

THEATRE MEMPHIS USHER GUIDELINES

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Important Contact Info

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Welcome to the Team!

Thank you for your interest in Theatre Memphis. We are always ready to welcome volunteers who are excited about theatre. We are proud of our volunteers and the services they provide to the theatre, the community, and the arts. We will work hard to see that you have fun, enjoy a strong sense of satisfaction and, above all, feel appreciated for your efforts.

Theatre Memphis is a nonprofit community theatre dedicated to producing professional quality theatrical experiences for both our patrons and volunteers. A Memphis arts institution since 1920, Theatre Memphis is a well established theatre, staffed with talented professionals, and able to produce high-quality productions. Members of our community have the unique opportunity to learn more about theatre production and hone their talents in a professional setting while enjoying the affable spirit of a community theatre. We invite any interested member of our community to get involved onstage, backstage, and/or front of house.

We offer a variety of positions and would be happy to have you share and expand your talents with us. Ours is an educational theatre, so if you have an area of interest, but not much experience, our department heads would be happy to teach you.

As a Theatre Memphis usher, you represent the Theatre. Most times you will be the first and only impression a patron has upon arriving at the Theatre, so be as courteous and helpful as possible.

These are general guidelines designed for your reference. Although we cannot anticipate every situation you may face, we know you will use your best judgment and concern for others in performing your volunteer duties.

If you have questions particular to ushering, please email our Usher Coordinator. If you have questions about volunteering in general, please email our Director of Stage Management, Outreach, and Volunteer Engagement. (Email addresses listed above.)

We are happy you have chosen to be part of our team!

House Information

Facility: Theatre Memphis's Lohrey Theatre can seat 411 patrons, and provides a middle row of wheelchair-reserved spaces. Theatre Memphis's Next Stage has a flexible seating arrangement that generally seats 100.

Accessibility: 6+ *handicap* parking spaces, wheelchair-ramp access and restrooms.

Digital Hearing Devices: Available at the Box Office. There is no charge for this service.

Emergency Number: In case of emergency, the administrative phone line is 901-682-8601. This phone line is not monitored outside of office hours, so please instruct the patron to leave a voice message and we will return their call as soon as possible. For immediate assistance, please provide and have the patron email ushers@theatrememphis.org.

Restrooms and Water Fountains: Patrons will find restroom facilities located in the Lobby downstairs, as well as in the south hall. Water fountains are located near the restrooms.

Late Seating: Latecomers will be seated as designated by the House Manager until the intermission, when patrons may be seated at their assigned seating.

Lost and Found: All lost and found items shall be brought to the Box Office.

Public Telephone: Because most people now have cell phones, the Theatre does not have a designated "public phone." If a patron needs to use a telephone to make local or emergency call, please direct them to the House Manager or Box Office.

Food and Beverage: Only bottled water and our approved souvenir cups with lids are allowed in the Lohrey Theatre, unless management advises otherwise. (Handicap section can be excluded, but the House Manager must be notified if other drinks are being brought into the house.) Cups without lids are allowed in the Next Stage.

Restricted Areas: There are several restricted areas where **patrons, ushers, and other volunteers** are not permitted unless these areas are included in their duties as specified by management:

- **Onstage**
- **Backstage**
- **Box Office**
- **Behind concessions areas, except as assigned.**

Smoking: Smoking is not permitted anywhere inside Theatre Memphis. The Theatre is a smoke-free facility. Smoking is only permitted outside.

Usher Requirements

Ushers must:

- Be 16 years of age or older and enthusiastic about the theatre. 12 – 15 year olds may also usher when accompanied by an ushering parent or other adult. (Both parent and child will be expected to fulfill ushering responsibilities.) No children under 12 may usher or accompany an ushering adult, unless a ticket has been purchased for that child and the child does not distract from ushering duties. Any exceptions will need to be approved by the Usher Coordinator.
- Have a positive attitude, conducting themselves with courtesy and consideration.
- Have a helpful friendly demeanor and be able to deal with a cross-section of personalities.
- Remain calm in stressful situations.
- Follow Theatre guidelines and accept supervision graciously, having a willingness to perform various tasks or positions as assigned or requested by the House Manager or Theatre Management.
- Have a working knowledge of the Theatre (seating, amenities, theatre layout and restrictions).

Dress Code

It's important that ushers follow the dress code, in order to look professional and be easily identified by our patrons. The dress code is similar to office/dress-style attire:

- Black slacks or skirt
- A collared white shirt or collared blouse (dress-style), turtleneck or sweater with sleeves (no t-shirts).
- Shirts with shirt-tails should be tucked in. If your shirt cannot be tucked in, please make sure that it does not show from beneath the provided vest.
- Sweater or other outerwear may be worn after patrons are seated. We need our patrons to be able to recognize you as an usher while seating or handing-out Will Call tickets.
- Black shoes (no sneakers unless necessary for medical reasons).
- No sandals, flip-flops, or stiletto-type shoes.
- A Theatre Memphis usher vest will be provided for you at the theatre. Please return the vest at the end of the show.

Please make sure you wear this attire when ushering at Theatre Memphis. If you have questions or concerns about the dress code, please contact the Usher Coordinator.

Signing up to Usher a Show

The Usher Coordinator will send a show registration web-link via email to all active ushers 3 weeks prior to opening night. Please sign up to usher via that link.

Upcoming usher opportunities can always be found on the TM website as well:
<https://theatrememphis.org/opportunities/usher/>.

If you find you **cannot work a performance for which you have signed up for, please use the link in your confirmation email to unregister.**

- If you cannot find that link, please login to your volunteer account at <https://theatrememphis.org/forms/volunteer-profile-updates/> and unregister.
- If all else fails, please email our Usher Coordinator. (Email address listed above.)

Please give us as much notice as possible (at least 48 hours). If notice must be given less than 24 hours in advance, please call the Box Office at 901-682-8323. It is very important that we have a full usher staff for each performance. If you are a "no show" for an usher appointment and have not unregistered yourself or otherwise contacted us, you will be removed from the usher pool.

Waitlist – An usher waitlist is enabled for most shows. Once registration fills up for a particular date, volunteers are given the option to register for the waitlist for that date. [In the list of upcoming usher dates, the word "waitlist" will appear next to a date, rather than the number of ushers still needed.] If someone unregisters or we add additional slots, volunteers will automatically be registered from the waitlist for that performance. You will not receive an email to confirm that you have been placed on the waitlist (but you will receive a confirmation on the online registration page). You will receive an email only when/if you have been moved from the "waitlist" to the "active" usher list for a date. Ushers may sign-up to be included on the waitlist for multiple dates or for a combination of "waitlist" and "active" dates. If you get notification that you've been moved from the "waitlist" to the "active" list, but are no longer available to usher that date, please cancel your registration ASAP.

Arrival / Check-in / Orientation

Arrive on Time: The call time for ushers is 1 hour before curtain. If you arrive late (depending on the arrival time), it will be at the discretion of the House Manager as to whether or not you will be able to usher that night. **So, please be on time!** If you arrive later than 30 minutes before curtain, it is most likely that you will not be able to usher that performance. Please remember to call the Box Office if you find you will not be able to fulfill your ushering shift on the day you are scheduled.

- In order to reserve parking spaces closer to the building for our patrons, we ask for our volunteers to park in the third or fourth rows of parking (from the building) or park toward the back of the building. If any of our volunteers have trouble walking long distances, please advise the Usher Coordinator or House Manager prior to your shift.
- The sign-in sheet is located at the Box Office, on the half-door ledge. Please check in as soon as you arrive. Fill all information as/if requested.
- It's recommended that you keep personal items brought to the Theatre to a minimum. **DO NOT** keep valuable items in your car.
- If you have not signed up to work a show and just show up, you may **not be allowed to usher**. We realize that sometimes there are shows you really want to see, but we want to be fair to the ushers who have signed up and it is not helpful to have more ushers than there is work to do. If you decide that you'd like to usher at the last minute, it is recommended that you call the Box Office, so they can check the posted usher schedule to see if any more ushers are needed for that performance.
- Your cell phone is permitted for **emergency** purposes only. Please keep the phone(s) silenced. Please do not use your phone otherwise, while on duty (after arriving at the Theatre, while ushering, and during the intermission(s)).
- **A briefing (orientation) will be held before each show. The House Manager will make announcements, provide information about the theatre, seating, accessibility needs for the performance, and make final usher assignments. If you have a medical need and require a particular assignment, please advise the Usher Coordinator or House Manager.**

- Changes may be necessary due to cancellations or alterations in the performance. Please be reminded that the Theatre's needs change often and we appreciate your flexibility.

Usher Responsibilities

Our primary duty is the comfort and safety of the patrons. Watching the performance is encouraged, but should not take precedence over your usher duties. Always meet and greet patrons with a smile. View the patrons as your guests. Be courteous! Leave them with a positive, lasting impression.

Before the Show:

- Make sure emergency exits are not blocked, become familiar with the seating pattern (**row and seat numbers**) and theatre amenities; help stuff programs as needed.
- Please stand at your assigned door or assigned location in the house. If you must leave, please notify the House Manager. Ushers are expected (but it is not mandatory) to stay the full length of a show. If you need to leave before the performance is over, please notify the House Manager. This is necessary for the safety of our patrons.
- House doors will remain open during the show, unless otherwise instructed. Curtains are to remain closed at all times during the show.
- The House Manager will advise you as to when it is time to close the house curtains and take a seat. The House Manager will close the house left curtains as a signal to the Stage Manager that the house is ready for the show to begin.

Seating Patrons:

- Patrons are allowed to enter the building an hour before a performance begins.
- Patrons must wait in the outer lobbies until the house doors are opened by the House Manager (usually 30 minutes before show time). At this time, house curtains will open and seating will begin.
- The Lohrey Theatre is reserved seating, while the Next Stage is general admission (or open) seating.
- The House Manager will assign an usher at each door to the theatre to pass out programs. If you are assigned to check tickets, please check the tickets for the following:
 - Show Title
 - Date and time of the performance
 - Row designation and seat number
- For the Lohrey Theatre, be courteous when requesting patrons to discard their open drinks before returning to their seats. Offer to discard the drink for them or advise they can purchase an approved souvenir cup at the bar. (Bottled water is allowed.)

If you are inside the theatre:

- Ask to be of assistance. (Some patrons may not need help.)
- **Always extend the courtesy of escorting a patron to their seat. Simply pointing is not sufficient.** Always use your full open hand to direct a patron. Subscribers often are familiar with row and seat location and need little or no assistance, but a friendly "*May I help you?*" is appropriate and appreciated.
- **All patrons must have a ticket for a seat.** If for any reason, they do not have their ticket, they will need to go to the Box Office and **ask for a reprint (no charge for this service)**.
- **For the Lohrey Theatre, patrons are to sit only in their designated seat, as indicated on their ticket(s).** If for any reason they are not pleased with the seat assignment or wish to be seated somewhere

else, they must return to the Box Office for assistance. **Patrons may not move to an empty seat at any time during the performance, since seats may have already been sold, or patrons may come late.**

- **Keep in mind the House Manager is available to help resolve issues.**

Seating Latecomers: Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of the House Manager or Theatre Management. To avoid disrupting the patrons already in the house, we will seat latecomers in easy-access seating until the intermission.

Duplicate Tickets (Lohrey Theatre): Occasionally, you may have two parties of patrons with identical tickets. Handle duplicate tickets in this manner:

- Check the tickets of the patrons already seated against the tickets of those who have just arrived. Make sure the tickets are indeed duplicates; check the performance date, time, row, and seat number.
- If the tickets are duplicates, ask the seated patrons for their tickets and let them know they may remain seated. Take these tickets and escort the second patrons with their tickets to the House Manager who will double-check the tickets and will intervene at this point. You may then return to your regular usher post.
- If one of the patrons has tickets for the wrong performance date, please guide them to the Box Office or the House Manager to have their tickets exchanged for the current performance date, if seats are available.

During the Show:

Please be reminded that watching the show is a perk! It is encouraged but should not take precedence over your usher duties. Seeing the performance is not a guarantee, and it should not be a primary expectation while working. Remember, you are not a part of the audience, but offering service as an official representative of Theatre Memphis at all times.

- Please remain mindful of the audience during a performance. You are there to catch potential problems before they are underway or as they develop.
- **Always expect to stand for a performance.** You may sit in any open seat (preferably on an aisle or where no major disruption could or would occur), **remember that a patron may be a latecomer and that seat may be theirs.**
- When seating ends, please refrain from repeatedly going in and out of the house or talking inside the house. This can be very disturbing to the patrons and the actors.
- **Please be attentive to the use of digital equipment during the show-- i.e., cell phones, photo imaging, text messaging, etc. This is very disruptive to other patrons as well as to the actors. Please advise the House Manager immediately if you notice a patron using their phone during a performance.**

Intermission:

- Open the house curtains when the lights come on and stand by your assigned door or position unless the House Manager advises otherwise.
- For the Lohrey Theatre, remember to be courteous when requesting patrons to discard their open drinks before returning to their seats. Offer to discard the drink for them or advise they can purchase an approved souvenir cup at the bar. (Bottled water is allowed.)
- Please remain at your post until the house lights are dimmed. The House Manager will advise you when to close the house curtains and be seated. The House Manager will also advise the Stage Manager that it is OK to begin the second act and will close the lower house left curtains.
- Ushers receive **one soft drink free of charge** during a performance.

After the Show:

- At the end of the performance, return to your assigned area. If patrons wish to leave before the performance ends or during curtain call, do not interfere – let them leave. **Curtains must remain closed until the house lights come on.**
- When the house is mostly clear, start clean-up at the top and walk down and through the house. Also check for lost articles. If any items are found, give them to the House Manager. **Pick up all programs and return them to the proper location. Discard those you deem unusable.** Also, please pick up any cups and bottles left in the house, as well as any inserts that have been added to the programs and can be reused. Souvenir cups can be placed in the kitchen.

Special Events:

- Occasionally, there are special events connected with a performance. The House Manager will apprise you of any special needs that arise because of such an event.
- When there is food provided at a special event, ushers are sometimes invited to partake of the leftover refreshments once attendees have gone in to watch the show, however ushers should NEVER insert themselves into a private event, unless specific direction is given by the House Manager or Theatre Management.
- There is always a reception on opening night, after the show. The reception is a thank you to our patrons and volunteers and a celebration of the efforts of the cast and crew. Ushers are welcome to take part in these festivities, but are reminded to keep in mind that they are still representative of TM and should conduct themselves in a way that remains respectful and attentive to our guests and patrons.

Emergency Procedures

In case of an emergency, we must remain calm and ensure that our patrons do the same. Patrons will rely on us to tell them what to do and how to respond to the emergency at hand.

Fire Alarms:

- In the event of a fire alarm, all ushers are to direct patrons out the house doors and nearest exit ensuring that everyone gets out safely. All patrons should be moved to the third row of parking along Southern Avenue.
- Please instruct patrons not to leave, so if needed, an accurate head count can be obtained.
- Once the building has been declared safe by the Fire Department for re-entry, everyone must enter through the front doors of the theatre.

Power Failures:

- In the event of a power failure, turn on your flashlight if available. (The House Manager will have one.)
- Stand near the exits and keep everyone calm and seated until the emergency lights come on.
- If instructed to evacuate the building, do so calmly. (Theatre evacuation explained above.)

Severe Weather:

- During a severe weather emergency, depending on the number of people in the theatre, patrons should remain seated inside the theatre away from all windows and doors.
- In the event Theatre Management determines the building must be evacuated, please follow the instructions of the House Manager.
- Everyone should remain in position until the “all clear” status is announced.
- In case of a tornado alert in the area, please follow the House Manager’s directions and instructions.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY:

In the event an accident occurs with a patron or fellow usher, follow this two-steps approach:

- **Step 1:** Check the condition of the person. See about their immediate safety. Do not move someone who has fallen. Make sure the person is not in danger of being trampled or injured further. If at all possible, get another usher or some other person to stay with the injured party while you take the second step. Do not indicate that Theatre Memphis is any way responsible for the person's injury.
- **Step 2:** Always notify Theatre Management of an accident, even if the person does not seem to be seriously injured. Tell Theatre Management when, where, who, and what the nature of the emergency is. You may be asked by Theatre Management to help complete an accident report form. A wheelchair is available in Concessions should the need arise.

Thank you for helping Theatre Memphis and the Community!

Revised July 2024 by Kaitlin Brucker, Usher Coordinator