



Volunteer Usher Handbook 2023-2024 Season

Thank you for your interest in volunteer ushering at the San Francisco Playhouse for our 21st Season! We could not do what we do without the generous gift of your time and energy.

This packet should contain all the information you need to successfully usher with us this season. If you haven't received sign-up invitation emails yet, or you'd like to re-subscribe to those emails, let us know and we will gladly add you to the mailing list. If you have any questions regarding these usher procedures, please don't hesitate to email us at usher@sfplayhouse.org. Welcome to the family!

Cheers,

Juliet Hicks

Front of House Manager, Operations Associate, & Usher Coordinator

San Francisco Playhouse

jhicks@sfplayhouse.org, usher@sfplayhouse.org

415.287.0915

415.677.9596 x110

GETTING TO THE THEATRE

We are located at 450 Post Street, between Powell and Mason, right off of Union Square. If traveling by public transportation, use the Powell Street station and walk up Powell Street to reach us. The theatre level is on the second floor of the Kensington Park Hotel, mezzanine/balcony on M2. Once you arrive, check in with the Box Office to let them know you're here to usher. Please leave any personal belongings in the Box Office (this office will remain locked any time it is unoccupied) and make yourself at home either on the benches in the hall or in the lobby.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) When ushering with us, you agree to be directed by the House Manager for the duration of the shift. This can include: standing in a specific location, wearing a face mask, wearing your glasses, and paying careful attention to their instructions. Whether before curtain or after the show, please ensure that you do not leave your post without clearance from the House Manager on duty.
- 2) Come fed! Make sure you give yourself some time to have a bite **before** you join us at the theatre.
- 3) All usher shifts begin 1 hour and 15 minutes before curtain. You should be in the lobby ready to meet with your House Manager at that time. At the end of the shift, House Management will release you once your duties have been completed and your usher badge is returned.
- 4) You'll receive a quick briefing regarding how full the house will be, intermissions, special groups etc. You may be asked to stuff understudy inserts into programs during this briefing.
- 5) Then you'll be assigned to one of a number of stations by our House Management staff, determined solely by them:
 - a. Lobby Greeter: Positioned behind stanchions at lobby doors - Scan tickets and welcome patrons inside the lobby, assist patrons with finding programs, restrooms, water fountain, etc. Either scan or visually check tickets to confirm they are here for the correct performance. If asked to scan, you will be instructed how to use the device.
 - b. Anteroom: Positioned in the main entrance to the Orchestra - Make sure patrons are in the right section (Orchestra). Then direct to appropriate aisles. Assist guests to finding their seats on Orchestra level. (Note: seats AA-H are located on this level, any letter higher than that should be directed upstairs. Seats with even numbers are located in the right bank of seats when you are facing the stage, odd numbers are on the left.)

- c. Mezzanine: Positioned upstairs on the house left side near the elevators - Assist guests with finding their seats on the Mezzanine and Balcony level (M2). Open and close the auditorium doors at the correct times, according to House Management direction. (Note: seats J-O are located on this level, any letter before J should be directed downstairs. Tickets marked with a 'W' are our wheelchair/scooter accessible seats, located in the second row of the mezzanine, far house right, facing the stage. If you need any assistance seating these guests, please notify House Management.)

Note: Occasionally a subscriber will have changed a date but attempt to sit in their "regular seats" that have since been reassigned. If a ticketing conflict occurs, the best way to resolve it is to check the date on both parties' tickets and send anyone with the wrong date back to the Box Office, otherwise please alert the House Manager and they will resolve the conflict.

- d. Other positions as required.
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5. After assisting at your assigned position until just before the curtain speech, you'll be directed to seats assigned to you by House Management. Seating is at the discretion of House Management and non-negotiable. House Management will do their best to find you the best seats left available to safely seat you in, in either the orchestra or mezzanine, at the discretion of House Management. Please keep in mind that House Management cannot hold the curtain for last-minute bathroom/drinking water needs. Enjoy the show!
 6. If there is an intermission, we will ask you to return to your assigned posts to answer questions, etc. You can coordinate with your fellow ushers and House Manager to take a restroom break.
 7. Following the performance, we will ask you to assist with cleaning up the auditorium (gloves and bins are provided), check-in with House Management once clean-up is complete, return your badge, and you'll be released for the evening by the House Manager.

OF NOTE:

- Our food and drink policy will mirror our Covid-19 mask policy within the auditorium. Patrons may eat or drink in the lobby with the windows open. However, when masks are required, we cannot allow snacks in the auditorium. If you see someone with their mask down in the auditorium, please feel empowered to gently remind them of our mask policy.
- We offer Assisted Listening Devices (ALDs) with the deposit of a credit card or ID. These can be obtained at the Box Office.

- We do offer late seating, at the discretion of the House Management team.
- Photography and videography in the theatre are prohibited. If you see someone filming or taking photos, please alert House Management. Do not intervene yourself.
- We will occasionally have specialized talkbacks with the cast or a person of note relating to the show, most notably on our Rising Stars nights. Please anticipate staying past the post-show discussion for clean-up. Rising Stars nights will be listed as such on Volunteer Local.
- We have a theatre dog, Emi (the Empathy Pup) who will occasionally be in the lobby pre-show. Note that she is very friendly and likes scratches. (You may also meet other dogs on staff, depending on the day.)

GENERAL POLICIES

- **We have a well-trained and friendly House Management and Box Office staff who are working their hardest to ensure that ushers, patrons, and our fellow staff members are treated as family. You will always be treated with the utmost respect. As such, we require that anyone working for us in a volunteer capacity treat staff and patrons with the utmost respect as well. We will not be tolerant of rudeness, dismissiveness, argumentativeness or any other form of disrespect in any capacity whatsoever, period. We reserve the right to end our Volunteer relationship at any time when confronted with rudeness. Play nice at the Playhouse!**
- Dress Code: We ask volunteer ushers to wear ALL BLACK while working. No jeans or graphic t-shirts. Please use your best judgment and wear something nice. This is important so that patrons know that you are representing the theatre; please dress accordingly.
- Volunteers are prohibited from drinking alcohol or otherwise being intoxicated at any time during their shift.
- At the end of a shift, once the House Manager has released you for the night and collected your badge, you are welcome to one complimentary beverage or snack from the bar, in recognition and appreciation of your help. The cast will frequently join us at the bar after the show as well if you'd like to stay and chat!
- No cell phone use while working; please stay open and attentive to patrons.

- Ushers should be able to stand without assistance for one hour while working unless special accommodation is needed. We ask that you inform us of any special needs, at least 24 hours in advance, by emailing either usher@sfplayhouse.org or jhicks@sfplayhouse.org.
- Be prepared to wear a mask for the duration of your shift. As a representative of the Playhouse, we ask that you abide by all house policies.
- Feel free to bring a small flashlight to help with seating and in case of emergency.
- Ushers must never go behind the Concessions Bar for any reason, at any time.
- You **MUST** stay after the performance to assist with cleaning the auditorium; failure to do so may result in being asked not to return.
- San Francisco Playhouse reserves the right to ask Volunteer Ushers not to return should they not follow policies, repeatedly show up late, or for any reason deemed appropriate by management.
- Remember, you are the face of the San Francisco Playhouse. Please present yourself accordingly.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Should there be a power outage, earthquake, or other emergency that requires stopping the performance or evacuating the theater, we request that you assist in that process. That said, **your safety is the highest priority**. Do not feel obligated to assist in an emergency if you are unsafe or unable to do so. Please be sure that you know the location of Fire Exits, etc. The House Manager will be happy to point them out to you if you're unaware.

In case a patron needs assistance, please alert House Management and await any instructions. We may ask you to wait downstairs to direct emergency personnel, if needed, but unless attending to a medical emergency **is something you are specifically professionally trained in**, we ask you to step aside and let House Management follow through on obtaining care.

If there is an emergency that requires an audience evacuation, and you feel safe and comfortable assisting House Management to direct patrons to the emergency exits,

please do so. Let your House Manager know that you can be of assistance. For evacuation purposes you should usher the audience to the Post Street Exit Stairs (House Right). The House Right staircase is our best option in an evacuation as the hotel staircase to House Left (near the Box Office/elevators) will likely be backed up with hotel guests. **Never use the elevator!** Only use the staircase to House Left if the staircase to House Right is blocked due to the Emergency.

However, if you in any way feel unsafe, unprepared, or in any danger or fear, please evacuate with the audience as described above. We in no way hold our volunteers accountable for emergency evacuation purposes, we only ask that you help if you feel 100% comfortable doing so, as you would in any other public scenario.

SCHEDULING A SHIFT

Volunteer Local! Volunteer Local is user-friendly and will make it easy for all of us to sign up for and keep track of our volunteer duties with the Playhouse. An email will be sent out 3 weeks prior to a new show, with details on the performance, dates, and a link to sign up with Volunteer Local online. Every show has a unique URL, so please only use the current link provided for the current show. Disregard past emails about closed performances, as again, the URL will be different for each show. Juliet will typically send no more than two reminders about signing up, so as not to overload anyone's inbox. **If you need any assistance using Volunteer Local, you can request a step-by-step guide by emailing usher@sfplayhouse.org.**

SCHEDULING POLICIES

- *Changing/Canceling:* Whenever possible, always try to stick with the date you committed to originally. If you must cancel a date, please make every attempt to do so sooner rather than later so we can plan accordingly. At that time, you can sign up for another date if you're able. Just as our subscribers are required to give us 24-hours' notice for any cancellations, we ask that you respect your commitments and do not cancel less than 24 hours before your scheduled volunteer shift, barring emergency. **You must call the Box Office to cancel day-of OR if you are running late at 415.677.9596**
- *No-Shows:* Should you schedule a shift and not show up without contacting us, or repeatedly arrive late, we reserve the right to ask you not to return as a volunteer.
- *Tardiness:* We reserve the right to send you home if you fail to arrive on time without notice.

- Remember, we ask our ushers to arrive on time (an hour and a quarter prior to the performance), work under the supervision of House Management, including scanning tickets, pointing folks in the direction of their seats, and some light pick-up following the show. Some standing, lifting, and bending is required. We ask that all our ushers treat our patrons and staff with the utmost respect.

AS A THANK YOU

- Ushers can purchase additional tickets for friends & family at a discount. Speak with Juliet or your House Manager for details.
- Once clean-up has been signed off on by the House Manager, you are welcome to join us (and occasionally the performers) in the lobby for one complimentary beverage or snack.
- Starting with *Nollywood Dreams*, ushers who follow all the guidelines posted above successfully, usher once for each play, and usher twice for *Guys and Dolls*, will be entered into a raffle for two complimentary tickets for the Opening Night of our season closer, *Evita!* PLEASE KEEP IN MIND that ushers are responsible for tracking their own attendance and emailing their records to usher@sfplayhouse.org by June 20, 2024 for entry, which will then be verified by the usher coordinators. Tickets will be seated at the Box Office's discretion.

Thank you so much for joining us and feel free to ask questions either in person or via email. We're so happy to have you!



Season 21 Usher Agreement Letter

I, the undersigned, do hereby acknowledge that I have received, read, agree to, and abide by the policies, guidelines, and procedures outlined in my volunteer usher guidebook. I understand that I have made a commitment to the SF Playhouse and its standards illustrated within the handbook.

I agree to follow the policies and guidelines detailed in this handbook when working at SF Playhouse and willingly accept the consequences of failure to do so, which may include refusal of my services as a volunteer and dismissal from the usher program at SF Playhouse.

I further acknowledge that I understand how to contact the volunteer usher coordinators during the season.

I also willingly disclose my email address, phone number, and name to the House Manager at SF Playhouse for the explicit purposes of facilitating my role as a volunteer usher. I sign this form with the understanding that this information will remain confidential and will not be used for any purpose that is not directly related to my involvement with SF Playhouse.

FIRST AND LAST NAME:	
BEST PHONE NUMBER TO REACH YOU:	
EMAIL ADDRESS:	
EMERGENCY CONTACT & RELATIONSHIP TO YOU:	
EMERGENCY CONTACT'S PHONE:	

Please check a box in response to the following questions:

May we text your phone? Yes No

Would you like to be on-call for urgent usher coverage? Yes No

Signature of Volunteer Usher _____

Date of Agreement _____