

# Volunteer Opportunities with Theatre Oxford

Everyone has a role to play!

Since 1997, the passionate volunteer-led Theatre Oxford has been creating and delivering theatrical works for the community of Lafayette County in North Mississippi and beyond. At Theatre Oxford we are committed to producing small-town performances that rival big-city quality. We strongly believe in the emotional power of storytelling and in the special ability of the theater to bring diverse people together for enrichment and fun.

## Location

Theatre Oxford is based out of the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, 413 S 14th St, Oxford, MS 38655. This role involves a mix of remote volunteering (i.e. in your own home or various other venues, depending on the needs of the production) and at the Theatre Oxford headquarters, see above.

## Volunteer Benefits

- Be a part of a creative team of volunteers
- Get hands on experience in theatre production
- See how all aspects of theatrical production work come together
- Learn about community theatre

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The descriptions of volunteer roles in this guide are intended to provide an overview. We have additional resources gathered to help you if you assume a position.

**Committees:** [Asset Management](#) | [Finance](#) | [Front of House](#) | [Marketing](#) | [Membership](#) | [Planning](#) | [Production](#) | [Resource Development](#)

**Production Team:** [Producer](#) | [Director](#) | [Stage Manager](#) | [Technical Director](#) | [Costume Director/Designer](#) | [Scenic Director/Designer](#) | [Lighting Designer](#) | [Properties Manager](#) | [House Manager](#)

## Theatre Oxford Committees

### Asset Management Committee: 4 members

This committee organizes, catalogues, and keeps track of Theatre Oxford's physical assets, such as props, costumes, and set elements.

### Finance Committee: 2 members

Chaired by the TO Treasurer, the finance committee oversees budgeting of the entire Theatre Oxford organization, including dues notification and collections, budget approvals, monitoring spending for productions, and a joint annual audit at the end of each fiscal year.

### Front of House Committee: 4 members

This committee is our hospitality force. They manage admissions, on-site ticket sales, and concessions while welcoming our audience.

### Marketing & PR Committee: 6 members

This committee handles marketing for specific productions and Theatre Oxford events, managing our social media accounts, seeking out relationships with the press, designing marketing materials, and updating the website. They disseminate information to our membership base.

### Membership Development and Nominations Committees: 2 members

This committee maintains membership rolls and mailing lists for services; they also present nominees for initial or replacement board positions.

### Planning Committee: 4-6 members

These people recommend a season of 3 stand-alone plays, 1 ten-minute play festival, and any other special events to the Board.

### [Production Committee: 6 members](#)

This committee assesses project needs and helps find directors, producers, crew members, and physical resources for productions. Key duties include:

- Reading the scripts proposed by the selection committee to report on the production needs, estimated costs (broad estimate, not line-item estimate), and overall viability of producing the shows proposed.
- Working with the financial office to create and/or solidify show budgets.
- Providing support for the Production Manager of individual shows, whose job is to oversee all aspects of the production.

### [Resource Development Committee: 4 members](#)

This committee oversees fundraising efforts, including grant development, ad sales, and community partnerships.

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## Theatre Oxford Production Team

### Producer: Overview of the role

**Time commitment (Producer): 10-15 hours per week for 4-5 weeks**

The Producer oversees every aspect of a production, making sure everyone on the production and creative teams are advancing on schedule, on budget, and in collaboration.

Key responsibilities include:

- Working with Treasurer and Director to create Budget for Board approval
- Monitoring spending to ensure the production stays within budget
- Securing a venue for the production with the Board's help
- Reserving rehearsal space
- Securing a production team; making sure all positions are filled
- Assisting the Director in creating an audition and rehearsal schedule
- Ensuring deadlines are being met
- Working with outside vendors to schedule payment, delivery and pick up
- Coordinating with marketing, resource development, and the Board
- Calling production meetings with creative staff

### Director: Overview of the role

**Time commitment: 10-20 hours per week for 4-5 weeks**

The director has the challenging task of bringing together the many complex pieces of a production—the script, actors, set, costuming, lighting and sound and music—into a unified whole. To accomplish this task, a director needs to:

- Interpret the script
- Cast the production
- Collaborate with designers
- Plan the rehearsals
- Guide the actors in their work during rehearsals.

The director's work is most often based on a detailed study and analysis of the script to be produced. Many careful readings of the script help the director understand the playwright's intentions, which will inform interpretation. [Learn More](#)

### Stage Manager: Overview of the role

**Time commitment: 10-20 hours per week for 3-5 weeks**

Stage managers (SM) typically provide practical and organizational support to the director, actors, designers, stage crew and technicians throughout the production process. They also run the show during performances.

During rehearsals, the SM records the director's decisions about blocking, technical cues, acting notes, logistics, and scheduling. At the end of each rehearsal, the SM submits a rehearsal report on the progress and emerging needs of the production. This work enables the director to concentrate on directing, while preparing the SM to assume responsibility for the show in performance.

Stage managers have several key responsibilities and tasks to perform in each phase of a production, including:

- Attending all rehearsals
- Preparing for and rehearsals
- Marking out the dimensions of the set on the floor of the rehearsal hall
- Making sure rehearsal props and furnishings are available for the actors
- Recording blocking and lighting, sound, and set change cues in the prompt book
- Notifying the designers and crafts people of changes made in rehearsal
- Coordinating the work of the stage crew
- Calling sound, lighting, set change, and possibly actors' entrance cues during performance
- Overseeing the run of a show from its first to last performance

## Technical Director: Overview of the role

**Time commitment: varies by production/will be determined by Theatre Oxford in advance**

The Technical Director (TD) has the daily responsibility for the technical operations of a theatre or performing arts center, including lighting, sound, set design and construction, and coordinating necessary maintenance. As such, this role is usually filled by the TD employed by the venue.

A TD may do any or all of the following:

- Operate, maintain, and safeguard the technical assets of the theatre
- Determine the necessary technical supports and special needs for events
- Design, set up, maintain, and operate lighting and sound systems for events
- Advise production managers and designers on the technical specifications, costs, and use of technical equipment
- Supervise the implementation of approved technical designs
- Supervise and assist with set and stage construction and management.
- Assist in recruiting and training technical staff or crew for individual shows
- Orient facility renters to space and safety protocols
- Maintain lighting, sound, and rigging equipment
- Assist with the preparation and control of production budgets
- Attend technical week rehearsals to supervise and assist in mounting the show
- Make recommendations to the Board of Directors or theatre leadership regarding capital purchases of technical equipment

## Costume Director/Designer: Overview of the role

**Time commitment: varies by production/will be determined by Theatre Oxford in advance**

Costume designers create the look of each character by designing clothes and accessories the actors will wear in performance. Depending on style and complexity, costumes may be made, bought, revamped from existing stock, or rented.

It is also the costume designer's responsibility to create a costume plot—a list or chart that shows which characters appear in each scene, what they are wearing and their overall

movement throughout the play. This helps track the specific costume needs of every character and identify any potential costume challenges, such as very quick changes between scenes.

Though designers in some theatres have a costume manager to assemble and oversee a group of volunteers to collect, construct, and alter costumes. The designer for Theatre Oxford also oversees construction (i.e., director/designer).

Key responsibilities of the costume director/designer include:

- Reading the script for details informing costume and style requirements
- Research period, look, and style for the play
- Participate in meetings with the director, design team, and other members
- Create the look for each character (including those not named in the script)
- Create a costume plot
- Create colored sketches, collages, or renderings of costume designs
- Oversee collection, construction, and alterations of costumes
- Oversee return (in good condition) of rented or borrowed items
- Collaborate with theatre crew throughout production

### Scenic Director/Designer: Overview of the role

**Time commitment: varies by production/will be determined by Theatre Oxford in advance**

The set designer is responsible for designing the physical surroundings in which the action of the story will take place. Generally, a set designer does not build sets, but Theatre Oxford hires a set designer who also acts as a scenic director, overseeing the assembly of the set and stage properties. All the things appearing on the stage other than the scenery are called stage properties or stage props, such as furniture, draperies, and decorations.

The role involves collaborating and communicating with the director, producer, technical director, costume designer, lighting designer, and properties manager.

In general, the scenic director / set designer will:

- Read script(s)
- Produce a rough sketch of the set in the preliminary phase
- Draft [floor plans](#) (to scale) showing the floor layout of each setting

- Draw front [elevations](#) giving a view of the elements of the set from the front
- Potentially create [models](#) showing how each set will look when finished
- Prepare estimate of set costs
- Manage spending and stay within budget
- Attend designated rehearsals
- Collaborate with theatre crew
- Oversee striking (take-down) of the set after production.

### Lighting Designer: Overview of the role

**Time commitment: varies by production/will be determined by Theatre Oxford in advance**

Lighting designers ensure the audience can see what's happening onstage, as well as create mood and direct focus. They determine how many lanterns (or light fixtures) will be needed to create a wash across the stage and to feature certain areas, as well as what color to use with each fixture. They also create any special effects needed.

Before hanging and focusing lights, the designer creates a [light plot](#), showing where the electrics (i.e., pipes from which a lanterns hang), [light trees](#), beams or other support units will be placed in relation to the stage. The plot also shows where lights will be hung, the area electrics will be focused on, and the color (if any) being used for the light.

Key responsibilities include:

- Reading script(s)
- Collaborating with the technical director to understand limitations of the venue and safety issues
- Collaborating with the producer, director, costume designer, and set designer during the design process
- Creating a light plot
- Preparing estimate of lighting costs (if any)
- Attending designated rehearsals
- Hanging and focusing lights
- Collaborating with theatre crew during technical rehearsals
- Overseeing a safe strike (removal and storage of lanterns/equipment after production).

## Props Manager: Overview of the role

**Time commitment: varies by production/will be determined by Theatre Oxford in advance**

The Props Manager is responsible for designing, creating, and/or securing all hand properties needed for the show (except for what are deemed costume accessories). Hand props are any item actors handle during the play. The Props manager will also support the stage manager in securing rehearsal props, as well as the set director/designer in securing stage props (such as furniture, drapes, and decoration).

In general, the Props Manager:

- Works with director to understand the needs related to time-period or other limitations
- Creates a props list for each show with the director and stage manager
- Estimates expenditures and submits a request to the producer
- Works within the assigned budget
- Collects all receipts for expenses and turns them into the producer
- Works with producer to find alternate sources for props if challenges arise
- Ensures props are ready according to schedule
- Assist actors in safe usage of props and understanding of any special concerns
- Organizes prop tables in collaboration with stage manager
- Oversees the training of props crew (if any) to explain set-up and production tasks
- Strikes all props at end of show and returns to the prop shop or place of origin

## House Manager: Overview of the role

**Time commitment: varies by production/will be determined by Theatre Oxford in advance**

The house manager (HM) is responsible for the smooth operation of the house (typically the lobby and audience seating area) during the run of the show. The HM trains front-of-house volunteers with an understanding those volunteers may be the only members of Theatre Oxford with whom the audience interacts on a regular basis. All interactions are of prime importance.

The HM ensures the audience feels welcome, appreciated, and safe—before, during, and after the show—and resolves any issues in a respectful and appreciative manner, answering questions, listening to compliments, and noting concerns.

Key duties of the house manager may include:

- Recruiting, training, and supervising box office workers, ushers, concessions workers and merchandise workers.
- Ensuring excellent customer service from all front-of-house workers
- Being aware of safety protocols for all emergency situations and providing leadership if emergencies arise
- Providing leadership in emergency situations
- Coordinating (with Stage Manager) when lobby and theatre/house opens during preview and performances
- Managing program distribution and other patron materials
- Maintaining the appearance of the lobby and all public areas
- Communicating with maintenance to ensure a clean environment, including restrooms
- Maintaining ticket-scanning equipment, hearing impaired devices, and walkie-talkies for communicating with stage manager
- Completing and distributing a house report for each performance
- Working closely with Producer to ensure proper staff is in place for all performances
- Along with the stage manager, ensure all lights are turned off after each show and all doors are locked, and that no water is left running.

## Addenda

### Directing

Directors also *study the characters* in the script, gathering as much information as they can about their physical and psychological traits. Character analysis is vital preparation for auditions, selecting the cast, and helping actors with character development in rehearsals.

The director also collaborates with the [production manager](#), [costume designer](#), [set designer](#) and [lighting designer](#) to create an environment for the story. In early meetings, the director will share any technical needs mandated by the script or deemed important to the vision of the show. Designers also convey their ideas. Through creative exchange, the director's vision of the production and how the designers may facilitate that vision are refined.

Details in the script about the *specific locale(s)* in which the action takes place will determine basic requirements of the set and movement of the actors on stage. Acting areas, entrances and exits, and furniture and props will need to be determined early in the set design process to facilitate blocking. Blocking (or staging) is the precise moment-by-moment movement and grouping of actors on stage. Sketching out a *floor plan* of the set's areas to record blocking can be very helpful.

Working closely with actors during *rehearsals*, directors will help them develop deeper understandings of the characters' motivations and relationships. The actors will also bring their own interpretations to the project, which can inspire the director to rethink.

As rehearsals progress, the focus of the director's work broadens to the overall look and feel of production, transitions between scenes, effective pacing, and the integration of design and technical aspects of the production.

Once the show opens, the director's work is essentially complete. Now it's the stage manager's job to make sure that every aspect of the production runs just as the director intended time after time, until the production closes.

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## Addenda Continued

### Scenic Director/Designer

The set designer will normally read the script many times to get a feel for the style, mood, and themes, as well as to list specific requirements for scenery, furnishings, and props. While reading, the designer takes notes regarding the time of day, location, season, historical period, and any set changes called for in the script. The set designer's goal is to determine all that may be needed based on the dialogue in the script. Stage directions may also help, but do not need to dictate the design.

A theatre set should:

- (1) Suggest the style and tone of the overall production
- (2) Create mood and atmosphere for each setting
- (3) Give clues as to the specific time and place of the action
- (4) Offer creative possibilities for the movement and grouping of the actors.

The set may also need to be designed so the backstage areas used by the actors and stage crew are kept out of sight from the audience. This will depend on the effect the director wants to create with the staging and on the type of stage the production uses.

Set designers use several tools to communicate their ideas to the director and the other designers, including [floor plans](#), [elevations](#), and [models](#).

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