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## **What Makes a Good Stage Manager**

Laura Garfein

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# WHAT MAKES A GOOD STAGE MANAGER

by

Laura Garfein

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors  
(Theater and Psychology)

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## Advisory Committee:

Dr. Rebecca Schwartz-Metta (Advisor), Associate Professor in Psychology

Mary Jean “MJ” Sedlock (Advisor), Lecturer in Theatre, Production Manager and  
Technical director

Dr. Jordan LaBouff, Associate Professor in Psychology

## ABSTRACT

The stage manager plays a vital role in the creation of theater performances; they are responsible for ensuring the smooth execution of a show from beginning to end. They are in charge of facilitating communication between all departments, running the technical elements once the show starts, and keeping information organized throughout the entire process. There are several resources that lay out the simple job description and requirements of this role, yet few discuss specific traits that distinguish the best stage managers. Those that do endeavor to go beyond a simple job description come from only the perspective of the stage manager and do not address the perspective of the team with whom they work. This research draws from the scholarly literature, the author's own experiences as a stage manager, and a survey of a cast and production team from a previous production to determine what the most important qualities of a stage manager are to the entire team. Upon collecting this data, many of the identified traits were consistent with the five-factor model of personality (Olsen, 2020). Personality has been shown to correlate with job success in certain fields. The five-factor model of personality has been shown to effectively break down personality into five major traits which can be used for analysis.

For stage management, the most important personality factors are extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Extraversion is important to the collaborative nature of the stage manager's job. It allows them to create positive working relationships with the whole team. Conscientiousness is a vital part of staying organized and on top of the information that they have to gather. Neuroticism, or emotional adjustment, means the stage manager can stay calm in the stressful situations that inevitably arise in the making

of theater. The remaining two factors, openness to experience and agreeableness are less important to the role as they can vary more with an individual stage manager's personal style. While openness to experience can be useful in problem solving, by creating a strong team the stage manager does not have to do it alone. Agreeableness comes down to each stage manager's personal style. While it can be important to be kind and warm to the people they work with, there are also times that it can be a detriment.

## DEDICATION

To everyone I have ever worked with, for teaching me so much about what it means to be a stage manager.

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## UNDERSTANDING A STAGE MANAGER

A stage manager is a crucial member of any theater production team, responsible for ensuring the smooth execution of a show from start to finish. From the first rehearsal to the final curtain call, the stage manager is in charge of coordinating all aspects of a production, working closely with the director, actors, designers, and crew to bring the artistic vision to life. Despite the vital role that it plays in the production of theater, the job of the stage manager is one which few people outside of the theater world are familiar with. The following sections detail the stage manager's activities, responsibilities, and the role that they play in each part of the process.

### What a Stage Manager Does

The most simple job description for a stage manager is that they are a manager for the stage, very similar to a company manager (Lawler, 2007), but it is not a job that fits a simple description. Everyone has their own way of explaining it, some use the vague explanation that they keep things running smoothly (Lawler, 2007) or that they organize rehearsals and run performances (Kincman, 2021). The most thorough definition required an entire paragraph to describe each aspect of stage management (Kelly, 1999).

When laying out the basic tasks of a stage manager, they sound straightforward. These skills can range from building a good document, something that is taught and used in many other fields, to something very specific to theater like taping out a stage (i.e., translating a paper ground plan into lines onto the floor of the rehearsal space; Kelly, 1999). However there are many soft skills that can be difficult to teach—for example, attention to detail, adaptability and being able to stay calm in a stressful environment (Lawler, 2007).



### Within a Company

Although it can be likened to the manager of a standard company, there are specific adjustments made for the stage, mostly due to sharing the responsibilities with the producer and the director (Stern, 2010). The stage manager does not have a say in who gets cast or hired and is not responsible for creating contracts or paying anyone working on a show. The producer or production manager is responsible for acquiring the necessary personnel and materials, while the director facilitates the creative vision for the show. The stage manager's job is to keep things running smoothly by compiling and communicating information so that everyone else is able to focus on their jobs (Stern, 2010). The stage manager acts as an important center of a wheel with each spoke going to each department within the theater (Appendix A). Each area of design works independently of each other until they all come together in the tech process. It is the stage manager's job, as the center of all communication, to ensure that proper communication occurs and there are no surprises (Kelly, 1999).

Another challenge of the stage manager is adapting to different environments within the lifespan of the production. Every show, theater, director, cast, and design team will require something different of the stage manager (Kelly, 1999). While there are certain basic requirements that carry through, it is important to be able to adapt to the needs of the current show and people. Even within a single production, the stage manager's role evolves throughout the process. The following sections explain what the stage manager is responsible for in each step of a production.

## Auditions

Auditions can be a chaotic time for all of those involved (Kelly, 1999). If a stage manager is brought on to help run auditions, they are responsible for keeping everyone on schedule as well as gathering information, keeping it organized, and getting it to the people who need it (Stern, 2010). This requires that the stage manager keep a level head and not get caught up in the whirlwind of emotions that are likely flying around.

Auditions are a time of many first impressions and can be the first step to building solid relationships with the team you will be working with on the show (Kincman, 2021).

## Rehearsals

Once rehearsals start, a stage manager's duties now include keeping track of people and schedules. This is done in two parts. The first is a general production calendar (Appendix B) that the stage manager makes based on rehearsal requirements and limitations, as well as any tech schedule information from the company (Kincman, 2021). While this calendar may be subject to change, it allows actors to get a sense of when they are expected to be in rehearsals and plan accordingly (Kincman, 2021). The second part is a daily call (Appendix C). The daily call is a document that gets sent out with the specific schedule prior to every rehearsal (Kincman, 2021). It lays out who will be needed, when they need to be there, what they will be doing and any other information for that day (Kincman, 2021). This ensures that everyone's time is used wisely (so that you don't have 20 actors waiting around while the director works on a two person scene) and allows the actors to be prepared for the specific requirements of any given day. The daily call also creates a consistent place that actors know to look for important announcements that they may have missed from during that day's rehearsal.

The stage manager is also responsible for facilitating communication about what occurs in rehearsals to the design and production team. This communication mainly takes the form of rehearsal reports. Rehearsal reports (Appendix D) are one of the most integral forms of communication that a stage manager uses (Kincman, 2021). This is a document that is sent to the design and production team after every rehearsal that formally communicates any important information that came up that day (Kincman, 2021). This allows the designers to get any vital information that might affect how their design is being used or needs to be built without needing them in the room every single day (Kincman, 2021). The most common notes are additional props to be added or unusual movements that actors will be performing (Kincman, 2021). It requires a high level of knowledge and understanding of the designs so that only the information that is important gets relayed and doesn't get bogged down by extraneous details. Rehearsal reports also require a very specific set of communication skills so that your designers can understand not only what the note is but also why it is being asked without causing tension to build. This comes down to the wording that is chosen and what information is provided (Kincman, 2021)

As rehearsals move forward the stage manager takes on the duty of keeping track of the blocking (actor's movements on stage) that gets created as well as keeping track of how the actors are doing on their lines (Kincman, 2021). The stage manager is constantly gathering and sifting information and coordinating with people in order to have everything that is needed close at hand through the entire process (Kelly, 1999). Their main focus is to track and take care of the organization details so that actors, directors and designers can focus on the artistic aspects of creating a show (Kelly, 1999).

## Technical Rehearsals

Technical rehearsal or “tech” is the point in the process when all of the work that the designers and production teams have been doing comes together to create the final product (Kelly, 1999). It is typically the final week of the rehearsal process before the show gets put in front of audiences (Kincman, 2021). This is when the stage manager's job shifts from being an extra set of eyes and hands in a room to being one of the leaders.

The stage manager is responsible for overseeing how each of the technical pieces come together (Kincman, 2021). They are the ones who are in charge of keeping everything running smoothly once the show is open and all the designers and directors leave, so tech is their opportunity to learn how everything works together (Stern, 2010). During tech the stage manager is facilitating the actor's adjustment to the new elements, planning and organizing how backstage runs, learning how to call the show, and managing the needs of all personnel (Kincman, 2021). The stage manager is relying on the work they put in early in the process to keep everything running smoothly. They use their previous records to track how each part is supposed to move and continue to build on them as more pieces get added (Kincman, 2021). They are also depending on the relationships that they have formed. It is important that they trust their assistant stage managers enough to delegate responsibilities, and that other's trust them enough as a leader to work collaboratively (Kincman, 2021).

Along with everything else, tech is the time that the stage manager learns how to call the show. This refers to how the stage manager communicates with the light and sound board operators as well as the deck crew (individuals backstage) to create the seamless final product (Lawler, 2007). With today's technology, designers could set

timers for when these changes are supposed to happen and have the technical elements of a show be completely automated. However, most productions still rely on the stage manager to correctly call a show. The main reason for this is that live theater is not perfectly consistent. On any given night an actor may talk just enough faster or slower to cause a timed change to be noticeably off. It is up to the stage manager to “perform” the tech along with the actors to create magic on stage (Kincman, 2021).

### Performances

When the show finally reaches performances, the stage manager keeps everything running exactly the same. In situations where designers and directors are coming from out of town they will quite literally leave once the show is open. They rely on performance reports (Appendix E) to stay updated on how the show is doing and any problems that may have arisen. The performance report is very similar to the rehearsal report, containing specific necessary details about that performance and upcoming performances (Kincman, 2021). An important part of this is the technical notes that report any issues that arose during the show and address how they should be fixed to prevent problems moving forward (Kincman, 2021).

It is also the responsibility of the stage manager to maintain the artistic integrity of the show and try to minimize the changes that may occur over time (Lawler, 2007). This is another time their previous notes that they took on the production come into use and run sheets (paperwork detailing each crew member’s tasks) are used to ensure nothing gets forgotten (Kincman, 2021). One of the greatest joys of live theater is that it can change every night, breathing with each different audience that it is performed in front of. Despite this, every audience is paying to see the same show and even small

changes can add up over time. It is up to the stage manager to notice these minor changes and correct them before they grow into a bigger issue. This can be something like a prop wearing down or breaking and needing to request a new one for upcoming performances or an actor making a different choice and needing to correct them (Kincman, 2021). Giving notes to the actors can be a careful dance to ensure that it is properly received without upsetting the actor. It is important to not only consider the content, but also the tone and timing of when the note is given to ensure that it is appropriately handled (Kincman, 2021).

The final responsibility that the stage manager takes on is problem solving when things go wrong. This can range from something as minor as a light bulb burning out, to a prop running out or going missing, to something as major as an entire operating system crashing (Kincman, 2021). The cast and crew look to the stage manager for the best way to solve any one of these issues, and the stage manager must use their knowledge of the show, individual's capabilities, and how each of the technical elements work to keep everyone safe, and the show running as close as it can to how it is supposed to (Kincman, 2021).

With the wide variety of jobs that the stage manager is responsible for, not all of the things that make them a success are hard technical skills that can be taught in a classroom. Each author who chose to write about the field had their own overarching idea that guides what a stage manager is for them: responsibility (Stern, 2010), communication (Kincman, 2021), or curiosity (Holland, 2015) to name a few. While these books may attempt to teach these qualities, there are certain factors, sometimes referred to as "inherent ability", beyond the basic set of skills that make a successful stage

manager (Lawler, 2007). These qualities are more likely to be part of an individual's personality than they are to be something that's learned along the way. The following section details how personality can relate one's success in their career.

## PERSONALITY RELATING TO CAREER

Personality is defined as how an individual interacts with the world; indeed, the root of the word means persona, or mask (Olsen, 2020). Personality theories and research attempt to categorize people and predict how they will think, feel, and act in various situations (Lowman, 2022). One of these situations is in group work settings. The relationship between career success and personality was previously under researched and inconclusive. However, starting in the 1990s there was an increase in research in this area (Lowman, 2022). This was especially true of the importance of personality in group work settings.

Depending on what the job requires, certain career paths relate more closely to personality than others (Lowman, 2022). For example, a job that involves more manual labor, technical skills, and independent work is less likely to be affected by the individual's personality, compared to one that revolves around teamwork. One reason is because jobs with a required set of technical skills have specific criteria that make someone good at the job. This set of criteria is based on physical actions that a person performs so success in their field is related to experience and education rather than how they interact with others. Comparatively, jobs that have a higher emphasis on working with or as a team often have softer descriptions of what makes someone successful which have more to do with how someone reacts in the situation of their workplace. Certain jobs, such as a carpenter, plumber or electrician, rely heavily on technical skills so an individual's personality is unrelated to their job performance (Smith, 2004). However other jobs, such as those involving leadership and collaboration, value behaviors determined by one's personality to determine success.



Although research connecting personality to job performance continues to expand, to date research has not addressed the linkages between personality and theater or stage management. The criteria and explanations that Lowman (2022) gives for using personality to predict job success, would suggest that stage management would qualify for this research to be relevant. Almost all of a stage manager's job has to do with interacting, coordinating and organizing groups of people from all different areas. The next section looks into one well-researched theory of personality and how it can be applied to understanding the traits that are essential to a successful stage manager.

## FIVE FACTOR MODEL OF PERSONALITY

Each theory of personality starts with how that theorist defines personality (Olsen, 2020). Sigmund Freud is considered to be the first psychological theorist of personality, and his theory focused on the work of the unconscious (Olsen, 2020). Though his work faces much criticism, it was the first comprehensive theory of personality and it is from this criticism that other theories of personality grew (Olsen, 2020). The earliest theories of personality focused on stages of development and how events at the various stages affect one's personality and attempting to trace abnormal behavior (Olsen, 2020). Theories began to move away from this approach in order to focus on the personality of "normal adults" and use scientific methodology (Olsen, 2020). One of the models that came out of this shift was the five-factor model of personality (Olsen, 2020).

Starting in the 90s, the five-factor model of personality became a popular model to use in the world of research (Lowman, 2022). This model lays out five factors that make up an individual's personality: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Olsen, 2020). Each of these factors is graded on a spectrum. For example, with neuroticism, an individual can be anywhere from highly neurotic to highly emotionally adjusted (Lowman, 2022). These specific factors were selected in a process that started with a large number of traits and terms that people believed should be considered in categorizing personality (Briggs, 1992). They were eventually sorted and condensed into the five main groups that are now associated with this theory (Briggs, 1992). Although this process has resulted in some debate as to whether there are only five factors that make up personality, it is generally accepted that there are a select number of major categories (Lowman, 2020).

Surveys assessing traits within the five factor model have been shown to be a replicable way for assessing personality type (Briggs, 1992). This is one of the reasons it has become popular among researchers investigating correlations between personality and other factors (Briggs, 1992). The five factor model has been found to be a reliable and replicable framework for studying personality (McCrae, 1992). Many other theories of personality are often criticized for being overly subjective in their assessment of individuals (Olsen, 2020). The five factor model was developed to create the missing objective breakdown of personality and create a better metric to research personality trends (Briggs, 1992). It is easy for any researcher to use it as a basis for studying personality because it uses very broad categories; this allows the model to be applicable to many areas of research (Smith, 2004). These broad categories also create a common vernacular for scientists to use, meaning that more studies are able to relate to each other without having to translate different terminology (Smith, 2004). Overall the five factor model is extremely useful to use in researching how personality correlates to elements of people, but it is also important to understand its limitations.

Like any theory of personality, the five factor model has its fair share of criticisms. The biggest concern with using the five factor model is that the factors it lays out are too broad. This makes it difficult to use them to predict an individual's behavior, which as mentioned before is one of the goals of a personality theory (McAdams, 1992). The other critique is that it does not explain what causes a person's behavior (McAdams, 1992). As much as these are both valid criticisms, it is for much of the same reasons that it is an ideal general and systematic approach to personality (Briggs, 1992). The broad

factors make it much easier to work with as well as create a common vernacular and are able to be used in a number of areas (Smith, 2004).

### The Current Project

The growing popularity of the five factor model has allowed for an increase in research connecting personality to career success (Lowman, 2022). This model reduced the number of variables that would need to be evaluated making it a much more reasonable undertaking and allowing for more conclusive results (Lowman, 2022). It is likely that the factors laid out by this model also reflect many traits that are important in stage management. The current project sought to analyze whether and how each of the five factors is considered a vital part of stage management.

## METHODS

In determining how each of these factors relates to being a good stage manager, I combined what I found in a literature review, along with my own experiences as a stage manager, and a survey of other members of the production team and actors. The following subsections lay out the process I used to gather scholarly, experiential, and interview data to determine what personality traits are most important to being a good stage manager.

### Literature Review

The body of scholarly literature on technical theater is small in comparison to play-writing or directing. What is currently written about stage management aims to provide a resource for those who may be new to the field by providing examples of common paperwork and addressing the hard skills that a stage manager needs. When the texts do address the need for soft skills they focus their content around a single topic.

These are generic phrases like curiosity (Holland, 2015), responsibility (Stern, 2010), communication (Kincman, 2021) or leadership and management (Chase, 2017).

Most, if not all, research, analysis, and commentary about the stage management profession has been conducted by stage managers themselves. When the authors of those limited publications have included external sources, those are also likely to be other stage managers. However, the role of a stage manager inherently requires interaction with many other diverse positions within a theater production team. The perspectives of these other team members regarding the role of the stage manager are largely missing from the literature.

### Experience

I have gained experience as a stage manager over the last 3 years, working with different styles of plays, directors and groups of actors at my university as well as local theater companies. As part of my research on the topic of what makes a good stage manager, I focused on a show that I stage managed in the fall of my senior year. The show was *Tartuffe* by Molière, a classic French play that was translated to English. The production of *Tartuffe* was relatively standard; it had a cast of 13, rehearsed over 6 weeks, and had 5 performances. The most unique element going into it was having the actors work with a text coach to help with the verse, poetic language in which the play was written. This didn't mean that it was without any challenges. There was an ill-prepared actor that caused hostile attitudes amongst the cast. As well as several incidences of COVID-19 causing last minute changes to the schedule, including having to postpone tech and our opening weekend. These are the kinds of situations that are not often written about, but having the right stage manager involved can make all the difference.

### Survey

As was mentioned above in the literature for stage managers, the only voices that get mentioned are those of actively working stage managers. What the stage manager does is so involved with every part of the theater making process that I thought it was important to hear from others in a variety of roles. Continuing to focus on my experience with *Tartuffe*, I sent out a survey to everyone I had worked with asking for their point of view.

I modeled my survey off of the reflected best self survey developed by Roberts and colleagues (2005). This survey was designed as an alternative way for managers to receive feedback by focusing on their positive characteristics. This is in contrast to the usual critical evaluations that are performed. In this exercise, the subject of the survey must ask those that they work with as well as a few individuals from their personal life what their best qualities are and a specific example of when it was used. The subject then reflects on the answers to determine what skills their team members value most that they can continue to build on.

I adapted this format to fit more specifically to stage management. I sent the survey out to all of the actors, designers, production and crew members of *Tartuffe* asking them to answer the following two questions; “What would you consider to be my greatest strengths as a stage manager?” “Can you provide a specific example of how I used them in the production of *Tartuffe*?”. I took the responses that I got back and listed out the traits that they mentioned (Appendix F). I compared this list to one that I had previously made based on my own ideas and some preliminary research and found three traits that were included in both lists. These were leadership, organization, and flexibility.

When people first think about stage management they can often get caught up in the solid skills of paperwork and calling the show. These are the kind of skills that you can easily show on a resume, but more and more recently it has been brought up that what makes one stand out as “good” has a lot more to it than that.

## RESULTS

In the following section I will apply each of the factors in the five factor model to what I have learned about stage management. This is from my own experiences as well as based on the responses I got from my survey and the couple of the articles I found discussing stage management. This is all to gain a better understanding of the relevant personality characteristics that appear necessary for stage management success.

### Factors relating to stage management

In my research, I found that three of the five factors are most closely related to stage management. The following sections analyze how each of these factors comes up and is used in the rehearsal and performance process by the stage manager to create an ideal and positive outcome.

#### Extraversion

Extraversion has to do with how outgoing and people centric an individual is. This can show in someone being outgoing or assertive, and can often make them more likely to have a positive attitude (Judge, 2000). Most of a stage manager's job is fostering relationships between people, whether it is the crew that they are overseeing backstage, the actors that they supervise on stage or the designers that they are collaborating with to put the show together. The stage manager is described as a people person who has positive energy and a polite demeanor (Chase, 2017).

As one of the leaders in the rehearsal space, the stage manager plays a large role in setting the tone of the production. One actor's survey response (Appendix F, Actor 1) expressed how my positive attitude made the process more enjoyable and easier to be a



part of. It is important to create an atmosphere that people want to work in. It makes everything run smoother because there is more willingness to put the effort in to make the final product look its best.

It is also important that people feel comfortable talking to their stage manager and informing them of problems so they can be addressed. This approachability is fostered from the very first day in the rehearsal room and carries through to the end of performances. One actor mentioned the importance of this in their survey response (Appendix F, Actor 1), calling back to an issue that they were having with a fellow actor. They felt comfortable enough to come to me with the issue so I was able to address their concerns and make them feel better about the situation. This allowed me to diffuse the situation before it continued to grow into an even bigger problem.

However, being approachable doesn't mean that you are overly nice to people. It is also important to be assertive and hold people accountable throughout the process. This can go in several different directions. When working on *Tartuffe*, the actors all had to sign up for a time slot to work with the text coach the school had hired, and I had to remind actors many times to do so. In the survey responses, one actor (Appendix F, Actor 4) showed an appreciation for this determination and my ability to put what needed to be done over what the actors thought of me. This actor expressed the importance of holding people accountable for what they have to do. This trait was also brought up by the production manager (Appendix F). Although they framed it as patience, to be able to give people time, from my perspective it also involved being able to speak up when I needed something and be willing to continue asking for it if necessary.

It is important to note, that while persistence and assertiveness are important, the stage manager should not be overly aggressive. An actor expressed their appreciation for being able to ask actors to be quiet and pay attention without yelling or belittling them (Appendix F, Actor 2). The cast of *Tartuffe* was prone to getting off topic and breaking into side conversations. In order to use everyone's time effectively it became an important task to keep the actors and director on track and moving forward. It is easy to get frustrated in this situation and start yelling, but there are other and better ways to keep everyone on track. The stage manager is constantly fostering the relationships between themselves and those that they are working for and with. One of the fastest ways to ruin this relationship is by treating others with disrespect. This is one of the many ways that the stage manager's job goes beyond the paperwork that they create or their ability to call a show.

### Conscientiousness

The trait of conscientiousness measures "achievement and dependability" and is most often associated with typical workplace values (Judge, 2000). Someone high in this trait tends to be punctual, organized, gets their work done on time, etc. These are characteristics that a stereotypical stage manager demonstrates. They are expected to be the one organized person in a room full of artists. This also has to do with the amount of paperwork that the stage manager provides throughout the process of a show. As the opening section explains, the stage manager is responsible for tracking information about every part of the show.

It is important that a good stage manager is prepared for each day. This includes being able to find information easily as it comes up in the rehearsal room. The director

remarked on my ability to keep track of information coming from multiple sources (Appendix F, Director). This is done mostly with the appropriate tracking paperwork but also in how a stage manager chooses to store and organize it all. Most stage managers will have some sort of show book/binder that contains their script with all of their notes as well as printed copies of any pertinent papers that get made and updated throughout the show. With the increased convenience of technology it is also common for this information to be kept digitally as long as they can easily be accessed as needed. When questions about set or costumes come up in rehearsal, everyone looks to the stage manager to answer the question. There is too much information floating around for them to be expected to remember it all, so it is important that it is all kept in a way that is easy to reference so the information can be found without interrupting the flow of rehearsal.

One of the actors also expressed how important it was for them to have a stage manager able to handle and organize this information (Appendix F, Actor 2). The production of *Tartuffe* faced multiple schedule changes for various reasons. First the tech schedule was changed from the original plan to accommodate several of the actor's class schedules. This change involved talking to the production team then taking the options for how to make the adjustment back to determine what would be best for them. This led to some confusing information getting given out as the multiple options were presented and decided on. As the stage manager I was juggling the information and passing it around to everyone. Everyone on the team trusted me to keep track of this information so that they could all be where they needed to be.

Similar to extraversion, conscientiousness can play a large part in setting the tone of the production. These are also skills that can be shown from the very beginning and

creates expectations for the whole production. If I am asking actors to be on top of their own responsibilities and be on time to rehearsals, then I should be as well. Another element to this is punctuality. The stage manager is the one responsible for keeping the room on track and following the schedule. This is one way that the stage manager can foster an environment of respect. If the actor's see that their time is valued by rehearsals being run according to schedule, they reciprocate by putting in the effort to be on time.

In order for the stage manager to keep things running smoothly they need to track information coming at them at all times. They need to keep this information organized so it can be communicated and found as it is needed. They need to be punctual to keep everyone on schedule and to stick with what was planned so time is used efficiently and everything gets done.

### Neuroticism

The factor of neuroticism gauges an individual's emotional adjustment (Judge, 2000). It is often associated with one's mental ailments such as depression or anxiety as well as their overall self esteem. In a show where everything runs perfectly and on time, this trait would probably be irrelevant. However that show doesn't exist. There is always at least one thing (and usually more than that) that goes wrong at some point in the process and causes people to panic. The production team, crew and actors all look to the stage manager in stressful situations, so it is important that they remain calm (Lawler, 2007). The stage manager should not add to the intense energy and emotions that are happening around them.

This attribute was particularly important in the process of *Tartuffe*. Both the director and production manager mentioned the importance of being able to take in

everything without letting it affect me personally or getting overwhelmed by them (Appendix F). The need for this arose several times during the course of the show. The first was when there was an actor who was frequently calling out of rehearsals at the last minute and when she was at the rehearsals was clearly a step behind her fellow actors. This caused both the director and the other actors to become irritated as they couldn't get the proper rehearsal time with this individual. When the director decided to confront the actor about it, she asked that I be a part of the conversation to ensure that it stayed honest and focused on how to move forward.

The need for this trait came up again when we had an actor test positive for COVID-19 on the first day of tech. This would mean that he would have to quarantine up until the final dress and that was with the assumption that he would feel up to coming back after the minimum amount of time. The production team had a meeting to discuss the various options of how to move forward. In this instance, those with the decision making power had a lot to consider and didn't need the added stress of trying to calm everyone else down. My ability to stay calm allowed me to be able to effectively listen and communicate as needed. The final decision was to postpone the opening by a week, but add performances so we were still able to get 5 shows without unnecessarily risking anyone's health.

This ability to stay calm also helps when quick problem solving skills are required. When something goes wrong, if you get too caught up in what and how it happened and let it stress you out, you lose the ability to think of solutions. Looking again at the situation where the actor would call out at the last minute, instead of getting

frustrated with her lack of attendance, I immediately started thinking of ways to get the most out of the time that we had with the actors that were there.

This is an especially important trait during performances when something breaks right before or during a show and needs a quick solution to keep things going. This also ties back to ensuring that the actors and crew that you are working with feel safe to tell you when things go wrong. If the stage manager freaked out or began blaming people when something broke, they may try to fix it themselves with less knowledge about what needs to be done. As the center of communication it is not only important that the stage manager is able to effectively share information but also make people comfortable in trusting them with the information.

### Remaining Factors

Based on integrating the literature, my experiences, and the survey, two factors did not appear to be as centrally important, although all stage managers, productions, and teams are different. Every stage manager has their own personal style that they bring. While there are certain personality types that are important to the role of stage management, there are a couple that can be open to interpretation. One reason is that they are compensated by the other factors, but also may vary depending on the situation and what is the best fit. The following subsections look into why each of these remaining factors do not affect the work that a stage manager does.

### Openness to Experience

Openness to experience is simply stated as an individual's creativity and perception of their surroundings (Judge, 2000). A stage manager does not need artistic creativity in the same way that the director or one of the designers does to create the

show. Creativity can be helpful in the problem solving that the stage manager is expected to do. However, with the right team around them, the stage manager is not the only person who can solve it. Oftentimes the stage manager is not an expert on any singular topic but instead knows a bit about every aspect of the theater and so may not have enough base knowledge to address an issue that arises. Instead they should know who would need to be contacted and the minimum that needs to be fixed and work with their team to find and achieve a solution.

### Agreeableness

Agreeableness is described as someone who is kind, trustworthy and warm (Judge, 2000). While there are some elements of this that can be important for stage management, it overlaps significantly with the trait of extraversion. If a stage manager appears to be competent and works to make themselves approachable, they don't need to be particularly nice to do what they need to do. In many situations it is actually necessary for the stage manager to be less nice in order to hold people accountable as discussed in extraversion. It is important that the stage manager is able to speak up for what needs to get done and should not be worrying about being nice. Again, this does not mean that they are going around screaming and yelling at people but instead knowing when, where and how to give someone a push when they need it.

## CONCLUSION

The current project aimed to uncover what qualities make the best stage managers stand out. I utilized a literary analysis, along with my own experiences and survey methods to address the question of what makes a good stage manager. Results suggested that the three personality traits of extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism are the most related to a stage manager's success. Although the project has limitations, it stands to quantify the element of stage management that is missing from instructional materials.

Whenever I am asked what a stage manager does, I often struggle to find a concise way to explain it to someone outside of theater. The job requires such a wide variety of tasks and can vary greatly depending on the day, production, or theater. A stage manager is responsible for keeping everything running smoothly, but the traits that set a good stage manager apart from the rest are not ones that can be learned in a classroom. Some may come from experience, but the traits that truly stand out come from personality.



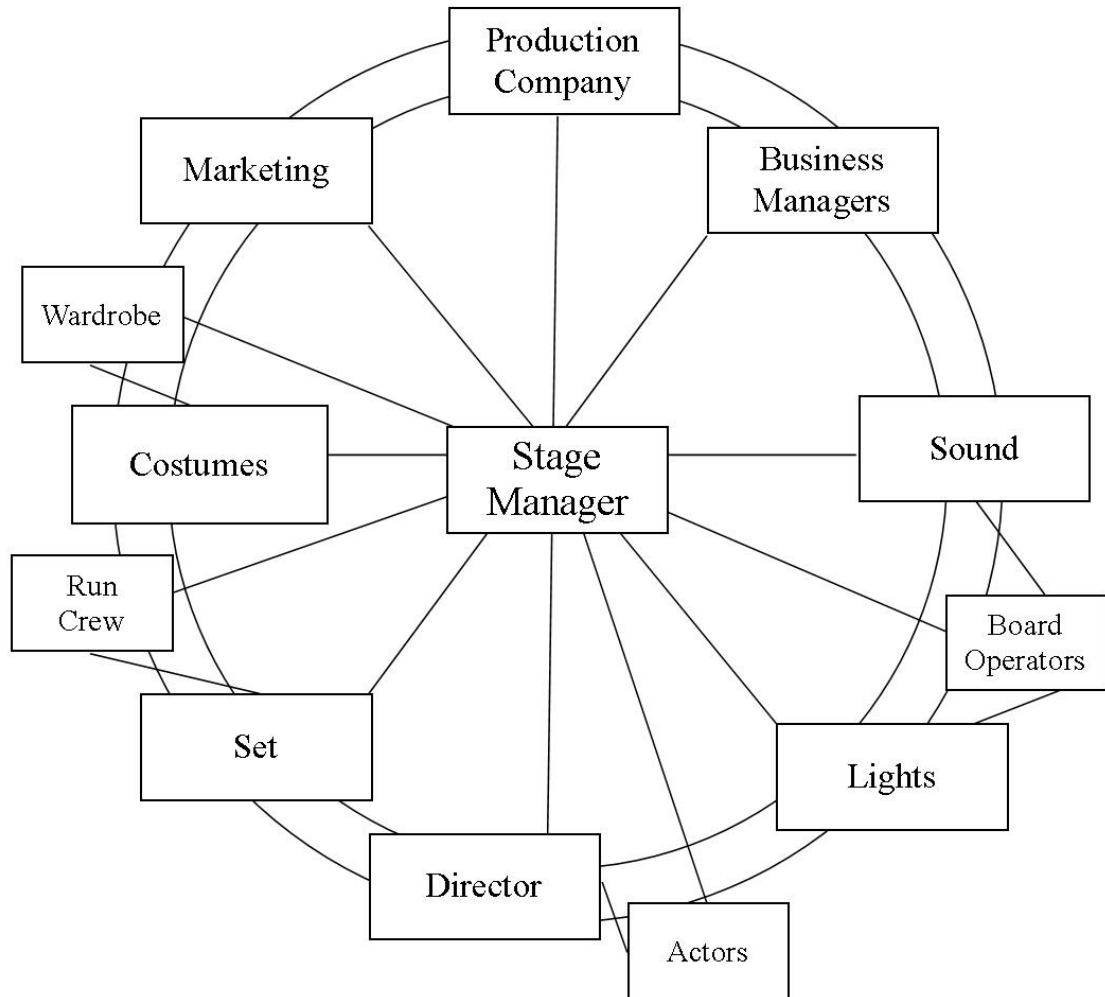
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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: STAGE MANAGEMENT DIAGRAM



## APPENDIX B: PRODUCTION CALENDAR

### Tartuffe

### Rehearsal and Performance Schedule

Version 4  
11/5/2022

#### October

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2	3 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	4 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	5 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	6 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	7	8
9	10 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	11 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	12 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	13 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	14	15
16 Rehearsal 10 am - 4 pm	17 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	18 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	19 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	20 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	21	22
23 Rehearsal 10 am - 4 pm	24 Rehearsal 6-9 pm <b>OFF BOOK</b>	25 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	26 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	27 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	28	29
30	31					

Director: Angela Bonacasa  
Stage Manager: Laura Garfein

- SUBJECT TO CHANGE -

Page 1 of 2

### Tartuffe

### Rehearsal and Performance Schedule

Version 4  
11/5/2022

#### November

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	2 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	3 Rehearsal 6-9 pm <b>DESIGNER RUN</b>	4	5 TECH #1 10 am - 1 pm 2 pm - 6 pm
6	7	8 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	9 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	10 Rehearsal 6-9 pm	11	12
13 TECH #2 10 am - 1 pm 2 pm - 6 pm	14 DRESS #1 Crew Call - 5:00 pm Cast Call - 5:15 pm Top of show - 7:00 pm	15 OFF	16 DRESS #2 Crew Call - 5:00 pm Cast Call - 5:15 pm Top of show - 7:00 pm	17 Performance #1 Crew Call - 5:30 pm Cast Call - 5:45 pm House Open - 7:00 pm Show - 7:30 pm	18 Performance #2 Crew Call - 5:30 pm Cast Call - 5:45 pm House Open - 7:00 pm Show - 7:30 pm	19 Performance #3 & 4 Crew Call - 12:00 pm Cast Call - 12:15 pm House Open - 1:30 pm Show #1 - 2:00 pm Show #2 - 7:30 pm
20 Performance #6 Crew Call - 12:00 pm Cast Call - 12:15 pm House Open - 1:30 pm Show - 2:00 pm	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Director: Angela Bonacasa  
Stage Manager: Laura Garfein

- SUBJECT TO CHANGE -

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## APPENDIX C: DAILY CALL

Daily Call #30 11/17/2022			
When	What	Who	Where
5:30 pm	Wig call	Dilia, Lauren, Katie	Dressing room
6:00 pm	Costumes	Everyone	Dressing room
6:00pm	Crew	John, Bell, Grace	Pav
6:30 pm	Warm up/fightcall	Everyone	Pav
7:30 pm	Start run	Everyone	Pav
10:00	End of day		
<b>Announcements</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Like we told you all tonight, we will be taking tomorrow off from rehearsals, but we ask that you all take some time tomorrow to review your lines. Although you are all doing great with your lines, there is always room for improvement, and with a day away we don't want to go into opening night missing lines.</li> <li>2. I would like to take some time in our preshow on Thursday to look at how everything is getting struck from the stage before the dance. This shouldn't change our schedule at all, just to make you all aware.</li> <li>3. Please remember that you should never put your phone in a costume pocket. Even if you aren't onstage it is good practice to find somewhere for it so you don't forget that it is there.</li> <li>4. Also please know that you should not be coming into the house to use the bathroom during a performance, so please plan accordingly.</li> <li>5. A small note I have from tonight, is anyone who starts the show from behind the set, can you please be there for house open. With the number of you that start there the cross to places is quite noticeable and a little disruptive.</li> <li>6. As a reminder we are having 2 shows on Saturday, the first at 2:00 pm the second at 7:30 pm. The department will be buying Pizza for us all in between the shows. I know I have asked for allergies in the past and I don't believe anyone had any, but if you have any dietary restrictions, please let me know as soon as possible so we can plan accordingly.</li> </ol>			

## APPENDIX D: REHEARSAL REPORT

### SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS

#### *Tartuffe*

#### Rehearsal Report #9, 10/16/2022

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Attendance: 12/12

Andrew and Lydia arrived late

Start 10:05 am

Break 11:28-11:37 am

Lunch 12:38-1:40 pm

Break 2:55-3:00 pm

Break 3:34-3:41 pm

End 4:02 pm

Daily Call #7 10/13/2022		
When	What	Who
6:00 pm	Review Act 1	Grimmie, Nick, Andrew, Peter, Katie, Dilia, Lauren, Lydia
7:30 pm	Review Act 2	Peter, <b>Patty</b> , Dilia, Lauren
9:00 pm	End of day	

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### TODAY'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Warm up

Blocked Act 5 scene 2- 7 (pg 99)

Dance

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### GENERAL NOTES

- I filmed a runthrough of the dance for anyone who would like to see it. It is in the cast resources folder.
- SCHEDULING: An actor reminded me today that they have a class that they cannot miss on Wednesday Nov 9 (supposed to be a dress rehearsal). Upon looking at other conflicts, Angela and I are thinking that it might make sense to move our day off during tech week to Wednesday instead of Monday. Anyone else have thoughts?

Director: Angela Bonacasa  
Stage Manager: Laura Garfein

SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS  
*Tartuffe*  
Rehearsal Report #9, 10/16/2022

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**SCENIC**

- Nothing to report

**LIGHTS**

- After the production meeting where Dan informed us that the space could go past paint line and be in the world, we are now having blocking that includes standing on the very bottom of the seating.

**PROPERTIES**

- We added blocking today where Peter Bacon jumps onto the bench. It was fine but looks like it should get some reinforcing if this is going to be repeated. Is this possible or should we adjust the blocking?
- During our dance rehearsal today, we found that we will need to clear all of the furniture off stage at the end of the show.
- Can we clarify how the alcohol is getting hidden?

**COSTUMES/HAIR & MAKEUP**

- The video of the dance will be in the cast folder. Everyone is in the dance except Tartuffe and Monsieur Loyal. Grimmer is currently represented by me and does not have a partner. We may be modifying some of it for her as she gets
- In act 5 Peter jumps up onto a bench.
- The final pose of the dance does have some kneeling and Peter lies on the ground. We told the actors that they will have to be careful about too much sliding, but if you think this is a problem please let us know so we can adjust.
- Angela sent you an email about Grimmer and her cane.

**SOUND**

- Nothing to report

**CHOREOGRAPHY**

- Thank you for your amazing work today Lauren!

**SPEECH/TEXT**

- Nothing to report

Director: Angela Bonacasa  
Stage Manager: Laura Garfein



## APPENDIX E: PERFORMANCE REPORT

SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS  
*Tartuffe*  
Performance Report #2, 11/18/2022

	Start	End	Total
Act 1	7:30 pm	8:34 pm	64 min
Act 2	8:50 pm	9:34 pm	44 min
		Total	1 hr 48 min

House Count: 33	Curtain Time: 7:30 pm	Weather: 27 deg and clear
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### Performance

- The actors had a lovely performance tonight. The house was very quiet but they were engaged the whole time and we got a few rolls of chuckles for Valere and Marianne when they are giggly lovers as well as for a few one liners throughout the show.

### General

- Nothing to report

### Technical

- PROPS: Thank you for the decaffeinated tea, Peter appreciated it.
- PROPS: we were missing the mini muffins for tonight's performance, so Angela ran to Hannaford last minute to get some for the show tonight. I have talked with MJ and she will be getting us more tomorrow for the rest of the run.

### Next Performance

Daily Call #32 11/19/2022			
When	What	Who	Where
12:00 pm	Wig call	Dilia, Lauren, Katie	Dressing room
12:30 pm	Costumes	Everyone	Dressing room
12:30 pm	Crew	John, Bell, Grace	Pav
1:00 pm	Warm up/fightcall	Everyone	Pav
2:00 pm	Start show	Everyone	Pav
5:30 pm	Wig call	Dilia, Lauren, Katie	Dressing room
6:00 pm	Costumes	Everyone	Dressing room
6:00pm	Crew	John, Bell, Grace	Pav
6:30 pm	Warm up/fightcall	Everyone	Pav
7:30 pm	Start show	Everyone	Pav
10:00	End of day		

Director: Angela Bonacasa  
Stage Manager: Laura Garfein

## APPENDIX F: SURVEY RESPONSES

Role	What would you consider to be my greatest strengths as a stage manager?	Can you provide a specific example of how I used them in the production of Tartuffe?
Assistant Stage Manager	Your greatest strength, out of many, I would say is your ability to <b>think quick on your feet</b> .	When a prop went missing, you were able to think of a workable solution pretty quickly. When an actor did not show up, it didn't take long for you to come up with an updated schedule for that rehearsal time.
Actor 1	You are very <b>approachable</b> , and just a good person. You are a <b>leader</b> , it is very clear the way you are always 30 minutes early and you carry yourself with passion and commitment you always have such an amazing attitude and a huge smile on your face which makes the process so much easier and amazing, honestly without your help in this project the show wouldn't of gotten off of its feet. You are a rockstar Laura, in every way possible you are an amazing person, and that's what makes you such a kickass stage manager! :)	When I had to talk to you about a situation and you calmly talked me out of being in my head, and you really made me feel better about myself in the cast that I was doing a great job and that my concern was heard. You were my first person to talk to about the situation, and it made me feel better that's you cared about me as not only as an actor, but as a friend. You always took care of myself and really everyone and everything! You are a star. And honestly imma miss you when your gone G. :(
Actor 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- always <b>prepared</b></li> <li>- keeps rehearsals running in a timely manor</li> <li>- doesn't yell at actors</li> <li>- <b>organization</b>: 10/10</li> <li>-<b>communication</b> levels on point</li> <li>-excellent baking skills (keeps the actors fed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- gave me multiple Advil's and pencils throughout rehearsals</li> <li>- made sure the actors were contacted if they were running late, told Angela she was going over time with notes</li> <li>- when actors would get noisy while angela was giving notes, you told them to quite down without belittling them or yelling.</li> <li>- your emails would always be easy to read and you knew the tech schedule well, even when it was changed last-minute. Always had props in the right place by the beginning of next rehearsal.</li> <li>- you were able to explain to the</li> </ul>

		<p>newbies what tech week looks like in a clear and concise way.</p> <p>- your cinnamon rolls made me happy :)</p>
Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Organizational skills:</b> Ability to handle information from a variety of sources while maintaining priorities</li> <li>- <b>Ability to not take things personally</b></li> <li>- <b>Calmness amidst chaos</b></li> </ul>	<p>Throughout Tartuffe you managed actor schedules, conflicts, production meetings, and the changing of the final run dates, all while maintaining a class schedule. I cannot count the number of times I came into rehearsal scattered in a thousand different directions, you knew exactly what was happening that night, and had several plans for what to do when things would change, which they constantly did. You were collaborative, consulting as an equal when you knew it was the time, but had no problem stepping back when the final decision was mine. There was no ego, no sense of ownership, but just commitment to getting the job done. When actors were frustrated, you would hear their complaints without absorbing their frustration, but simply let it roll off and continue with the task at hand. You were a point of stillness throughout the process, and everyone was calmer and more focused after an interaction with you.</p> <p>Specifically-when we had an actress miss rehearsal at the last minute multiple times and was proving to be a point of concern for many of us, I relied on you to be there when I spoke to them. I knew that my emotions were running high, and that I was frustrated with the behavior. But I asked you to be there while I spoke to them, because I knew that if I started to lose my cool, that your presence would keep</p>

		<p>me grounded and be a beacon of calmness for me and the actor. It helped keep the interaction honest about the concerns, but not emotional, so we were able to talk through the issue and keep things moving in a positive direction. An interaction that could easily have become heated did not, and I firmly believe that your presence was a large reason for that.</p>
Actor 4	<p>One of your biggest strengths is that once you're working, you don't stop. You are essentially a one-person crew. It is a great feeling to know that my stage manager can and will get it done. Another one is that you will keep people to their word, and you aren't afraid to remind people of their obligations. <b>(Determination)</b></p>	<p>A specific example of the second strength I mentioned is when actors didn't sign up for line work, you kept hunting them down when they did. Despite some actors getting annoyed by the constant reminders, you were doing your job even when others were making it difficult.</p>
Production Manager	<p>Laura's greatest strengths as a stage manager are her <b>flexibility, patience, and unflappable calm</b> in the face of challenges. She is able to make the rest of her team feel at ease by always seeming to have everything under control, no matter the circumstances she faces. She is quick to come up with a plan when there is a need to change course and never gets hung up on mourning the time and effort that was lost in the transition to the new plan.</p>	<p>During <i>Tartuffe</i>, there were many circumstances that required last-minute changes to the plan. When the Production Manager (me) and Shop Supervisor got COVID, there were significant delays in the completion of the scenery, lighting, props, and paint which had effects on what could be reasonably accomplished during our technical rehearsals. Laura took the information about the new realities in stride and worked seamlessly with the director to create a new plan for the best use of the time. She was flexible without placing blame or pointing fingers, and helped everyone to feel certain that the show would still reach its opening successfully.</p> <p>Then, when an actor got COVID in the tech week, the show needed a complete overhaul of the schedule with new dress rehearsals,</p>

		<p>performance dates, and procedures for a two-show day that was not previously planned. Laura once again absorbed the information about the options for our new circumstances without any sign of stress and helped formulate a new plan quickly and calmly. She communicated clearly and compassionately with the whole team to ensure that everyone felt comfortable with our new plans. The situation could have been insurmountable for myriad reasons but instead resulted in a lovely, successful set of performances and that is in no small part because of Laura's leadership.</p> <p>Lastly, Laura faced several situations during <i>Tartuffe</i> where she asked others for information, assistance, and/or support and did not necessarily receive it in a timely manner. She often had to ask multiple times for people (mostly me) to purchase props, answer emails, create paperwork, or otherwise support her in her work. She was always kind and patient in her persistence with these things. That even extends to her patience in waiting for me to send this very document. (Sorry Laura)</p>
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## AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Laura A Garfein was born (on August 28, 2001) and raised in Walnut Creek, California. She graduated from Acalanes High School in 2019. Laura is double majoring in Psychology and Theater. She is an active member of UMaine's Theatre/Dance Division.

After Laura graduates she hopes to continue with theater and pursue a career in stage management.