***Welcome to the Southport Dramatic Club***

***“Join Us, Join In” – what really goes on behind the scenes?***

The purpose of this document is to help you understand how many opportunities there are to get involved in every area of the theatre.

The Southport Dramatic Club (SDC) puts on 9 productions a year, including a pantomime and a play in the Bar, as well as 2 Youth productions (a play in March and a musical in August). As we also sub-let our theatre and bar to other amateur societies, professional lets and companies throughout the year, you can see that we are a very busy Club with many positions to fill.

**PERFORMANCE**

**Actors, Singers, Dancers, Directors, Assistant Directors, Prompts, Choreographers and Musical Directors**

The Play Selection and Casting Committee (PSCC) are responsible for selecting the season and finding directors, assistant directors and prompts for each production. They then assist the chosen director with their ‘talk-up’ (an open evening for anyone interested or curious to find out more about the production), auditions and casting of each show.

Each standard play runs for 8 performances (Friday to a week-on Saturday) with a tech and 2 dress rehearsals. Rehearsal periods will vary – 8 to 10 weeks – but are not every night and are organised to suit all. Exceptions to this are the pantomime, which runs for approximately three weeks over the Christmas/New Year period and our June ‘Bar’ production (usually four nights), performed ‘in-the-round’ in the Bar.

**YOUTH THEATRE**

You can be part of our Youth Group if you are aged between 14 and 24 (and still in education).

For performers, there are 2 dedicated shows each year (spring and late-summer) plus opportunities to appear in the pantomime and any other production with age-appropriate roles and you can be assured that there will be the appropriate safeguarding supervision at all rehearsals and performances, with fully-trained and Local Council Registered chaperones.

For technicians – stage management, props, lights and sound – you are welcome to learn and participate in any show (subject to the availability of suitable chaperones).

We are proud that many of our Youth Theatre members have gone on to study theatre and work professionally as actors, singers, directors, technicians and administrators.

**PRODUCTIONS**

**Stage Management**

As the Stage Manager (SM) or Deputy SM, you are at the SM’s desk and in charge of the show when it comes to the stage. This will involve attending rehearsals, marking up your script with the sound/light/flying/curtain cues, giving those cues, making announcements to the audience and ensuring everything is ‘alright on the night’. As an Assistant Stage Manager (ASM), you could be asked to ensure the cast are ready to go on and do not miss their entrances, help out with props, scene and/or costume changes as well as making the tea! It is a great way to learn the many facets of working backstage.

**Flying**

This is the term for bringing pieces of scenery or curtains or cloths in and out (down and up) as required. Many plays only require one unchanging set but for some shows like the pantomime, the locations change frequently and 1 or 2 fly-persons are required. This role does not entirely rely on muscle but on technique and careful planning as many of the flying bars are counter-weighted. You have to be OK with heights though, as the fly-rail is 20ft above the stage.

**Crew/Set Builders**

Every set requires a crew to bring in its’ composite parts, be they 14ft high flats from the workshop behind the theatre or rostra and/or carpets from the store on the rear carpark or garden fences in the Annexe basement. Sunday mornings are the usual time to bring in and take out a set and we often help with our sublets’ scenery. The aim for a normal SDC play is to build it during the following 3 days/evenings after the ‘get-in’ to enable the cast to begin rehearsing on it asap. The finishing touches will be added - for example door furniture, shelves, curtains, pictures, light fittings – alongside the other productions’ teams - with the aim that all should be ready for the technical rehearsal.

Some productions, particularly the pantomime, will require a crew to make set changes between scenes (i.e. quickly) or during the interval or both. It’s great to have the same crew for the entire run but do not let that stop you from volunteering.

We have many experienced crew who will be happy to share their knowledge and tools.

**Lighting**



Lighting is used not only to illuminate the stage, but also to create a particular mood or special effect.

When an audience watches a performance, they see the end product of a lot of hard work. The lighting designer will have worked closely with the Director to decide what the lighting will look like, what style and what atmosphere is needed.

The lighting (LX) team will have spent time cleaning, rigging, and focussing lights so that the actors can be seen.

The SDC lighting rig is made up of an extensive number of lights. We have some LED fixtures, but most are traditional lamps such as:

  

Parcans. Profile spots. Fresnels

These fixtures require regular maintenance which is one of the jobs of the lighting department.

The lights are controlled by a Zero 88 Solution lighting desk.



For each play, a member of the LX team will programme the desk so that each lighting cue is recorded.

On the performance nights, an LX operator then presses the GO button each time the next pre-recorded lighting state is needed.

As a team, we would love to welcome any new (or existing) members who are interested in finding out more about this exciting part of putting on a show.

No experience necessary – just enthusiasm and a willingness to get stuck in!

**Sound**

There are 3 levels to Sound –

1. **Programming** the sound software after you have liaised with the Director to confirm the music and effects required and then attending some rehearsals to ‘mark up’ the script. Most of the ‘sound track’ can be developed at home on your own laptop. You should attend the technical and dress rehearsals in case any amendments are required.
2. **Operating** the mixing desk and computer using the marked-up script and the cues from the stage manager. Again, you need to attend some rehearsals before the tech night.
3. **Patching and rigging** which requires a more detailed understanding of the Mixer functions and how to connect the inputs to the correct speaker outputs.

You can focus on one area only or take on the full set. We offer support and training, including observing other shows in performance from the Sound Bridge at the back of the auditorium.

**Props**

There are several facets to helping on Props. Every show has a different set of requirements depending on the period, the set colour, the subject matter etc. For example, “Sleeping Beauty” required 2 car tyres and a spinning wheel, whilst “Deathtrap” needed all sorts of weapons-through-the-ages to hang on the walls, and “Blackadder Goes Forth” moved between a WW One trench, a General’s office and a hospital ward!

Some people prefer to research the items online or scour second-hand shops for an item we could hire for the run of the play. Others are happy to make the ‘odd’ items such as tinsel-encrusted giant birthday cakes and others will root through the contents of our own Props ‘Front’ Store.

Once the set is dressed and all props are in place or ready off-stage, it may only be necessary for the Props team to call in each night and ensure everything is clean, topped up and in the correct place. Some shows, however, will require the team to clear or set items in scene changes or blackouts.

**Wardrobe**

You do not need to be a seamstress or even know how to thread a needle to help on Wardrobe. The central task of the wardrobe team is to research suitable costumes for each play. These are then sourced from our extensive stock, from charity shops, online and hiring. Other parts of the job include arranging appointments with directors and actors for fittings, organising the current stock in ‘No. 27’ (a detached house next to the theatre), creating an online photographic record of that stock – you can volunteer to be a model! – and helping backstage as a dresser if quick changes are required. Actual sewing is the last resort, unless it is for minor adjustments or ongoing repairs. Still unsure? You are welcome to get a taste of what’s involved by shadowing the team as we costume a production.

**Front of House (FOH)**

**Marketing**

We are responsible for the marketing and promotion of the Little Theatre and all SDC productions, which we achieve by using a number of channels and media including:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Programmes – design, content and adverts | Design of Half season flyers and posters |
| Design of Posters for plays | Design of flyers for next plays |
| Social media content | Website |
| Subscriber brochure | Take rehearsal photos |
| Competitions | Content of TV screens |

**Box Office**

The Box Office team are probably the first people you meet either in person or over the phone. They can advise you of the available seats and prices, print out your tickets and take payments in cash or by card. A moderate knowledge of computer operation is required but training on our system is given and you won’t be left alone until you are confident.

This office is open 11am-1pm from the Friday before opening night and also 6.00pm to 7.30 pm when there is a performance.

We only sell tickets for our own SDC productions but occasionally share the space with the Box Office teams of our sublets.

We are responsible for cashing up and putting money in the safe.

We are a friendly team and communicate frequently on a WhatsApp group.

**Duty House Managers and Stewards**

We are the people who greet you at the door, check your tickets and show you to your seats but are also there to ensure your safety.

It is an important role as the show cannot go on if there are not enough front-of-house (FOH) staff on duty.

The SDC provides a Duty House Manager (DHM) for every performance in the building and he or she is supported by 4 Stewards who are either at the auditorium doors or assisting audience members with the lift. One or two of the stewards will remain inside the auditorium during the performance to, for example, assist in the unusual event of an audience member becoming ill or discourage the taking of photographs.

Once the doors are closed, the rest of the team can relax in the Foyer until it is time for the interval. The same process occurs for the second half of the show and, following the final curtain, all Stewards and the DHM are there to say thank you and goodbye and hand out leaflets for the next show. However, the primary duty of the FOH Team is to be there to help – be it directing the audience to the coffee counter, handing out plastic glasses or dealing with any type of emergency.

The DHM sorts the floats, counts the takings and has overall responsibility for everything in front of the House Curtain.

Anyone wishing to volunteer as a steward can be trained on-the-job. A DHM has usually been a steward for a while, observing and assisting the DHM until they feel confident to reverse the roles.

Working FOH is a great way to meet other members and you are not expected to be there every night of a run – unless you want to!

**Social Committee and Servery**

Social Committee and Servery

The Social Committee is responsible for organising our members to offer a warm

welcome to our audiences in the Art Deco Foyer and sell them Programmes, Teas,

Coffees, Cold Drinks, Sweets and Icecreams whenever the Theatre is open for

performances of either our own shows or those of the Societies letting our building.

Members can volunteer to help on one night or many, and do not need any experience

as full training is given. Three or four volunteers are needed every night the theatre is

open and it is a great way to meet other members.

The Social Committee also assist with social events – organising the Mince Pies and

Mulled Wine at the Christmas Carols Evening in the Bar, assisting with the Garden

Party and Treasure Hunt wherever required and providing the Last Night Supper on

the final Saturday Evening of each SDC Show (free to the Cast and Crew or for the

sundry sum of £2.00 each for other guests).

Come and talk to Pamela and Diane to get more details, and volunteer - it will be

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The Social Committee may also assist with catering at social events – organising the mince pies and mulled wine at the Christmas Evening in the Bar, assisting with the summer Garden Party and Treasure Hunt and providing the Last Night Supper after the final performance of each SDC show (which is free to the cast and crew - and only £2.00 for other guests).

**Bar**

The bar is open whenever there is a show on or a social event or it happens to be a Friday (our regular ‘Club Night’ after 9pm). It is run on our behalf by ‘Roll-the-Dice’ led by Kevin Spofforth, with the assistance of member volunteers.

We have a touch-screen system and you will have plenty of training and support from Kevin and the team. We generally only need 1 volunteer per night for Monday-Thursday and sometimes 2 for Fridays and Saturdays, unless it is a special event, like the Southport Comedy Festival, when a second bar is set up in the Foyer and up to 8 people could be required!

**FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE RUNNING OF THE SDC**

**OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the Club are the production and performance of plays, and the encouragement of dramatic art.

**ORGANISATION / COMMITTEES**

The Club is governed by a Board of Trustees (which broadly determines policies) and meets when required, plus an Executive Committee, which deals with operational and day-to-day running and meets every month.

The Executive Committee is assisted a great deal in its work by a number of sub-committees including: Play Selection & Casting (PSCC), Productions, Marketing, Social, Bar and FoH.

An AGM and AM is held in June every year, when Club officers are elected / re-elected and annual reports are presented.

The theatre is closed to the public during the summer months in most years, for the purpose of holidays (Staff and Members) and for general maintenance work, redecoration etc. However, June and July can be just as busy as the main winter season, since the theatre is regularly let to other societies and clubs, and there is a requirement for SDC Members to provide FoH & Bar staffing and stage/technical crews. The Youth Theatre also uses this time to rehearse their August production.

**INVOLVEMENT IN PLAYS**

Any member accepting a part in a play or a position backstage or front of house is expected to give it priority (of their time and attention), and to make himself/herself acquainted with the responsibilities involved from the person in charge, i.e., the Director, Stage Manager or House Manager. It is usual for rehearsals to start a minimum of eight weeks prior to each production.

All members are entitled to attend rehearsals of SDC plays, but it is courteous to ask the permission of the Director beforehand. Members are especially welcome at the 2nd dress rehearsal as audience feedback (laughs, sharp intakes of breath etc.) helps the cast prepare for opening night.

**SUBSCRIBER TICKETS**

The Subscriber Ticket Scheme is available to both members and regular audience members. Tickets for the season can be purchased in advance in August each year at a reduced rate (based on eight shows for the price of six – or 25% reduction on the price of a ticket).   
Explanatory forms are sent out in good time each year.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

All applicants are required to pay their subscription and Entrance Fee (Full members only) before they are admitted to the Club (which will be returned should you decide not to continue). Annual subscriptions are due for payment on 1st June each year, and if not paid by 31stJuly then membership will lapse. New members admitted to the Club between 1st February and 31st May will not have to pay their Subscriptions again until June in the following year.