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Reflection on the Senior Play

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Reflection of the production

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My Reflection of the Senior Play

This is my third time join the production team in the English Department. However, it is my first time to work as a stage manager instead of leader of certain technical group. At first, I thought it is not a difficult task for me to get the show up and run the show, for I work as stage manager assistant at Family Theater at Taipei City Hall. However, getting a show up is not only about professional knowledge but also about the ability to communicate and help people cooperate. I encountered various difficulties because I was too confident about my experiences and professional knowledge. In short, being a stage manager in the production of *The Secret in the Wings* helps me understand my limitation and realize how to adjust my mentality and communication skills to lead a nonprofessional production.

At first, I set a very high standard for this production since I considered it as my own senior production. I wanted it to be marvelous and different from the ordinary production that our department used to put on. I thought I could teach all of my staffs and train them well before the run of the show. However, it was impossible for me to train them all in such a tight schedule. Moreover, I did not take my staffs' time and their ability into consideration. For example, I spent most of time to teach my lighting staffs; however, it was still difficult for them to catch up during the technical

rehearsals. It took three days for them to get used to the lighting console and to understand the lighting design of each scene. In addition, it took almost a week for them to remember all the cues and run them correctly. I spent two extra mornings to teach them how to distinguish different lighting transformations on the stage.

Although my staff did a great job after two-day practices; however, they still made numerous mistakes on the first two days of our performances. I did not realize we just have such limited time for technical rehearsal. It makes it harder for my staffs to catch up in such a short time. In brief, in a nonprofessional production, I should not have been so harsh on them.

Moreover, I did not distribute my work to my assistant well. I thought I could handle each technical team. I did not want to cause my assistant, Renn any inconvenience since she is a very busy sophomore student. I wanted her to learn as much as she could within her ability, hence I did not ask her to take care of any technical group. However, due to the unexpected problems I did not have much time to take care the details of props and costume and makeup. For example, I spent a lot of time adjusting the fly on the wire with stage staffs and tried different way to fix the frame problem. Therefore, I do not have time to discuss and confirm the details with the director which makes the prop setting remain ambiguous. I only checked the list with my props leader; nevertheless, it is until the second day of the performance I realized there was a big problem of scene transformation after the intermission. The prop list did not have any problem; however, actors' always put props in different position that confused the prop staff. They did not know whether they should leave the props on stage or take it away. On the other hand, the director wants the stage

remain the same; hence, she was always confused about why the staffs remove some props on stage as well.

This could have been avoided if there is a person in charge in the prop setting on stage, who could talk to actors, director and the prop leader. I should have asked Renn to confirm the details of setting transformation and ask her to communicate with the director and actors instead of letting my prop team leader talk to the director alone, which cause a great deal of unnecessary misunderstandings and problems. I should have trust Renn more and allows her to handle more tasks instead of finishing them by myself, let alone I am overwhelmed with lighting and stage problems. Although I am capable of finishing these details on my own, I should know when to ask for help and make some adjustment when I am too busy. There are actually more details need to confirm and discuss when things go wrong. It is essential for me and the director to reach a consensus about how to deal with unexpected situations on stage. It is more than just checking the list.

Last but not least, I had a hard time communicating with the director due to our different characteristics and personal traits. During the initial rehearsal period, I did not like her way of rehearsing. I thought she was always way behind the schedule and changed her mind every single time. There was barely nothing I could confirm and make sure during the rehearsal. Moreover, we did not have any full rehearsal for the crews to see and discuss the design because she never makes to finish rehearsing the whole play. Most important of all, we should have delete some scenes in advance to make sure we can follow the schedule. She cannot make up her mind to delete any

scenes, which wasted a great deal of time. I talked to her many times to warn her that she was running out of time that she had to make decision as soon as possible, while she still insist she needed more time to consider. I just gave up communicating with her, since I thought she was not willing to change her mind. Additionally, she always talked to my technical group leader about her needs for the production instead of talking to me. Each time I found out there is something on the list that I did not know, I told Autumn she needs to talk to me and let me know instead of talking to my staffs. However, she still kept adding new props or changing costume without letting me know.

Two days before the rehearsing week at Arens Theater, she added a lot of props and changed the costume of chorus again. However, we did not have much time to find the props she needs. Moreover, we already spent one thousand and four hundred dollars on the chorus' dresses. I was furious and I sent her a long message tell her that she cannot do whatever she wants without discussing with me since she knows nothing about technical group and our budget. I told her if she kept doing this I will not give her any props or costume. It was until that day she realized that it was necessary that she had to talk to me. Each time I told her she needs to keep me posted, she just replied okay, while she did not see it necessary. She said okay without understand my words every time, which was the main problem of our communication.

At first, I talked to her and I thought she understands my words. When next time I found something went wrong again, I just said the same words because I wanted to be nice. I thought maybe it is because she forgot to tell me. When it happened all over

again, I just felt angry and did not want to talk to her anymore. I considered talking to her was useless since she did not want to respect and value my opinion at all.

However, it was a wrong decision, since it will not help the production getting any better.

I should spend more time explaining the reason why she must talk to me first and let me talk to my staffs later until she really understands me instead of believing her words. She was not a professional director in theater, hence it is normal for her to feel confused. I should be more patient to teach her and help her become a better director instead of being angry at her. Tolerating her doing wrong things all over again is not about being nice, it is about ignoring the situation and the problem and blames her for that. Moreover, I should have set different deadline for each technical group and be stick to it to let her know when she should stop changing the settling of the play instead of letting her changing the setting all the time and complaining about her. As a technical leader, I need to know when and how to take effective methods to stop her from messing up all the technical works. Over all, there are lots of things I could have done to make our communication better. It is okay to feel angry, while solving the problem should be my main concern when we are in a production team.

All in all, join this production team helps me learned a lot. For technical works, there are many things I cannot do that I need to ask for help due to the time limitation, while for communication, there are more things I could try to improve the conditions. To be a better stage manager, it is important for me to know how to adjust my mentality and communicating skills in different production next time.