



EASTMAN  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC  

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UNIVERSITY *of* ROCHESTER

**USHER HANDBOOK**  
**2021-2022**

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# THE CONCERT OFFICE

## Staff and Contact Information:

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- Julia Ng, Assistant Director of Concert Activities
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- Jess Green, House Manager
  - [jgreen51@u.rochester.edu](mailto:jgreen51@u.rochester.edu); 339-235-4832

## Stage Operations Staff

- Ron Stackman, Director of Stage Operations
- Jules Corcimiglia, Assistant Director of Stage Operations (Kodak Hall)
- Dan Mason, Assistant Director of Stage Operations (Kilbourn Hall)
  - [dmason@esm.rochester.edu](mailto:dmason@esm.rochester.edu); 585-314-6921
- Michael Dziakonas, Assistant Director of Stage Operations (Hatch Recital Hall)
  - [mdziakonas@esm.rochester.edu](mailto:mdziakonas@esm.rochester.edu); 585-208-8779

## Other Useful Contacts

- Public Safety
  - 585-275-3333
- UR Facilities
  - 585-273-4567

## **OUR MISSION**

The Eastman School Concert Office schedules, manages and coordinates more than 800 events a year taking place in Kodak Hall, Kilbourn Hall, Hatch Recital Hall, and other school venues. Program production, ticket sales, and most importantly, stage and house management, are coordinated through the Concert Office. Supporting its full-time staff, the Concert Office employs more than 40 student ushers, including at least 5 Head Ushers and 2 House Managers, to help manage events that take place in the school's major performance venues: Kilbourn Hall, Hatch Recital Hall, and Kodak Hall. All ushering activities are coordinated by the Box Office Staff.

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

As an usher you greet your friends, teachers, and the general public. It is important that you be alert, courteous, and professional. You may be the only person from the Eastman School with whom the audience has direct contact; in addition to performing your assigned duties for a particular event, you are representing the School. For this reason, we ask that you give 100% of your energy and attention to your ushering assignment.

Usher duties include:

- Preparing the hall by picking up old programs, removing any litter in the hall, entrances, aisles, restrooms, or on stage
- Handing out programs, scanning tickets, counting and seating patrons
- Being of general assistance to patrons, including being familiar with details regarding the concert such as the performers, the length of the concert, and the approximate length of each piece. Ushers should also be familiar with ticket prices and policies, and should know where restrooms and exits are located. Also, ushers should be prepared to answer questions about the School, the hall, upcoming concerts, and where to get additional information about upcoming events.
- Working backstage and onstage (KH and HRH only). You may need to move instruments, coordinate performers, run the lighting boards, etc. If you have any physical limitations (i.e., hand or back problems) which would prohibit lifting and/or moving heavy items, let your Head Usher know.
- Post-concert duties, such as tear-down and cleanup of the hall.

# THE USHER PORTAL

The Eastman Usher Portal can be found at <<https://www.esm.rochester.edu/ushers/>>.

The Usher Portal can be accessed by logging in with your NetID. It is the primary way in which the CO communicates schedules, events, and staffing with the Usher crew.

Events are listed on the Portal on roughly a monthly basis. An event listing on the Portal contains a lot of information, and looks like this:

Event Name: Eastman School Symphony Orchestra

Event Type: Concert/Performance\*

Booking Date: Mon Apr 26th 2021

Start: 7:30 PM

End: 9:30 PM

Venue: Kodak Hall

Status: Concert Office - Confirmed

Head Usher Call: 6:30pm

Usher Call: 6:45pm

Staff Required: 5

Staff Still Needed: No

CD Sales Requested: No

**Head Usher**

Trevor Scott

**Ushers**

Noah Sesling

Joohyun (Patrick) Baek

Connor Ingham

Kristin Andlauer

Megan Neuman

You can always click on the “Eastman Ushers” button in the top left corner of the screen to reach the “Show My Gigs” page, which lists every gig you have been assigned to in chronological order beginning on the date of access.

**You should check your “Show My Gigs” page *and* the “Staff Needed” page on a daily basis to make sure you are on top of your gigs and any sudden changes to the concert schedule.**

# AVAILABILITY

Periodically, you will be contacted via email by the House Manager as gigs are added to the portal. You will be asked to fill out your availability, and will generally be given several days to do so. To start, you must log into the Portal and then click on the “Availability” tab under the “Gig Information” drop-down menu.

You will see a long list of gigs in chronological order from the date of access. To fill out your availability, you must scroll to the beginning of the date range you are marking availability for, and then click the “I’m Available” button beside each gig you are able to work.

Once you are done marking your availability, you must refresh your browser tab to ensure that your availability was processed correctly. After you refresh, you should still see all the glowing green buttons next to gigs you’ve indicated availability for.

## **If you see multiple gigs that overlap with each other:**

Generally, it is the House Manager’s job to ensure that no one is double-booked. Therefore, if you would be available to work either gig, you may mark yourself available for both of them. If you would prefer to work one gig over the other one, you may mark yourself available for only the gig you want to work.

## **If you are accidentally double-booked:**

If you notice that you are scheduled to work two gigs at the same time, contact the House Manager ASAP to have the issue resolved. If it has been several days since the gigs were staffed, the House Manager may ask you to find a substitute for one of the gigs yourself. Otherwise, the HM can fix the issue internally by re-staffing the gigs.

**Please be aware of your schedule *before* filling out your availability!**

# **SUBSTITUTES**

We understand that schedules and availability can change at a moment's notice, especially at a place like the Eastman School. While the Concert Office is more than willing to help you if you are caught in a bind and cannot work a gig, you are responsible for finding a substitute.

## **How to find a substitute:**

In the Usher Portal under the "Contact Information" drop-down menu, there is a tab labeled "Ushers" that directs you to the usher roster. The roster lists everyone's phone numbers, and has links to email each person individually. However, you should use the "Email Whole Team" button at the bottom of the page, which will generate an email draft to the entire usher roster.

In the subject line of your email, you should write "Sub for [date]" or something similar so that ushers can easily spot sub requests in their email inboxes.

In the body of the email, you should include a screenshot of the event listing in the Portal (rather than copying down all the information), as well as a brief message with any details about the sub request (whether or not it is urgent, if you are able to cover a portion of the gig, etc.).

Once you receive an email accepting the gig, you should make sure that your substitute has marked themselves available for the gig in the portal. Once they have done so, you must send an email to the House Manager that includes the gig information (ideally a screenshot), as well as the name of your sub. The HM will then re-staff the gig accordingly.

**The House Manager cannot staff a substitute on a gig if they have not marked themselves available for the gig in the Portal - please make sure your substitute has done this *before* you email the House Manager!**



# **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

## **Dress Code**

In a nutshell, head-to-toe black formalwear. The following rules apply:

- No hats, hoods, or headwear. Exceptions will be made for religious or medical headwear.
- No jewelry other than small earrings, rings, or necklaces. Bracelets are not recommended.
- Shirts must be formal - no polos, T-shirts, or hoodies. Acceptable shirts include collared button-down shirts and formal blouses.
- Shirts must not show your midriff or shoulders, must have a modest neckline, and must have sleeves at or below the elbow.
- Shirts must be solid black - no pinstripes, patterns, graphics, logos, insignias, sheer fabric, or sequin/rhinestone decorations are allowed.
- Jackets/blazers are not required, but you may wear one if you so choose.
- Ties are not required, but you may wear one if you so choose. Neckties and bowties are both allowed, but they must be solid, matte black with no pattern or shine.
- Belts must be solid black and may not feature large, decorative belt buckles.
- Pants must be formal, full-length black slacks. Jeans, leggings, sweatpants, shorts, skirts, and dresses are not allowed.
- Shoes must be comfortable and soft-soled (quiet), but formal and solid black. Sneakers, flip-flops, sandals, or any other open-toed shoes are not permitted.
- Socks must be black, but patterns are allowed.
- Usher tags must be worn on the upper left chest (your left).

## **Professionalism and Presentation**

Keep in mind that you are representing the Eastman School each time you come to work a gig.

Donors, school officials, or members of the public may be attending *any* event you are working.

Please keep the following rules in mind when you are coming to a gig:

- Your hair must be kept neat and clean. Beyond this, all hairstyles are acceptable.
- Any makeup must be conservative in style and color.
- Visible tattoos are allowed. Tattoos consisting of profanity, nudity, drugs/alcohol, or offensive imagery, however, must be covered.
- If you carry electronic devices (phones, watches/smart-watches, etc) on your person, please make sure they are either *fully* silenced or powered off. Use of cell phones during a gig is *strictly prohibited* unless your Head Usher has given you explicit permission.
- Front-of-house ushers are generally required to stand during their entire event, including during intermission. Only on certain occasions (at the discretion of the Head Usher) are ushers allowed to sit.

## **Report Time and Late Arrival/No-Show**

Your report time is listed in the Usher Portal under “My Call Time.” You will be expected to meet your Head Usher at your gig’s venue by your call time. For gigs in Kilbourn or Hatch, please plan to meet your Head Usher in the theater lobby. For gigs in Kodak Hall, you should meet your Head Usher in the side lobby, just inside the doors to Lowry Hall.

You are considered late if you arrive even one minute after your call time. Please plan to arrive at least a couple of minutes before your report time to ensure that you are not marked late.

If you anticipate that you will be late to your gig, you must contact your Head Usher by phone or text (all HU phone numbers are listed in the Portal) and let them know.

Consistent tardiness (arriving 1-4 minutes after your call time) will result in a job performance warning and potentially termination if the pattern continues.

If you are not present 5 minutes after your call time, you will receive a phone call from your Head Usher. At this point, you are considered severely late. It is then your responsibility to make every effort to get to your gig as soon as possible and keep in contact with your Head Usher.

If your Head Usher calls you 5 minutes after your call time and you do not answer, you will be marked a no-call, no-show. A no-call, no-show is a serious infraction and will result in a job performance warning and potentially being dropped from the usher crew.

## **Head Usher No-Show**

In the very rare event of a Head Usher no-show, you should first call the Head Usher directly using the number listed on the Portal. In the even rarer event that they don’t answer or can’t come in, call the House Manager right away.

## **Timekeeping**

All ushers must clock their hours in HRMS (Human Resources Management System) using the student computer available in the Concert Office or a personal mobile device connected to the University Wifi network prior to leaving the school. The Head Ushers will provide you with the hours to be reported as they appear on the Head Usher report. You will need your NetID and password to log in.

If you do not log your hours, you cannot be paid for them! Pay periods run on a two week cycle from Sunday through to Saturday. On the Monday after a pay cycle is completed, the timekeeper will validate your hours. Paychecks are cut on the following Friday, and can either be mailed to you or deposited directly into your bank account (this is recommended). Direct deposit can be set up online through the HRMS website.

## Hall Policies + Emergency Procedures

Ushers must enforce *and* obey the following general hall policies:

- No food or drink except sealable water bottles is allowed in any of the halls. Patrons may either leave their drink in the theater lobby to be collected after the concert or chug it beforehand (be sure to remind them where the restrooms are located!).
- Smoking and vaping are prohibited in all indoor areas of the Eastman School.
- Flash photography is never allowed in any halls at any events.
- Non-flash photography and videotaping are allowed at ECMS events and concerts that are being taped on behalf of a soloist or conductor (SDRs, ensemble concerts). Outside of these events, videotaping is not allowed (especially during faculty/guest recitals).
- Latecomers should never be seated while a concert is in progress. In HRH, they may stand in the vestibule to wait for applause, and in KH they may stand at the top of the stairs on either side as long as they are not blocking the exit.
- No people or objects (wheelchairs, tripods, bags, instruments) may *ever* block a fire exit, aisle, staircase, or doorway. Sitting on the stairs in KH is prohibited.
- Animals are *not* permitted inside the hall. The only exceptions to this rule are service animals - emotional support animals are *not* allowed in the building.

In an emergency:

Immediately inform your Head Usher if you encounter situations such as:

- someone becoming ill or injured
- problems handling difficult or threatening patrons
- unwanted guests entering from the street
- problems with ESM facilities (light failure, water leaks, fire alarm)

Do not hesitate to contact UR Security in Lowry Hall or by phone if you need assistance. The security officer is trained to handle situations like the ones above; you are not! Assess and deal with the situation as best you can. Stay calm, and try to keep patrons and coworkers calm.

In the event of an evacuation, the audience will be notified by the Head Usher (KH and HRH) or the Stage Manager (EKH). If there is a fire alarm, the hall is to be evacuated immediately, whether it is a real emergency or not. Open all doors, and direct people all the way out of the building through the nearest emergency exit. Always remain calm to avoid mass panic.

Always be sure that you are aware of every emergency exit in each hall, as well as the quickest way out of the building from any spot in the hall. If you need to, take a look around before your gig starts, or ask your Head Usher about the locations of the exits.

Emergencies do happen - usually more often than people expect. Always be prepared, and never be afraid to ask your Head Usher if you are unsure about anything or need help. Be ready to make an emergency announcement to the audience if needed, and be prepared to keep your cool in the event that something goes awry.

#### Facilities Issues:

*Always* inform your Head Usher right away if you encounter any broken, damaged, or malfunctioning equipment (i.e. burnt-out lightbulbs, damaged instruments, seats, etc), spills or messes, hall issues (exit signs not working, ceiling leaks or damage, green room issues), or anything else that needs attention and/or may affect the next events in a hall.

## **WORKING BACKSTAGE**

You should expect that you will be working backstage in KH and HRH with fair regularity.

Every event in these halls requires a backstage usher. Student Degree Recitals only require one usher, who will always be working backstage.

With regards to dress code, backstage ushers can generally afford to prioritize comfort and range of motion over formality - however, keep in mind that backstage ushers are required to be onstage at several points during a performance, so professionalism is still paramount.

You should be readily available for assistance and behave in a polite and attentive manner. It is true that for the majority of a performance, the backstage usher may not have a lot to do. You may not use your cell phone or do homework when the artists are present. Further, please do not socialize with friends while working backstage as it is unprofessional and can result in noise disruptive to the performance. A backstage usher is required to be at their post from the beginning of the performance until it has ended. You cannot leave your position for any reason other than an emergency.

## **Keys**

All backstage ushers will use a designated set of keys for hall access when staffing events. These must be picked up from the HU upon arrival at the venue at your call time. The Head Usher will maintain access to the Concert Office before and after the concert, but it is the responsibility of the backstage usher to make sure the key ring is returned to the Head Usher or the Concert Office after the event. Here is a short list of the key numbers and functions you should know:

KH Keyring:

#51 - Concert Office

#142 - KH Green Room

#221 - KH Master Key

#100 - ESM Building Master Key

HRH Keyring:

#51 - Concert Office

#95 - HRH Master Key

#35 - Hallway Storage Closet

## **Fire Announcement**

All ushers must memorize the official fire announcement which must be made from the stage at the start of any performance with more than 50 patrons in attendance. The official text can be found attached to any of the clipboards in the Concert Office. You may read from the clipboard during your first few gigs, but you will be expected to memorize the announcement within about a month of starting to work.



## General Guidelines and Tips

- When you come to work for your first gig, take the time to familiarize yourself with the aspects of the venues covered in backstage training: greenroom access/safes, lighting controls, and the location of extra staging equipment and instruments - also, take the opportunity to orient yourself onstage and get familiar with the layout.
- When arriving for a gig, take the time to get organized and study the program and any provided staging. Grab scrap paper if you need to jot down notes in the absence of a staging diagram. Check with the HU regarding any notes on the HU report that might pertain to backstage operations or setup/strike. When in doubt, ask questions – all Head Ushers are trained in backstage operations and have plenty of experience with all aspects of hall management.
- If there is no staging, try to infer your own based on the pieces on the program. Write down any notes, and once the performers arrive, check your ideas against their needs. Don't forget about the 'miscellaneous' items: piano stick height, page-turner's chair, extra stands for mutes or music, benches, etc.
- Coordinate the removal of any special equipment (mutes, iPads, foot pedals, water bottles) and scores for the performers as needed. All scores must be returned to performers at the conclusion of the concert and before they leave the venue.
- Practice your public speaking: recite your fire announcement to your friends and get comfortable changing the text. Your delivery needs to be confident and you need to be able to project and engage an audience of up to 450 patrons (KH). Record yourself on your phone to check your speaking speed – the text must be understandable even if you are nervous. Frequently there may be added points that need to be communicated to the

public as part of the pre-concert announcement and your delivery should not change regardless of the text in question even if you have to 'improvise'.

- Keep in mind that when working backstage, you are dealing with people on both ends of the job – the performers on the backstage end, and the audience during your times onstage. The latter will evaluate everything you do, and the greatest compliment you can receive is that they do not notice your work. This implies that you perform the job in such a manner that they are hardly aware of all the planning and physical work that goes into it, and your skill allows them to not lose focus from the performance they came to see and/or shift it to your performance on the job! The former will always present a unique challenge: almost all performers get nervous before they play and this can manifest itself in various forms, from visible illness to forced gaiety, curtness, and in very rare cases, rudeness. Always remain courteous when dealing with performers, and try to place yourself in their shoes. If a performer is truly out of line, notify the Head Usher immediately so that they can defuse the situation. Keep in mind that your job is to make their experience as stress-free as possible by removing all worries outside of the actual act of performing. Your professionalism will earn their trust and almost always their praise and gratitude.
- Remember - the more you know, the more confident you will seem. The more confident you are, the more comfortable you will be doing this job and dealing with nervous performers while making them more at ease both onstage and off.

## Equipment

Pianos:

Two 9-foot Steinway pianos are in residence in Kilbourn Hall - #941 and #660, and two in Hatch Recital Hall - #797 & #292. To distinguish between the two, look for the number on the pedal lyre (941 is labeled, 660 is not; 797 has a commemorative plaque on the inside of the piano lid).

No fewer than two people should move either one of the Steinway pianos, ever! They each weigh about 900-1000 pounds, and can be dangerous to move alone!

Close the piano lid and the keyboard cover before any moves. Any contact between the piano and the stage walls/proscenium could result in damage and must be avoided.

Remember to adjust or remove the music rack from the instrument as necessary. Typically, the rack is removed for solo piano recitals, but will be used for any pieces where the piano serves in an ensemble capacity. The exceptions to this are duo piano concerto/accompaniment setups where only the accompanist's piano will need a rack since the soloist plays from memory.

Always place the protective covers on the pianos when they are not in use. When removing piano covers, never crumple them up or stuff them away - always fold and roll them so that they can be stored neatly and replaced easily.

Pianos may never be fully positioned on the stage extension due to safety concerns.

Preparing pianos is not permitted without approval from the Concert Office. Such approval will be indicated on the Usher Report.

Take time to practice lifting/lowering the piano lid before your gig starts, especially if you have never done it before. The lids are heavier than they look!

Never allow the lid stick to drop inside the piano. Always use two hands when lowering the lid.

Never waste time during a performance trying to get the piano to budge an extra inch. Get it roughly to where it needs to go, make sure it's straight, and then continue with the concert. Those extra seconds feel much longer to the audience, and can bring on comments or judgement regarding the backstage usher's job performance.

Practice moving the piano(s) with another usher after your first gig – learn what is the best way for you to approach the instrument in order to get it rolling in the desired direction and at an appropriate speed. All instrument moves need to be efficient but safe to both the stage crew and the instruments.

Place the piano bench *after* the piano is positioned. The bench should be about 12 inches from the edge of the keyboard and centered across the Steinway logo.

Place the page-turner's chair to the left of the piano bench at the left-most edge of the keyboard to allow for sufficient room for the pianist's hands.

Harpsichords:

No fewer than three people should move any of the harpsichords or fortepianos. The resident harpsichord (Taskin) is kept offstage left in Kilbourn Hall, and another is in the piano storage room backstage in Hatch. Always place the protective covers on the harpsichords when they are not in use, and make sure nothing is placed on top of the instruments. All harpsichords other than the resident one are brought into the hall only for special recitals (the request must be made in advance with the Concert/Instrument Office). On the Ross harpsichord, note that the instrument is separate from the stand. Two or three people should lift the keyboard of the Ross while one person takes the stand. Harpsichords/fortepianos are used with prior approval from the

Instrument Office. This will be indicated on the Usher Report and communicated to you along with post-concert instructions for instrument pickup.

#### KH Organs:

The Schlicker positiv is stored in the 2nd basement level. Put it there only if you absolutely need to (Dan usually does this). You can also move it to backstage left if necessary. The Chamber Organ (Goetze and Gwynn) is generally used for Collegium Musicum and is usually handled only by Instrument Office personnel.

#### Chairs and Stands:

For small groups, there should be plenty of chairs and stands backstage left in Kilbourn Hall, and in the storage room in the backstage hallway in Hatch. Fifteen stands and grey chairs are generally kept within easy access backstage. Extras for Kilbourn are in the basement directly underneath the stage, or sometimes in room 120, key #100; use the stand rack key #2126 on the KH Head Usher keyring to unlock them. Ensembles of more than 10 players are permitted for student degree recitals only with prior clearance from the Concert Office, which will be noted on the Usher Report and communicated to you.

#### KH Elevator:

The Head Usher is responsible for operating the elevator lift - ushers should *never* operate the lift alone. Make sure that the elevator cutout onstage is completely clear of equipment and people before using the elevator. Be extremely careful when loading pianos into the elevator. Make sure that the piano is covered with the protective cover. Place the metal ramp securely on the floor,

and ensure that both wheels are on the ramp. Load the piano from the back end first; the keyboard always goes in last. Make sure that both gates are closed before lowering the elevator (If they slide open while the elevator is between floors, the elevator gets stuck!).

## **Lights**

Hatch Recital Hall:

All lights (house and stage) are controlled via one touch-screen panel located in the backstage lighting cabinet. The panel includes multiple buttons labeled for various pre-concert, concert, and special lighting settings. The lights will automatically crossfade between the current and the desired setting once the button is selected on the screen. Please note that due to the nature of these controls, you must *always* have a lighting button selected in order for any lights to be on in the hall. If none of the presets are selected, the hall will black out. You can *never* allow the hall to be in complete darkness when patrons are present inside the venue!

Sometimes, the lights will be turned on by ESM Security via a keyed timer which causes the lighting to black out once the timer runs out. In this case, you will need to turn the lights back on using the touch panel backstage. In most cases when the timer is used, the HU report will have a note about the approximate time that the lights will be expected to time out and turn off. All lighting questions or issues should be directed to Mike Dziakonas, the HRH stage manager.

Kilbourn Hall:

The lights in KH are broken into two sets: House Lights and Stage Lights. The house lights are controlled by either of two panels: one backstage right and one in the left vom. Generally, the vom panel is not used to control the house lights, so it is your responsibility to make sure that the

backstage panel has control of the house lights *before* your event starts. Usually, pressing the “all off” button on the backstage panel to black out the hall and then selecting the desired light setting is enough to reset the panel. Otherwise, you will need to black out the hall from the vom panel (including setting all the faders to 0), select “all off” on the backstage panel, and then select your desired setting. *Always* check that the backstage panel has control and reset if needed when you are working in Kilbourn - there is little worse than an unexpected lighting malfunction during a performance!

Here is a list of the house light control buttons and their functions:

Open - turns on the house lights to pre-concert settings

Standard - brings down the house lights to concert settings (does not black them out)

Text/Notes - brings down the house lights, but not very much - generally used for voice recitals

All Off - blacks out the house lights completely - only used for special effects during a concert or when packing up the hall at the end of the night

The stage lights are controlled by the faders on the backstage panel.

Generally, you will use the “Pre-Concert” and “Basic Concert” labeled faders. Before a concert, the “Pre-Concert” fader should be all the way up. When the concert starts, bring the “Basic Concert” fader up all the way or almost all the way (depending on the performer’s preference).

At intermission and the end of the show, bring the “Basic Concert” fader back down to zero.

Other faders are used for the stage extension and special effects - your HU will provide instructions on how to use these and which you should use before your gig starts.

**Rule of thumb:** each time you do a lights change, you will be bringing one set of lights (house vs. stage) up and one set down. *Always bring lights up BEFORE you bring others down.* This avoids any possibility of accidentally blacking out the hall.

General lighting tips/guidelines:

- *Never* black out a hall with patrons inside (unless it's part of the show)! This is both dangerous and very disruptive to a performance.
- At intermission or the end of a concert, always bring up the lights as applause is dying down, not after. Do not leave the audience sitting in a dark hall any longer than they need to be.
- Do not mess with the lighting panel(s) during a performance. It is all too easy to accidentally press a button or move a fader and disrupt a performance.
- Always check lighting preferences with the performer before a concert - they may request special effects lighting or other alterations.
- In Kilbourn, always adjust the faders slowly and smoothly. Generally, the audience often thinks the lights are machine-controlled. Don't make them realize that a person is behind the lighting changes by moving the faders too quickly or in a jilted, stop-and-start manner.
- Always check with your Head Usher if you have any questions or are at all unsure about light operations.



# STAGE CHANGES

Stage changes are an integral part of working backstage. Performing efficient, quick, “invisible” stage changes comes mostly with practice, but here are a few tips and tricks:

- Always confirm staging with the performer before an event starts, and clear up anything that might be unclear on the staging diagram - programs change all the time, or there may not be a staging diagram at all!
- Never forget the minutiae of staging - extra stands, page-turner’s chair, stick height, etc.
- Take notes! Bring a pen with you backstage, and be ready to take notes on scrap paper or on the staging diagram itself. Know the layout of the stage, and get familiar with the “shorthand” used to mark staging diagrams so that your notes are clear.
- Before you go onstage, plan out your every move, especially if you are working with another usher or the HU. Always coordinate with your coworkers.
- *Always* empty your pockets before going onstage! Don’t bring your walkie, keys, phone, or anything else that can fall out of a pocket or make noise while you’re working.
- Walk quickly and quietly - this is why we ask you to wear soft-soled shoes!
- *Never* turn your back to the audience (except when working with the pianos) - know the layout of the stage and try to stay facing forward or sideways.
- *Never* stand onstage and watch another usher finishing up the stage change.
- Don’t spend too much time trying to get pianos, chairs, stands, etc. into exactly the right spots. Every second you spend making tiny adjustments to equipment feels like ages to the audience - the performers will adjust the equipment when they get onstage.

# **BACKSTAGE USHER CONCERT PROCEDURES**

1. Arrive at the Concert Office at the appointed call time
2. Meet the Head Usher on duty and go over any special staging instructions, and collect necessary keys, radios, staging diagrams, and programs
3. Proceed backstage and unlock the doors leading to the backstage area and the green room  
- in KH, wait until the arrival of the artist to open the green room for security reasons
4. Check the lights backstage, making sure that work lights are off (KH), and that the appropriate panels have control of the lighting. Turn the stage/preset lights on, and turn on the stage floor lamps in KH.
5. Find the performer(s) and/or conductor and discuss details of staging that are not clear, especially: piano stick position, page-turner's chair, additional stands, special lighting and microphone needs, planned exits off the stage between pieces, etc. Offer programs to the performer(s) if they are available, and let them know to find you if they have questions or need anything done.
6. Coordinate the opening of the house with the Head Usher via radio: For student recitals, performers must be offstage 5-7 minutes prior to concert time at the latest. Push the performers if necessary so that you can open at a reasonable time. For other events, open 25-30 minutes before scheduled start time; be proactive and remember that by being calm and collected yourself you will be more successful in managing and calming down a nervous performer!
7. Give the performers 5- and 2-minute warnings before the start time for the event, and be prepared to radio the HU if the performer requests that you hold the start for a few

minutes longer. Any delay in start time greater than 4 minutes is considered excessive and will require an explanation on the Head Usher report.

8. When you are ready to begin the performance, coordinate with Head Usher via radio to make sure the front of house is ready as well.
9. Call the performer to the backstage area, and begin changing the lights to concert settings.
10. Make the fire announcement and then return to the backstage area. Close the door fully behind you.
11. Open the door to let the performers onstage and begin the performance. Remember to smile, and always be encouraging! This is often when performers are most nervous, and a reassuring presence goes a long way in moments like these.
12. During the concert, open the door to let performer(s) on & off the stage and perform stage changes as needed. Remember to keep the green room door closed while the performer is onstage!
  - a. Open the door quickly and promptly as needed (watch the backstage monitor in HRH and peek through the door crack/listen for footsteps in KH)
  - b. Always be aware of big stage changes and plan ahead
  - c. Always be alert for encores, program changes, and incidents like forgotten music, broken strings, and other interruptions to the performance
13. At intermission, remember to bring the house lights up first before turning down the stage lights.

14. Unlock the green room for the performer as needed and double-check the length of intermission - generally, we try to stick to 10 minutes for degree recitals, ECMS, and other small concerts, and 15 minutes for faculty recitals and bigger events.
15. Flash the house lights if needed to signal the end of intermission (KH)
16. Give the performer a 2-minute warning before the end of intermission (be prepared for them to ask for extra time!)
17. Bring the stage lights up and house lights down, wait 10-20 seconds for the audience to settle, and then let the performer back onstage for the second half.
18. After the concert, remember to adjust the lights as applause stops (not after), and be aware of the possibility of encores and curtain calls - most recitals will have at least one curtain call!
19. Radio the HU to let them know the concert has ended (especially in HRH!) and proceed onstage if needed to begin striking/resetting the stage.
20. Perform necessary striking and resetting of the stage - your HU will generally meet you onstage and let you know what needs to be done, especially if it involves the stage elevator (KH) or the piano closet (HRH).
21. Check with the HU regarding lighting/staging needs for future performances that day, or about packing up the hall if you are working the last performance for the night.
22. Tidy the backstage area and store any extra chairs/stands/equipment where it goes. Make sure any forgotten music/belongings are returned to the performer and any trash is thrown away.
23. Make sure the performer has vacated the green room (this may take a while!) and hasn't left anything behind. Pack up the green room if needed, and close/lock it.

24. Proceed to the front of house with your HU (don't forget to bring your keys, clipboard, and walkie!) and wait to either receive further instructions or be dismissed.
25. Head to the Concert Office to return your keys, clipboard, and tag and log your hours!

# FRONT OF HOUSE NOTES, TIPS, AND GUIDELINES

- FoH ushers are generally required to stand for most or all of a performance, especially when members of the public or school officials are involved.
- Professionalism is paramount when working FoH. Always be approachable and be ready to greet patrons, make conversation, and answer questions.
- Relatedly, be familiar with the event, the artists, and the approximate length of each piece, as well as ticketing policies and information about the halls and school.
- Know where restrooms, exits, elevators, etc. are located, and be able to give directions.
- Do not use your cell phone, read, do homework, or talk loudly with other ushers/friends.
- Do not play with the clickers (they are very breakable!).
- Box Office issues are handled at the office near Hatch Hall in EEW. Generally, at large ticketed events Box Office staff are present at a Will Call table.
- Refer *any* questions that you cannot answer yourself to your HU or to Box Office/Concert Office staff if they are present at an event.

## Disabled Patron Seating

KH: Seat any patrons in wheelchairs in the designated wheelchair spots at the house right ends of rows E and F where seats can be removed to make room for a wheelchair.

HRH: There is a spot for a wheelchair in row K, just in front of the cross-aisle. HRH also has several transfer seats along the house right side of the hall for disabled patrons.

EKH: There are several spots for wheelchairs along the back row of seats on the orchestra level, and disabled patrons can use the ET elevator to access the upper levels of the hall.

## **Full House Procedures**

KH: As the clicker count approaches 375, the HU will temporarily close KH and get everyone inside seated. Explain to the people waiting in line the reason for the delay. Allow remaining patrons to enter and direct them to open seats. When the count reaches 415, the hall will be closed again and all except two of the ushers should go into the hall to assist with finding empty seats. Communicate via radios to figure out how many patrons can be allowed in and guaranteed a seat. Once the house is full, if more patrons wish to come in, direct them to the standing room positions in the voms, or behind the last row of seats.

HRH: As the clicker count approaches 175, the HU will temporarily close the bottom level of HRH to allow everyone inside to be seated. Remaining patrons will then be seated party-by-party - communicate via radio to ensure the correct number of patrons are allowed in. Once the orchestra level seats are filled, the HU will then open the balcony. At least one usher should then be responsible for directing patrons to the balcony door and seating them until all the balcony seats are filled. Once every seat in the hall is filled, no one else should be allowed to enter - there is no standing room in HRH.

EKH: Generally, any concert with a high expected attendance is ticketed, so ushers don't often have to deal with regulating the number of people inside the theater. Always prioritize keeping the lobby as clear as possible, as it is very small and is easily crowded. Your HU will have specific instructions if a general admission or open concert is expected to have high attendance.