



# Usher Handbook 2019-2020

**Contact Information:**

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(active September 30th)**

*[mcleary@aomtheatre.com](mailto:mcleary@aomtheatre.com) before 9/30*

*General Emails, Voicemail and Texts will be checked on  
Wednesdays and Fridays and day of show.*

**Website:**

**<https://www.aomtheatre.com>**

# Welcome

Welcome to The Academy of Music Theater and we thank you for volunteering with us. Without your participation in our volunteer usher program, we wouldn't be able to provide quality entertainment in our community. It is our desire to make each visit to The Academy of Music Theater special, for both you and our patrons. As an ambassador for the theaters, it is important that you help each guest to feel welcomed and at ease. It is your actions, appearance and general conduct that will influence a patron's perception of The Academy. More often than not, you will be the only theater representative that our patrons will come in contact with. That is why it is extremely important to treat our patrons in the same manner in which we would like to be treated when visiting a theater. As an Usher, it is your job to greet our patrons with a smile and be willing to help with their needs during their visit to The Academy of Music Theatre

## **Mission Statement:**

*The mission of the Academy of Music is to enrich greater Northampton's quality of life by offering first-class performing arts and film presentations in a historic theatre of national significance, and encouraging the use of the venue for social, educational and professional events; the Academy of Music seeks a broad and diverse audience through its programming and outreach efforts.*

*The Academy of Music building is owned by the City of Northampton, which received the deed in 1892 from former owner and builder Edward H.R. Lyman. The Academy of Music, Inc., is the operating entity for the building, and it is an independent, private, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) charitable organization governed by a Board of Trustees. The Northampton Mayor and Smith College President serve on the board, as was Lyman's wish. The other board members are volunteers who have an interest in the performing arts, in the continued vitality of the City of Northampton, or who have special expertise related to the Academy's operations.*

## **Staff:**

- Debra J'Anthony, Executive Director
- Melissa Cleary Pearson, Theater Manager
- Emily Curro, Director of Marketing and Development
- Michael Abbatiello, Technical Director
- Martha Potyrala, Education Director
- Tanya Ritchie, Box Office Manager

## **Board of Directors:**

- Andrew J. Crystal, President
- Gail Yacuzzo, Vice-President
- Stuart Mieher, Treasurer
- Linda McInerney, Clerk
- Brian Foote
- Amanda Herman
- David Mintz
- Minh Ly
- Gina Wall
- Kathleen McCartney (Ex-Officio)
- David Narkewicz (Ex-Officio)

# **Volunteer Basics**

## **Physical Requirements**

Volunteer ushers may be required to stand for long periods of time, move quickly, and move up and downstairs to upper levels of the theaters. They must have adequate vision to read tickets and seat locations.

## **Application/Usher Information Form**

All new volunteer ushers must complete an usher application and return it to the Theater Manager. The application can be found on The Academy of Music Theater Website.

Current ushers must complete an Usher Information form seasonally to ensure that all information is up to date. This form can be obtained from the Event Manager.

Please discuss any challenges you may have with our Event Manager or Supervisor and they will be addressed accordingly.

## **Yearly Training and Policy Updates**

All new ushers are required to attend one orientation session before volunteering. All current ushers will be required to attend one usher training per year. Additional refresher sessions may be required throughout the season.

## **Dress Code**

The purpose of a dress code is to ensure that our usher staff is both professionally and distinctively dressed. It is important that our patrons can easily identify a theater representative. The dress code is a solid white shirt and solid black slacks or skirt, comfortable black or dark shoes. No open toe shoes or flip flops are allowed. Jeans, t-shirts, and mini-skirts are not appropriate work attire. All clothes must be clean and ironed. Please refrain from wearing excessive perfume or cologne, as some patrons might be sensitive to strong scents. Event Staff badges must be worn at all times.

## **Attendance and Punctuality**

The Academy of Music Theater depends on volunteer ushers to operate. It is vital that ushers arrive on time and be ready to work. The Theater Manager or Supervisor will lead an event orientation to relay important information regarding the performance this will be held 25 minutes before doors open, at this time ushers will also receive their assignments. If you are unable to attend your shift please call or email the Event Manager at least 24 hours in advance. If there is an emergency the day of the show and you are not able to make your shift please call or text the Volunteer line.

## **Attitude and Conduct**

Our volunteer ushers are often the only faces of The Academy of Music Theater that our patrons see. Ushers represent The Academy of Music Theater and are expected to hold themselves to the highest standard of behavior while interacting with each other and patrons. As an usher, you are always expected to carry out your duties with courtesy.

### **Call Time – Start of shift**

Usher call time is usually **one hour before curtain (Show Time)**. This may vary depending on the event. Ushers will enter through the PORTICO doors. Upon arrival ushers will sign-in, hang coats, store personal belongings, get event staff badge and flashlight in the Usher office/lounge, then head into the inner lobby. Ushers might be required to put inserts inside playbills for certain performances.

### **Opening Lobby & Theaters**

The lobby will open one hour before curtain time and the theater usually opens ½ hour before curtain at both CityStage & Symphony Hall. There are times that we will open both the lobby and the theater at the same time. It is important that you are ready to assist patrons once the lobby has opened. If you are a ticket taker you must be at your post when the lobby opens. If there are inserts to put into playbills ushers can continue working on them until Five-minutes before the theater opens. At that time you must head to your assigned location and be ready to welcome & assist patrons. At no time should you need to go into the Front Office or Box Office.

### **During Performance**

You must be ready to help a patron at all times, including during a performance. You are able to take a break or use the restroom once the performance has begun and patrons are seated, but you must inform another Usher or Supervisor so they can cover your post.

### **Sitting During a Performance**

Once the performance has begun and the manager has released you from your duties, you may be able to sit in USHER DESIGNATED seats located in the back and sides of the theater. The Event Manager and/or Supervisor will show you where these are located. Ushers are NOT allowed to sit in sold seats at any time. You also must be ready to assist patrons at any time.

### **Intermission & Post-Show**

As a The Academy of Music Theater Usher you are required to return to your post during intermission and see your post through to completion of the show. Once the theater is cleared, after the show, you will walk the rows looking for lost items. Please put all lost items on the Concession Stand or hand to a manager. All ushers must check in with the Event Manager or Supervisor and sign out before leaving the building.

### **Food and Beverage**

Water, popcorn and soda will be provided for the Ushers. Ushers and Staff can purchase candy from concessions. All food and beverages must be consumed before the lobby

opens or once you've been released from your job duty. Please keep snacks out of sight of patrons and consumed when not helping a guest. The consumption of alcohol or smoking during your shift is not permitted.

### **Clean Up and Trash/Recycling**

Trash Bags, gloves, and brooms are located in the Galley Kitchen for your use post-show. Do not dig through the trash once it is in the larger containers. The Academy has been working diligently with the Center for EcoTechnology to make sure trash and recycling are disposed of correctly. No more trash picking!

### **Usher Sign-Up**

Sign-ups will be announced by the 15th of every month on Sign Up Genius. The Theater Manager has the last say on shift assignments and will make accommodations for those who do not have access to a computer. If you are interested in a Sign-Up Genius Training Session, please let me know.

### **Volunteer Usher Post**

***Ticket Taker:*** Ticket takers stand at the entrance to the theater, check, scan or rip tickets and direct patrons to the location of their seats. Ticket Takers must be at their assigned door once the lobby doors open.

***Greeter/Programs:*** Greeters stand inside the theater doors, hand out programs, direct patrons to the location of their seats and answer questions. During a busy event, an additional usher might be posted in the lobby to greet patrons and help answer questions.

***Seating Usher:*** Ushers direct and assist patrons to their seats. In this position, ushers are not required to walk all patrons directly to their seats unless they need further assistance, but simply guide them to the correct area. Seating Ushers must be able to walk up and downstairs with ease.

***Accessible Entrance Greeter:*** Greeters take/scan tickets, direct patrons to their seats and answer questions. During intermission, greeters must return to the accessible area to offer assistance to the restroom or to retrieve concessions items.

***Front Sidewalk Greeter:*** Must be able to work outside. The first face of the Academy. Greet patrons, direct them to the right line, ask them to have their tickets ready. May need to take on other duties during intermission. (maintain lobby lines, ID guests and assist with recycling)

**Lobby Assistant/Assistant House Manager:** I will start staffing volunteers as assistant house managers if you are interested in more responsibility. Please let the manager on duty know you are interested in this job and/or write an email with a resume and letter of interest to [volunter@aomtheatre.com](mailto:volunter@aomtheatre.com).

**Check-in/Check-out duty:** I'm interested in finding someone to check in and check out volunteers especially during busy events where my attention is needed elsewhere. This requires more knowledge of the venue and a few extra hours here and there. Please let the manager on duty know you are interested in this job and/or write an email with a resume and letter of interest to [volunter@aomtheatre.com](mailto:volunter@aomtheatre.com).

## **Theater Rules & Policies**

### **Tickets**

All guests over the age of two must have a ticket to enter the theater. Patrons must be seated in the seat printed on their ticket. There are no exchanges or refunds available. If there is an issue you are unable to handle please contact the Event Manager or Supervisor.

### **Ticket Issues**

While assisting a patron you may run into an issue with their tickets such as duplicate tickets, the need for accessible seating, etc. If this happens please contact the Event Manager or Supervisor. They will be able to assist the patron and resolve any issues that may arise. Do not feel as though you need to handle it on your own.

### **Accessibility Information**

The Academy of Music Theater has 16 accessible seats on the first floor, one accessible restroom and one (soon to be two) ramp(s). We do not have an elevator. Walkers and chairs should be stored against the wall and must allow at least 3 feet of space in the aisle. At this time, we do not offer assisted listening devices but do have earplugs available at every entrance.

### **Cameras and Recording Devices**

Flash photography or recording devices are generally not allowed; however, this may vary by show or presenting organization. Some performances don't allow any photography of any type while other performances do. The Event Manager will inform you of the shows policy during the event meeting before the performance.

### **Going On Stage or Backstage**

Patrons are not allowed on stage or backstage at any time. If a show has a pre- or post-show meet and greet, a location will be assigned and those involved in the meet and greet will be informed of the location. The Event Manager will inform you of this information during the event meeting before the performance.

### **Restrooms**

Restrooms are located on the lower level and one accessible restroom on the main floor.

### **Aisles and Stairs**

Aisles and Stairs must remain clear at all times. Not only is this a safety precaution, but it also allows patrons to move about the theater as easily as possible. Wheelchairs, crutches, strollers, bags, coats, etc., must be stored under a seat or in designated areas. Patrons are sometimes permitted to stand or dance in the aisles. If a guest gets up during a performance, you must shine the flashlight on the floor to help ensure they don't trip while walking in the dark theater. Once the guest returns they must wait for a break in the performance to return to their seat. For example, between acts or between songs.

Sometimes, during a bar show, we will not allow standing in the loge for the patron's safety. This is usually handled by security personnel.

### **Late Seating**

If a patron arrives once a performance has started they will have to follow the late seating Policy. The Late Seating Policy varies from performance to performance. The Event Manager will inform you of this information during the event meeting before the performance. If late seating is allowed patrons must stand in the back of the theater until there is a point in the performance they can be seated.

### **Concessions**

Soda, water, beer, wine, and light snacks are sold. Concessions are located in the lobby. The AOM accepts cash only. Concessions will stay open through intermission. If there isn't an intermission the Event Manager will close the concessions stand one hour to a ½ hr before the end of the event.

### **Food and Drink**

Patrons are allowed to bring food and drink purchased from concessions into the theater for most performances. Patrons are not allowed to bring their own food and drink into the theater. Kindly ask them to finish it before they enter or dispose of it before entering.

### **No Smoking**

There is NO smoking allowed within 20 feet of the building. This includes "e-cigarettes". Patrons must exit the building to smoke. They will be allowed back into the theater but they MUST keep their ticket stub on them at all times. Alcohol is not allowed out of the building. If a patron leaves to smoke they must leave their Alcoholic-Beverages inside the building.

### **Alcohol**

Alcohol is served at 30 shows a year. Patrons must be 21 years old to consume alcohol; concessions may ID anyone purchasing alcohol. If you witness someone purchasing alcohol for someone under the age of 21, please inform the Event Manager or Supervisor immediately and they will assess the situation. If a patron becomes

disorderly during a performance, please inform the Event Manager or Supervisor and they will address the patron.

### **Patron Conduct**

Patrons are expected to display good conduct during performances and events at The Academy of Music Theater and follow the rules of the theaters. As an Usher, please remind the patron of the rule they may not be following. If at any time a patron becomes disorderly, please find the Event Manager or Supervisor immediately and they will handle the situation.

### **Lost and Found**

If a patron informs you about a lost item please ask them to write a description of the item and a phone number they can be reached. If they would like to call to report a missing item they can call the Event Manager on Tuesday– Friday from 9-5. Found lost items can often be picked up at The Academy of Music Theater Box Office during box office hours.

### **Cell Phone Use:**

All cell phones must be shut off or silenced during a performance. If a patron needs to use their cell phone they may step out of the theater into the lobby to do so. Texting is not permitted during performances for it is distracting to performers and other patrons. If you see a patron texting during a performance kindly ask them to put their phone away without disrupting other guests or the performance. If you are met with a disruptive

### **Coat Check:**

We do not have a coat check but there are small coat racks and several closets that patrons may use. The Academy is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

## **Emergency Procedures**

In the rare case of an emergency, Ushers must remain calm at all times and follow policies and procedures. If you have any questions or concerns at any time please contact the Event Manager, House Supervisor or a full-time staff member immediately.

**PLEASE REMAIN CALM!**

### **Fire Alarm & Emergency Exits**

In the case, the fire alarm goes off everyone must proceed to the nearest emergency exit immediately. Signs are posted at both The Academy of Music Theater directing people to the nearest exit. Ushers should assist patrons in exiting the Theater. If you feel you are in immediate danger please exit the building immediately. ALL staff and ushers please proceed to our designated meeting spot. You may NOT re-enter the building until given the all-clear from the Event Manager. An announcement may or may not be made



at the time of the alarm sounding. Do not wait for an announcement if you hear the alarm everyone must exit the theater.

### **Lost Child or Guest**

If a guest reports a lost child or guest, notify the Event Manager or Supervisor immediately. Obtain a detailed description of the lost person. All Ushers should move to the nearest staircase or exit to monitor anyone exiting the building. The Event Manager or Supervisor will inform the usher team of the description and when the person is found. For safety reasons, we do not make an announcement about lost people.

### **Medical Emergency**

In case of a serious medical emergency remain calm and notify the Event Manager or Supervisor immediately, including details of the emergency and location. Once the Event Manager or Supervisor is at the location of the Medical Emergency, you can return to your post. Please do not disclose any information about the Emergency to other ushers or patrons.

### **Minor Accidents or Falls**

An usher should stay with the injured person and send another usher or patron (if necessary) to get the Event Manager or Supervisor. If the patron insists they are ok and do not want assistance, simply note where they are sitting and report the incident to the House Manager or Supervisor. For all falls or accidents, the Event Manager must fill out an accident report you may be asked to sign the report as a witness.

### **Power Outage**

The Academy of Music Theater is equipped with emergency lighting but no generators. If the power does go out please turn on your flashlights on and take your post. Please ask patrons to remain seated until power is restored. We will resume the performance when the power is restored. If power isn't able to be restored an announcement will be made.

### **Suspicious Person/Person with a weapon or suspicious bag/package**

If at any time if you witness a suspicious person or person with a weapon, please notify the Event Manager, House Supervisor or full-time Staff immediately. If you find a suspicious bag or package **don't touch it**, notify the Event Manager, House Supervisor or Fulltime Staff immediately.

## **Building Policies**

### **Ticket Policy:**

A ticket is required to enter the theater for all ticketed events at CityStage & Symphony Hall. Anyone over the age of two must have a ticket to enter. We reserve the right to refuse admission or eject patrons from the theater based on management's discretion.

**Electronic Devices:**

Cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices should be silenced prior to entering the theater. Text messaging and other uses of devices that cause unnecessary light are prohibited in the theater. Cell phone conversation and text messaging are disrespectful to the artist and other patrons and are not allowed during the performance.

**Late Arrival:**

Late seating will be at the discretion of the production company and may require late patrons to wait to enter the theater until a designated break in the performance.

**Photography and Recording:**

Flash photography and audio or video recording devices are prohibited. The use of cellular phones for recording or photography is also prohibited. Some performances may prohibit all photography and recordings.

**Smoking:**

There is no smoking. If you leave the building to smoke, you must have your ticket for re-entry.

**Bags:**

Large bags and backpacks are prohibited in the theater. The Academy of Music Theater management reserves the right to search all bags and purses.

**Prohibited Items & Weapons Policy:**

Large bags, balloons, laser pointers, noisemakers, whistles, air horns of any type, coolers, bottles, cans, drugs, outside alcohol and weapons of any kind, including knives, are NOT allowed. Management reserves the right to confiscate these items.

**Disturbances:**

All patrons must maintain appropriate behavior at all times. Any patron using offensive language, engaging in disorderly conduct, disturbing other patrons or violating any Theater Policies may be ejected from the venue and may be subject to arrest. Ejected patrons will not receive a ticket refund.

**Merchandise:**

Merchandise is available for sale for select performance. Show related merchandise is sold by the show's producing organization and therefore The Academy of Music Theater is not responsible for defective merchandise.

**First Aid:**

The Academy of Music Theater is equipped with First Aid kits, if you are in need of medical attention please contact a staff member for assistance.

**Lost and Found:**

If an item is lost during an event, please see an Academy of Music Theater staff member. If you discover an item missing after an event please call The Academy of Music Theater House Manager to inquire about possible recovery at 413-788-7646. The Academy of Music Theater is not responsible for lost or stolen items in the theater.

**Serving and Consumption of Alcohol:**

The Academy of Music Theater have the right to deny alcoholic beverage service to anyone and will eject anyone under the age of 21 who is observed consuming alcohol or appears intoxicated. We reserve the right to refuse admission or eject patrons from the theater if they appear intoxicated or cause a disturbance during the performance. Alcoholic beverages are not allowed outside CityStage & Symphony Hall.

**Food & Beverages:**

Food & Beverages are allowed into the theater for most performances at CityStage & Symphony Hall. Management and presenting productions reserve the right to not allow food and/or beverages into the theater.

**Accessible Seating:**

The Academy of Music Theater is handicap accessible. Accessible seating is available but a ticket is required for these sections because seating is limited. Our staff will do our best to accommodate anyone without an accessible ticket that is in need of accessible seating.

**Backstage Access:**

The Academy of Music Theater personnel and show production staff have exclusive access to the backstage and all support areas. No one without credentials or staff accompaniment is allowed backstage at any time.

**Third-Party Tickets:**

The Academy of Music Theater cannot guarantee the authenticity of tickets that are obtained through any third party that is not one of our listed points of purchase.

If you choose to purchase from a third party:

- We cannot be responsible for tickets purchased through unauthorized third parties
- Your tickets cannot be replaced if lost or stolen
- We cannot guarantee that your tickets are valid and, therefore cannot guarantee admittance
- You may be paying much more than the ticket's face value
- We cannot contact you with information regarding time changes, show cancellations or other information.