily approachable sources of help for your effects. Be familiar with what you need and solicit ideas and information at these production meetings.
3. Confer with the director for clarification of effects. The director may have had previous experience with these or similar effects.
4. Determine what effects may be readily conveyed through sound and lighting alone. If so, approach said people with a clear description of what is required and indicate you would like their help, making it perfectly clear that you will be responsible for fabricating or obtaining any special 'item' that is required.
5. Determine as soon as possible any special equipment requirements so that rental or loan arrangements can be made conveniently and economically. Ascertain the likelihood of this production going to festival, which would require certain considerations regarding portability of effects.
6. Check local laws in regard to guns, flash pots etc. Fog machine can be rented from Vancouver or Seaton School Drama Department.

WORKING

1. Obtain a copy of the rehearsal and the 'effects deadline' schedule.
2. Attend as many of the early 'open' rehearsals as possible to determine and to understand your exact cues.
3. Provide your special effects as early on in the rehearsal schedule as possible. The actors appreciate being able to rehearse with the specials as often as possible. Note: specials are controlled and operated by you. Never by actors.
4. With respect to activating a specific effect; this may be done by remote control from the sound and lighting booth by the stage manager and assistants from behind the sets. In the latter case, your presence backstage must be coordinated with the stage manager (who is also a very capable effects assistant). It is most desirable that you handle the effects. Occasionally it may be more convenient to have the stage manager or sound person initiate the effects, especially in a large production where most of your time is spent in preparing the effect to 'go off'.
5. Be present and in operation at as many 'complete run through' rehearsals as possible. Be prepared to receive notes at the end of the rehearsal.
6. Be on hand for all production meetings.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

7. Prepare sequential cue sheets. You may find it most convenient to mount each page of the script on a larger loose-leaf page (with a window cut through for each alternate page of the script) so that cues and details can be marked in margins.
8. Special effects are usually of potential danger to actor or operator. Ascertain and adhere to safety codes and procedures. Avoid taking risks.
9. By first technical rehearsal all effects must be final and running on cue. ALL assistants must be present at all subsequent technical rehearsals and full runs. It is most desirable that any assistants you require are available to work each evening of the run. Alternating assistants from night to night has proven very awkward in the past. A headset could be available for cues from the stage manager if you cannot see the action of the play.

RUN

1. Arrive at the theatre to check ALL special effects one hour before each performance. This check, plus the setting of the effects for Act 1 must be completed before the house is open to the public – 30 minutes before curtain at 8:00 p.m.
2. Check in with stage manager and all of your assistants.
3. Maintain minimal and quiet conversation in the wings. Refrain from chatting with actors just before they are about to go on stage – you might throw them off character. Please ensure your assistants are aware of this courtesy also.
4. Be completely aware of all your cues, checking your script or cue sheet regularly. Be at your ‘effect’ place well in advance.
5. Food, munchies, drink and smoke are not permitted behind the scenes or in the sound and lighting booth.
6. If your assistants are not active for long periods of time, ask them to wait in the clubroom until they know they are needed.
7. Where required, be responsible for changing, setting or cleaning up special effects during scene changes, intermission and after each performance.
8. After the play attend to any problems and be certain that all the effects are ‘shut off’ or left in a safe and secure manner. A locked storeroom is available just off the clubroom.
9. Your operating script and cue sheets are indispensable items – leave in a safe place from night to night. The stage manager should be aware of where you keep this information – a good place might be inside his small desk by the stairs.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

STRIKE

1. After the final performance, disconnect and remove to a safe place any special effects equipment that might otherwise be in the way while the set is being dismantled.
2. Special effect items that were specially fabricated for this play may be worth saving. The props room above proscenium and the workshop has limited storage for items that are not too large and cumbersome.
3. Be responsible for the return of any rented or borrowed equipment, in the appropriate good condition.
4. Help strike the set – in particular the areas and items you were responsible for.
5. Hand any bills and receipts to the administrative producer.
6. Return job description manual and keys to the technical producer.