



TECHNICAL DIRECTOR (2018)

POSITION OVERVIEW

Technical Director (TD) is considered one of the most key positions in the day-to-day operation of *Merlyn Productions*, and reports directly to the Artistic Director (AD). As with all Company Staff, its intended commitment is for the entire season (i.e.- a full year), not show-by-show, due to the status and training involved.

The Technical Director is an individual with a passion for stagecraft, who leads and is directly responsible for a major portion of the critical behind-the-scenes operations of a community theatre company. The TD focuses upon the execution of each production's technical designs within the parameters set by its artistic vision, whereas the AD makes the rehearsing of performers his own chief concern, until all merge together at Tech/Dress Rehearsal.

The Technical Director maintains open lines of communication with a production's director and designers. Officially and in theory, he carries supervisory authority over all prep crew in the Scenery, Properties, Lighting, and Sound departments. In actual practice, the TD's own work is chiefly concerned with Scenery: leading its planning, construction, transport, set-up, and tear-down. For the scenic duties absorbed into his position, he is typically also credited as a production's *Scenic Designer* or *Master Carpenter*, as appropriate.

QUALITIES, SKILLS, & REQUIREMENTS

The ideal Technical Director is both independent and a good communicator: maintaining regular contact with the Artistic Director and other staff while operating in a self-motivated, unsupervised manner to ensure that a production's technical plans are executed on schedule.

The majority of his hours are at his own convenience, however it is critical that **the TD attends the move/build, technical rehearsal, and tear-down** with the same absolute reliability as an actor attending performances.

Comfort with the use of tools and the ability to follow a specified design are a must. Any previous theatre, carpentry, or painting experience are a bonus, and any previous *scenic carpentry* or *scenic painting* experience are an excellent asset. However, community theatre is a training ground, and much can be learned over time on the job.

Aside from high reliability, the indispensable qualification is a serious interest in stagecraft, demonstrated by the desire to ask questions and do research to learn exactly *how* standard pieces of scenery at *Merlyn Productions* are constructed. Currently, the company has a significant inventory, but is also continuing to create new designs. Each season is a mix of new and returning productions, and many productions merge new and existing scenic elements.



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A rental vehicle is often necessary for venue load-in and load-out, thus the TD *should* possess a valid driver's licence and be comfortable operating cargo vans and 16-foot cube vans (however, this is negotiable).

Being concerned only with production prep and tear-down, the TD is not precluded from also participating as a performer or Stage Manager. However, the job is best-suited to one who enjoys taking on these roles only occasionally; otherwise the number of hours required in rehearsal are likely to create a significant challenge of time management with the tasks that need to be completed outside of rehearsal.

PRODUCTION PROCESS

The technical direction process for each production is as follows:

1. After the Artistic Director announces a title, he will issue a script to the Technical Director to be read prior to the first production meeting, and advise on the general size and scope of scenery the production will require. Merlyn's designs span the range of full box set, unit set, ultra-portable unit set, and "show-in-a-box".
2. Prior to the start of rehearsals, the AD and TD hold a Production Meeting to collaborate on the scenic design, with agenda as follows:
 - i. Draw a scenic diagram. In the case of a new production, the type and placement of major scenery on the stage is determined, with notes on its appearance, theme, colour scheme, etc. In the case of a previous production being re-mounted, the TD will be briefed on the existing stock design and the pieces required for it. Any ideas to improve or expand upon an existing design can be discussed.
 - ii. Produce a complete list of the major items of scenery required (flats, furniture, etc).
 - iii. Create a technical task list by verifying the presence & condition of existing scenery & equipment, noting any that needs to be constructed, repaired, painted, modified, or purchased. Typically, the intention is to utilise or re-purpose as much current scenery as is reasonably possible.
3. The TD ensures that all items on the technical task list are completed prior to technical rehearsal.

It should be noted that although he is leading the effort, the TD is not intended to be the company's sole scenic carpenter or painter. Many productions have several company members onboard who contribute their talents to the scenic prep crew. Team efforts at this stage are actively encouraged, and both internal and external calls can be made if additional help is needed.

In completing the task list, the TD is responsible for:

- Communicating how much crew help he requires for the design, and when studio space will be needed for building/painting;



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- requesting a budget and obtaining of any necessary building materials, hardware, or paint;
 - specifying to scenic crew exactly what design and materials are to be used and how; and
 - consulting with the AD if he is unaware of the standard theatrical method or materials needed to construct a particular item of required scenery, researching scenic textbooks if needed.
4. Come show week, the move, build, and tech happen consecutively (most often on the same day) as follows:
- The TD oversees the move alongside the AD: ensuring that all scenery and related equipment are ready for transport, picking up and dropping off the rental van if needed, and instructing the assisting crew in transporting the production's items to the venue.
 - After load-in, the TD assumes primary control of the stage and performs the function of *Master Carpenter*: leading the crew in the set build, and ensuring that construction proceeds in a safe & methodical manner.
 - The Technical Director attends the Technical Rehearsal. At the onset, with the build completed, the TD gives the official clearance for the cast to be onstage. If warranted, he will also give a scenic tour, demonstration, and safety briefing at that time. During the Technical Rehearsal, the TD notes any final technical issues that need to be corrected before Dress Rehearsal — at which point primary control of the stage is assumed by the Stage Manager.
5. Immediately following the final performance, the TD re-assumes control of the stage to oversee the final tear-down, load-out, and move back to the studio. All hands participate in this process; cast members who have changed out of costume report to the TD onstage. The TD assigns tasks and ensures that everything proceeds methodically and safely in reverse-order.
6. In the days that follow, various Company Staff (*Artistic Director, Technical Director, Wardrobe Mistress, and/or Property Master*) will meet at the studio to stow all items, and restore the space for the next production.

On average, the Technical Director expects to spend fewer hours working on a typical show than a principal actor will in rehearsal — at times significantly so, in the case of a stock design.

Nevertheless, the TD is utterly instrumental in the preparedness of a production for all involved. It is through his efforts that imagined environments become a reality, and a Technical Director who has a zeal for attacking new production challenges – and designing scenery to look the best it can – will see the results of his work appreciated by performers and patrons alike.