



Rochester Broadway Theatre League 2008-2009 Usher Guidelines

Thank you for being an integral part of the Rochester Broadway Theatre League team! You are the first faces that our patrons see and associate with RBTL, thus we truly appreciate your excellent customer service. Below are guidelines for Ushers to follow while volunteering for the RBTL. Please read these guidelines carefully and contact a House Manager with any questions or concerns. The House Manager will respond to you in a timely manner.

The usher's primary job is to assist patrons throughout the seating process, the performance, intermission, and at the end of the show. Excellent customer service is our GOAL.

SIGN IN / USHER MEETING

- You must sign in upon arrival for each event you usher at the House Manager's office on the basement level of the Auditorium Theatre.
- All ushers are required to report **1½ hours prior to curtain time**. Prior to each event there is a meeting near the House Manager's office, at which time your location is assigned and you will be updated with important show-related information.
- A locked cabinet is available in the House Manager's office if ushers wish to store purses or other valuables during the event
- If an usher is not assigned to the performance, they should not show up, and may be asked to leave. (Please see page 5 of these guidelines regarding scheduling and sign-up procedure for performances that are added to the schedule mid-season)

DRESS CODE

Ushers should look professional and appropriate as representatives of RBTL. An usher's dress should not draw attention to themselves, but stand out as a recognizable part of the team.

- Men - White shirt (long or short sleeves), and dark tie
 Black suit or black pants & coat
 Black shoes
- Women – Plain white or black top with long or short sleeves
 Black slacks, or knee length skirts/dresses
 Plain black jacket or sweater is acceptable
 Black shoes (no open toe shoes)
- Usher badges should be worn and visible at all times, normally on left side of chest. (Badges must be returned to House Manager's office at the end of the performance.)

- If a show is designated as a “CASUAL” show, men are not required to wear a coat and tie. As an alternative, men and women may wear plain black or white polo shirts. (“Casual” show designation will be indicated on the schedules and, as new shows are added after schedules have been sent, via the usher line, RBTL website and via e-mails)
- If an usher shows up with apparel that is deemed inappropriate, that usher will be asked to leave.

REQUIRED ACCESSORIES

- Working flashlight with good batteries
- Pen or pencil and something to write on
- A smile and **positive** attitude

GENERAL BEHAVIOR

Prior to start of performance:

- Show up at the assigned call time, sign in and check the box next to your name on the assignment sheet.
- After usher meeting, report directly to assigned area for “mini-meeting” you’re your Director/Reader.
- Be aware of location of restrooms, drinking fountains, public telephones, ATM, booster seats, and handicap elevators.
- Familiarize yourself with your area (row letters, seat numbers, etc.). Prepare program racks for your area.
- Prior to the start of a performance, the touring company may need to conduct sound checks in the theatre. At such time, refrain from all talking, do not interfere with crew or performers, and do not applaud any sound check.
- Ushers should be standing at all times when patrons have entered the building (including lobbies), especially during intermission and at the end of the show.
- Greet all patrons with a smile, and thank them for coming.
- Follow Aisle Director’s instructions.
- **Never** argue with a patron.
- Although all patrons deserve your attention, handicapped patrons require an added degree of support:
 - When patrons are able to transfer from wheelchair to seat, ushers should stow wheelchair in alcove or lobby, and be responsible for returning wheelchair to patron if needed during intermission and at the end of the event. Patron’s ticket stub should be left with the wheelchair for easy identification.
 - If a patron is using oxygen, House Management or Security must be notified of the seat location in order to remove that patron first in case of a fire emergency.
- Remind patrons that if they leave before a seating hold begins, they will not be allowed back into the theatre during the hold.

During a performance:

- Stay in the rear of the theatre (in the orchestra level) during shows. **If there are no seats available**, only two ushers should stand at the back of the aisle so that late-arriving patrons, or patrons leaving the theatre, can be assisted with minimal disturbance to others. All other ushers should move to the lobby. (Some productions may restrict standing inside the doors so you will be required to stand outside of the doors.) Please see the Balcony Manager for balcony regulations.
- **Seating holds are to be observed by everyone.** (Exceptions are made for show personnel and emergencies.) Remain standing at assigned positions outside the lobby doors until the end of seating hold in order to assist any late-arriving patrons.
- Do not sit in front of or in the same row as patrons, nor on the floor or on stairs.
- At intermission, you are to go to your assigned post and remain there until the next act.
- Ushers are NOT to purchase food/drink or concession items, eat, drink or use the restrooms DURING INTERMISSION (or until the seating hold ends and the next begins).
- Ushers are not to drink alcohol while working in the theatre.
- Refrain from talking during performances, and do not use your flashlight unless assisting a patron.
- All ushers are expected to remain for the entire performance, and until all patrons have exited their area. If an usher cannot remain the entire time, arrangements should be made in advance with the House Manager and Director.

After a performance:

- At the end of the performance (as well as at intermission), please wait until the house lights come up before you “pin” the aisle doors (orchestra level) in the open position.
- At the end of an event, ALL USHERS are expected to:
 - look for any lost & found items, and turn them in to the House Manager/Patron Services table.
 - pick up programs left behind and return undamaged books to program holders for re-use.
 - retrieve any booster seats from the theatre and return them to designated area(s).
 - pick up all trash and programs between shows when there is more than one performance per day.

Orchestra – in general

- Ushers assigned to aisle A guard the emergency exit doors at intermission. (Patrons are allowed to exit via these doors at the end of the performance.)
- Ushers should follow Aisle Director’s instructions.
- Ushers assigned to aisle D guard the emergency exit doors at intermission and at the end of the show. Except in an emergency, patrons are never allowed to use these doors.
- Direct and assist handicapped or infirmed patrons to the outer lobby elevator on the first floor behind the concession area for access to the handicap-designated restrooms on the lower level.
- Do not stand on, or block walkways to the soundboard platform at the rear of the main floor. Do not interfere with the crew or show company staff.

Loge and Balcony – in general

- All emergency exit doors should be guarded throughout the performance, intermission and end of the show.
- Ushers should follow Tunnel Director’s instructions.
- “Move down” issues --- occasionally, because of “cheap seat” sales in the last rows of the balcony, combined with light sale of next price point seats, numerous empty rows in the balcony are tempting for patrons to move down into those empty rows.
 - Be aware of where “price break” seating locations are in order to prevent patrons from moving down to empty (higher priced) rows.
 - 3rd floor ushers should position themselves near aisles at row M to discourage move-downs.
 - Any “move down” exceptions are made only at the discretion of House Managers and/or Directors.

POSITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

House Management

- **House Manager** – ultimate authority over house staff.
 - Conducts usher meetings, providing information and procedures unique to the current show.
 - Is the only individual capable of “officially” opening the House to patrons.

All new ushers MUST be able to work EVERY position (Director, Usher, Ticket Taker) and in every location (upstairs and downstairs) in the theatre.

Director

- Responsible for the management of ushers assigned to his/her area, gives direction, and is “in charge” of that location.
- Remains outside of aisle door (on orchestra level), or at tunnel entrance (in Loge or Balcony) before House Manager opens house; and during any seating holds, or assigns task to an usher.
- Reads tickets and hands off to ushers for seating.
- Issues a verbal warning of any usher rule infractions, and informs House Manager of such.
- Ensures that patrons adhere to any food/beverage restrictions, as directed by House Manager (for example: no food or beverage, with the exception of bottled water, allowed inside theatre during Broadway shows)

Usher

- Escorts patrons to correct row, and ensures that patrons are seated in correct seat.
- When program inserts (stuffers) are used, **all** ushers assigned to the area are to help stuff (and un-stuff) programs, as needed. All stuffers are to be placed inside the front cover of the program.
- Bring any issues (with patrons and/or other ushers) to the attention of the Director.
- Ensures that patrons adhere to any food/beverage restrictions, as directed by House Manager (for example: no food or beverage, with the exception of bottled water, allowed inside theatre during Broadway shows).

Ticket Taker

- Open front and concession lobby doors only when authorized by House Manager.
- Trained in use of electronic scanners. Scan each patron’s ticket and direct him or her to appropriate aisle or balcony location. Any response other than “GO” must be directed to the House Manager.

- Ensure that cameras or other recording devices are not allowed in building, as well as “foreign” food or beverage items.
- Unless otherwise instructed by House Manager, at least one ticket taker should remain in lobby and concession area at all times to assist patrons.
- **Return to assigned area during intermission.**
- Watch exit doors for re-entry and doors near aisle A for any unauthorized exit/entry.
- Ensure that any smoking is done completely outside of the building.
- Ensure that alcoholic beverages are not carried out of the building.
- Assist Security personnel in administering any unique regulations such as “no re-entry.”

Escort

- When necessary, individuals are assigned to escort patrons through the lobby – most commonly when patrons enter the building from the parking lot/Prince St. entrances (through the handicap entrance), but have not picked up tickets from the Box Office.

SCHEDULES – SIGN-UPS AND CHANGES

We ask each usher to pick one day of the week as their “ushering day”—on Saturdays and Sundays you will choose either the matinee or evening performance. Your choice of day will be effective through the end of December. You may choose a different day for the remainder of the season if desired.

- You will be required to usher at every show that falls on this day of the week. This will help us to ensure that, throughout the season, we have a sufficient number of ushers for each performance. *To exemplify, if you are scheduled for Tuesdays, you would usher at every show that fell on a Tuesday, be it Broadway, a comedy, or a special like Bill Cosby.*
- You may elect to work more than one day, but if you choose to do so, you will be expected to work all of those days during the term of the schedule
- **Requesting to work a performance not on your assigned day** — for performances of a “highly desirable” nature, ushers may elect to be put on a waiting list to work such events. Ushers will be added to those schedules based on 1.) the order in which names were added to waiting list, and 2.) ability to work in areas of need, such as ticket taker, director or balcony, etc. Ushers will be notified via email (or by phone if email is not available) if they are needed for each requested performance.

Concerts/comedies and children’s shows with two or more performances in one day will be handled as follows:

- If a non-Broadway show has two performances on a Saturday or Sunday, the matinee ushers handle the first show and the evening ushers handle the second show.
- If a non-Broadway show has three performances on a Saturday or Sunday (I.e. Sesame St.), the earliest show will be open to all ushers.
- If a non-Broadway show has two or more performances on a Tuesday through Friday, the ushers for that day will usher the late show, and the earlier show(s) will be open to all ushers.
- If a non-Broadway show has one or more performances on a Monday, the show(s) will be open to all ushers.
- If you would like to usher for a non-Broadway event that does not fall on your scheduled ushering day, we will create a waiting list to use as needed.

RBTL, as evident in these policy changes, is asking for you to continue or to renew your strong commitment to the theatre and to excellent customer service as ambassadors of RBTL. We assure you that we will make every effort to make accommodations when necessary.

- Schedule sign-up sheets for upcoming events are mailed (usually twice per season) to all ushers. Per instructions, ushers request work dates and return forms to RBTL. This is the primary means for scheduling usher participation. Please use only the schedule sent to you. Do not make copies for new or other current ushers. Thank you!
- **New process for notification of new events** (as well as changes to currently scheduled events): **Each and every Monday** during the RBTL season, an email will be sent to all ushers having email access alerting them to any newly added events or other information regarding the current schedule. **At the same time**, a new recorded message will be posted on the Usher Line (585-325-7760 ext.3403) for any ushers who do not have access to email. It is the responsibility of all ushers to use one of these methods to remain current on their schedules.
- As new events are added to the schedule, the “assigned usher day” concept still applies, but sign-up sheets will be available at existing events if additional help is needed.
- **Email sign-up** and/or cancellations are also acceptable. To receive email notifications, send email address information to usher@rbtl.org
- **The Usher Line** (585-325-7760 ext.3403) is primarily used as a means for indicating a necessary change to your schedule. Unless specifically requested, Management will not return the phone call.
 - If it is necessary to cancel your commitment to an event, leave a message.
 - If an event is under-staffed, or over-staffed, the Usher Line may ask for you to change your commitment. **In this case, leave a message with your name and indicate which event/time you will work, or are canceling.** (Note: if an event is over-staffed, and you elect to cancel, you will still receive credit for working that event.)
 - If a new event has been added, the “assigned usher day” concept still applies. If additional help is required, the Usher Line may ask for new commitment. Only if the Usher Line says ushers are needed, will you be able to schedule a new event using this phone message.
 - When new events are advertised in the newspaper or on the radio, the Usher Line will **not** accept usher sign-ups unless specifically asked for.
 - Messages left on the Usher Line are normally retrieved by the House Manager two hours prior to start of event.
- **Please do not show up to usher a performance if you are not already on the list to work that event. In addition, do not send substitutes in your place if you cannot make it.**

Cancellations:

- Each usher is allowed three absences per season. Please call or email with as much notice as possible so that we can plan for adequate coverage. Due to the necessary role of each usher, “no-shows” are obstructive to customer service, and therefore, two “no-shows” will indicate to RBTL that you are no longer able or interested in being a part of the ushering team.
- **“Snow Birds”** For those of you that spend the winter months in warmer climates or preparing taxes, we ask that you notify us with specific dates that you will be unavailable for ushering by September 30.

HANDLING “DUPLICATE” TICKET SITUATION

The occurrence of duplicate tickets has been minimized with the addition of electronic ticket scanners. If such a situation does occur, the following steps should be taken:

- **Check both sets of tickets** for the following:
 - Correct location (orchestra, box, loge, or balcony), row and seat numbers
 - Correct performance date and time
 - Correct theatre and event
- If “valid” duplicate tickets are found after checking the above points, **write PURCHASER’S names on each set of tickets, or ticket receipt, and bring both sets to the House Manager**, who will handle the situation from that point on. (Note: patron’s name and that of the ticket purchaser may not be the same — be sure to ask for name of PURCHASER.)

PATRON EMERGENCY

- Security Staff is on duty at the theatre. If there is an emergency, unruly behavior, or something that looks suspicious, please report it to one of these individuals or the House Manager.
- If you witness or hear of a patron being injured at the theatre or on their way into the theatre, it is imperative that you report this to the House Manager or Security **immediately. Do not attempt to move patron or render assistance on your own.**

USHER PARKING

Unfortunately, we (RBTL) do not have management rights to the parking lot in back of the building, and the building owners typically do charge for parking. They also control the parking lot at the Red Cross (across the street from the back lot) and will generally charge staff half price to park there (\$2.00 in the past season).

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES FOR USHERS

Rarely do we find it necessary to place an usher on probation or dismiss them from the usher crew. Behaviors leading to either of these outcomes include (but are not limited to):

- Repeated no-shows, tardiness, rule breaking, or inappropriate attire.
- Neglecting ushering duties.
- Rudeness to patron(s), other ushers, Directors, or House staff.
- Belligerent attitude while on duty, including: verbal snipping at patron(s), other ushers, Directors or House staff; lack of cooperation; complaining. Leave your bad attitude outside!

Reasons for automatic dismissal:

- Consuming alcoholic beverages during, or immediately before, volunteer hours
- Profanity
- Misuse of Usher Badge
- Admitting persons into the theatre without an admission ticket

Length and severity of discipline (probation or dismissal) is at the discretion of RBTL.

There may be situations where an usher’s physical or other restrictions will require RBTL to ask the usher to stop ushering temporarily or permanently.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

An informed usher is our best ambassador. Occasionally patrons will have questions, and therefore the following information about the Auditorium Center, RBTL, Box Office, etc. may be helpful.

- **The Rochester Broadway Theatre League (RBTL)** is a non-profit organization that is hired by various promoters and organizations to perform ticketing, advertising and production

services. Each fall and spring season, a schedule of more than 160 events includes national touring Broadway shows and single night events.

- **The Auditorium Center** is comprised of the Auditorium Theatre, as well as several smaller theatre spaces, meeting rooms and office spaces on the west end of the building complex. The building was built in 1929 by the Masonic organization. The Auditorium Theatre is owned and managed by RBTL, while the remainder of the Center complex is owned by Saucke Brothers Construction. Since opening, the Auditorium Theatre has been one of Rochester's premier venues for touring vaudeville, theatrical and entertainment presentations of all kinds.
 - No cameras or recording devices are allowed in the theatre. Any violations should be brought to the attention of House Management or Security. (There may be exceptions for media or other equipment, but you will be notified at the usher meeting if such exceptions are to be made.)
 - Smoking is not allowed anywhere in the building.
- **Box Office Information**

To order tickets by phone, call Ticketmaster at (585) 232-1900 or online at www.ticketmaster.com

Auditorium Theatre Box Office (Ticket Express) hours:

 - **Non-show days:** Monday-Friday 10am-6pm; and Saturday 10am-2pm.
 - **Show days:** Monday-Saturday 10am-Show time; Sunday 12 noon-Show time. (Special hours apply for morning shows.)
 - The Box Office is not generally open during **intermission**.
- **Patron Services**
 - **Hearing assistance devices** are available near the ticket office at no charge. Patrons must leave driver's license or credit card.
 - **Audio description devices for the blind and visually-impaired** are available near the ticket office at no charge. Patrons must leave driver's license or credit card.
 - **Sign interpreters** for hearing impaired patrons are scheduled every Thursday night of the Broadway productions.
 - **Booster seats** are available at no charge. Patrons are asked to leave the boosters in the seats after the event.
- **Handicapped Access**
 - **Handicapped parking** is available behind the building at the normal parking lot rate, with ground level wheelchair or "walker" access into the building at the rear Prince Street entrance.
 - **Handicapped restrooms** are available on the lower level, and are accessible via the elevator in the outer lobby behind the main floor concession area.
 - There are specific seating locations that are designated for wheelchairs and the hearing-impaired in the house.
 - Some aisle seats have armrests that lift out of the way for easier transfer from wheelchair to seat.

HOUSE MANAGER — CONTACT INFORMATION

If you encounter a problem that requires you to reach the House Manager, please call the Usher Line (585) 325-7760 ext.3403 and leave a detailed message. The Usher Line is checked three hours prior to each performance.

- **In case of an emergency** or other urgent matter, you may contact RBTL representative Shannon Struzik. She may be reached during normal business hours at (585) 325-7760 ext.3225

Thank you once again for your participation in the RBTL Volunteer program. Remember that our key objective is to provide assistance to our patrons. As a benefit to providing this service, we sincerely hope that you are able to enjoy the performance as well.

Please sign the attached Usher Pledge sheet, indicating that you have read and understand these guidelines. Return the signed form to the House Manager no later than your first scheduled ushering performance.



the arts and performance people

2008/2009 Season

VOLUNTEER USHER PLEDGE

Believing that the Rochester Broadway Theatre League (RBTL) has a real need for my services as a volunteer usher:

- I will be punctual and conscientious in the fulfillment of my duties and accept supervision graciously from management and directors.
- I will treat my fellow ushers and staff with respect.
- I will conduct myself with courtesy and consideration.
- I will take any problems, criticisms, or suggestions to the House Manager.
- I will endeavor to make my work professional in its quality.
- I have read and will follow the policies and procedures as stated in the RBTL Usher Guidelines.

(Usher Signature)

(Date)

(Print Name)