



A Capitol Volunteer Handbook

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Revised September 2006
by Claudette Glencross
and Robin Anne Ettles

**WELCOME TO THE CAPITOL THEATRE!
THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING TO GIVE OF YOUR TIME AT OUR FACILITY.**

The Capitol Theatre is pleased to have you among the ranks of our volunteer corps, headed by Ms. Claudette Glencross and supervised by the Front-of-House (FOH) Manager. The corps now numbers approximately 200 people. Rick Costain, former team leader of the Capitol Stars, has graciously prepared this handbook to help guide you along in the process of volunteering at the Capitol Theatre. It is generally structured in a handy Q&A format. Although this handbook is quite comprehensive, there will always be extenuating circumstances or you may have questions about these or other matters. Please do not hesitate to ask your team leader or the Front-of-House Manager!

Volunteering at the Capitol consists mostly of carrying out duties as specified by your team leader and the FOH Manager during our shows. In return for your help, you are welcomed to watch the same entertainment that our patrons pay to see. Through your work, you will also get somewhat of an inside look at the entertainment industry: technical details, artist and public relations, media, venue preparation, etc. Other volunteer activities are optional, but sometimes include helping us prepare subscriber mail-outs for the new season or generally helping out around the premises. Through your volunteer work, you will meet new people not only on your team, but from other teams as well. We celebrate the work of our volunteers at least once a year with a collective meal. Some teams make use of our facilities for meet and greet events, such as potluck dinners, etc. Volunteering is always a social event here at the Capitol!

Also, your suggestions and comments are very helpful to the continued quality of our public image and customer service. If you have anything to say, we'd love to hear from you!

**SO I'M NOW A VOLUNTEER AT THE CAPITOL THEATRE –
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN EXACTLY?**

At the very least, this means that you have come to give some of your time and to enjoy the entertainment provided here. This also means that while wearing a Capitol volunteer jacket and nametag, you are a representative of the Theatre. It is extremely important to be polite, courteous and friendly at all times. Often, patrons think that you are an employee of the Capitol Theatre and you are the first person they see, and their impression of you may be their initial impression of how the Theatre is operated. As they say, one never gets a second chance to make a first impression.

You have also been provided with a booklet detailing the history of the Capitol Theatre and you will receive some training from your team leader and theatre staff. However, sometimes patrons will ask you questions that you are unable to

answer. As a general rule of good customer service, it is paramount that the patron's question be answered. If you are unsure, please refer the patron to the FOH Manager or check with a staff member to get the answer. "Please hold on – I'll check with a staff member" is far more appreciated by a patron than "I don't know, I'm just a volunteer", and speaks much better for our organisation.

HOW DOES THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM WORK?

If you offer your name as a volunteer to Claudette Glencross, your name will be added on a team list. You will receive a monthly schedule of events and a list of team members and team-leaders. On the schedule are those nights or days your team is designated to work. Approximately seven days before the event, you will be contacted by your team leader to see if you will be available. To make your team leader's life easier, we encourage you to call your team leader yourself to notify him/her if you will be available to work or not. There are many reasons why a volunteer cannot be available for the time his/her team is designated to work and that is why there are approximately 20 members on a team. However, when you offer your name, you should be prepared to make yourself available for those times your team is designated to work. If, for some unseen circumstances you have to cancel after telling the team leader you would be available, you should contact the team leader as soon as possible so that a replacement can be found.

HOW OFTEN DO I HAVE TO BE THERE?

Generally, the teams are on a rotating schedule that comes out each month. On average, each team works twice a month. However, this can vary greatly depending on the time of year and level of rental activity. As a volunteer, we ask that you come for all shows for which YOUR team is scheduled to work unless you absolutely cannot, even if sometimes they do not particularly pique your interest. This is important to the functioning of the theatre and to the planning that your team leader is required to do. It may not be your cup of tea, but you may also find yourself appreciating a different type of entertainment or, in the case of conferences, learning new things. If you are unavailable to work three consecutive events (although of course we realize that certain circumstances are unforeseen), we may question your desire to be a part of our volunteer corps. As will be mentioned below, you are welcome to submit your name for events where your not team is working, above and beyond what your own team is scheduled to work.

HOW OFTEN AND HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO BE THERE? HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE NEEDED? IF I DON'T SHOW, SURELY I WON'T BE MISSED!

There are various factors that affect the number of volunteers needed for any performance. Generally, depending on the size of the house, the type of entertainment, whether the coat check is available to the patrons, the time of day, etc... there are 18 volunteers needed at any given time in the following positions:

Taking tickets (orchestra)	2 ¹
Taking tickets (balcony)	2 ¹
Passing out Programs	2
Coat check	1 ² or 2
Ushers in the Orchestra	6
Ushers in the Balcony	5
One extra to float (merchandise, etc.)	1
Total	20 or 21

WHAT IF I'M A VOLUNTEER BUT OUR GROUP IS NOT SCHEDULED AND I REALLY WANT TO SEE THIS PERFORMANCE?

If you really want to see an event for which your team is not scheduled, approximately 5-7 days before the event you should contact the team leader of the team that is scheduled. Provided there are not too many volunteers for the same event, the team leader can normally accommodate you and have you work with their team for that performance. However, we do not want to create a situation where there are so many volunteers that it looks strange to the patrons, so please try to understand if it is just not possible for that event.

CAN I DO SOMETHING LIKE WORK THE DOOR OR SHOW PEOPLE TO THEIR SEATS AND THEN GO HOME EARLY?

When you commit to work for an event, it is expected that you will stay for the duration of the program unless there are sound reasons why you cannot. This is necessary to meet the Fire Marshall's requirements for having all exits covered in the case of an emergency. If you have to leave before the end of the performance, you **MUST** advise either the Front-of-house Manager or the team leader so that arrangements can be made to fill your post.

¹ One of who should be bilingual when a number of Francophone patrons are expected

² Only during inclement weather and in the winter, and should receive help after the performance from the volunteers who were giving out programs.

WHEN AM I EXPECTED TO ARRIVE AT THE THEATRE? AFTER ALL, THE AUDITORIUM DOORS DON'T OPEN UNTIL ½ HOUR BEFORE THE SHOW STARTS ...

The normal procedure is for the Main Theatre doors to open 1 hour before the performance time, and the performance hall doors are opened ½ hour before show time. **Note: under NO circumstances should either door be opened without instructions from the FOH Manager.** It is also important that hall doors remain closed until the house is officially opened. Touring companies often need to make last minute adjustments before the house opens to the public, and unnecessary traffic can affect their set-up, lighting cues, etc. As a new volunteer, your team leader will likely wish to take you through the house before a performance. Please check with the FOH Manager before doing so.

You should try to be at the Theatre at least 1½ hour before performance time. There are many reasons for this, among them is to assist the team leader so he/she knows for sure who is available for an assignment. Also, volunteers are often needed for other duties such as stuffing programs, or Theatre staff may need to issue special instructions during this time. The FOH Manager him/herself always addresses the team with details specific to the show in question, 10 minutes prior to Main doors opening.

WHAT AM I EXPECTED TO WEAR?

Clothes.

Just kidding, of course. Clothes are indeed mandatory, and we suggest that upon arrival at the theatre you should be dressed in a white top (tie for the gentlemen), and black (or dark) slacks or skirt, and appropriate footwear. Remember you may be standing in one position for more than an hour or you may have to usher in the balcony.

You should then proceed to the coat check to find a maroon jacket or vest that will fit. Many volunteers have their own maroon jacket or vest. If you decide to remain with us for a while, you may wish to purchase or, in the case of some of our volunteers, make your own.

Capitol Theatre volunteers are now required to bring a small flashlight to the shows they are working.

Purses or valuables may be secured in the box office. You are welcome to ask the FOH Manager to bring your purses or valuables there. Please note that the Theatre is not liable for your personal effects. We ask that you NOT go in the Box Office under any circumstances, as it is a restricted area.

OK, I'M DRESSED AND READY - WHAT NEXT?

You should then report to the team leader and get your nametag. If there is a particular job you wish to be assigned to, then you should let the team leader know. However, please note that most team leaders try to rotate members of their team through all assignments. The team leader will then assign you a position or duty, and if you are going to usher, you should have your flashlight ready (all volunteers working in the auditorium should have a flashlight in the event of an emergency). Be ready to accept any job that needs to be done, including ushering in the balcony.

If you are the first volunteer to arrive, please get the nametag box out and ready. They are usually located under the black skirt of the table next to the bar and closest to the stairs.

WHAT IF I'M NOT ASSIGNED TO USHER? WILL I GET TO SEE THE PERFORMANCE?

After your duties in the lobby are complete, you are welcome to go into the hall and enjoy the performance. You should ask the ushers if there are any available seats, or your team leader may have given you an additional assignment to position yourself by one of the exits. There are now jump seats available along the walls for volunteers. Volunteers are NOT to sit in the Opera Boxes. Use of the Opera Boxes is determined by FOH only.

Any volunteers in the auditorium during a performance should remember that they are not paying customers and therefore should respect the right of the theatre patrons who do pay. We should be as discreet as we can, taking care not to disturb the patrons.

Important points for all volunteers to remember, regardless of your assignment:

- coming and going from the hall should be limited, and only when there is an appropriate break in the performance;
- we should try not to block the view of any patrons and we should avoid passing in front of them;
- we should be quiet, and not be talking so that we disturb anyone close by;
- if you work the Balcony, you should be aware that the buttons on the sleeves of the jackets can clink on the brass railing, and should be careful to avoid this;

- do not flash your light in the air or in patron's face – this sometimes happens accidentally, so it is important to be mindful of where the flashlight beam is pointing. Also, it can be distracting to the performer and to the lighting technicians;
- we ask that you take your positions shortly after the Main doors have opened. It can be rather intimidating for patrons to encounter an army of maroon-jacketed individuals sitting in the lobby;
- in addition to your assigned duty, it is the responsibility of all volunteers to ensure that patrons encounter as little disturbance as possible while watching the show. You are encouraged to ask noisy patrons to be quiet, or to ask those using flash cameras to stop doing so. If you notice any of these things but are uncomfortable approaching the patron(s) yourself, please inform the FOH Manager of the situation and where it is located so it can be resolved as soon as possible;
- We ask those people working the coat check or a merchandise table to anticipate the time of intermission and the end of the show so that you can come out and set up a little ahead of the patrons' exiting. Our clients and patrons are greatly appreciative of this.

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY NAMETAG AND FLASHLIGHT WHEN IT'S ALL DONE?

After the performance, you will return your nametag to the table by the bar. Please put your nametag in the corresponding plastic envelope with your team name on it.

We are pleased to offer \$2.00 to those who pay the special events parking fee. Usually, the FOH Manager will ask for a show of hands of those requiring funds during the briefing session. However, sometimes we are hurried with unexpected details and cannot look after reimbursing right away. If this happens, please ask the FOH Manager for the money at the end of the performance.

If you would like an alcoholic beverage, the cash bar is available to you as is it to the public. We ask only that you complete your duties and remove your jacket and nametag before consuming alcohol on the premises unless otherwise indicated by the FOH Manager. Meanwhile, all volunteers working a show are welcome to a complimentary glass of juice, as available in the refrigerator in the staff room next to the coat check.

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO IF I USHER, OR TAKE TICKETS, ETC.?

The various duties for each position are described on the following pages. Please note that duties are subject to change. We have tried to cover most of the situations you may run into, but if something comes up, just do your best and then find the FOH Manager or one of the theatre staff.

TICKET TAKING

- Greet and welcome the patrons to the Theatre.
- Look to see that the tickets are for the appropriate show, time and/or date. If not, ask them kindly to step aside while you find the FOH Manager, who will help them resolve the situation.
- Tear the stub from the ticket and put it in the container for that purpose.
- Return the main portion of the ticket to the patron as this identifies their seat.
- Elderly or disabled patrons can be directed to the elevator at the end of the lobby. If their tickets are for the Orchestra, tell them to get off at floor number 2. Wheelchair patrons should be asked if they want assistance, and if so, get one of the other volunteers to help.
- Should anyone inquire about the hearing impaired system, direct them to the FOH Manager.
- After everyone is in, then you may take a position inside the theatre. You may be assigned to a particular exit, or you may be asked to help in the coat check after the performance.

PASSING OUT PROGRAMS

- This is usually done at the bottom of the first set of stairs.
- Normally there are enough programs for everyone, but on occasion you may be requested to limit their distribution, in which case you should ask people to share. On other occasions, the performers will sell their own programs, or they will hire the theatre to sell programs. In this instance, we may be asked to work a merchandise booth.
- You may suggest to those patrons wearing a coat that there is a coat check available down stairs at the end of the lobby. If someone has a large or questionable item, please recommend that they check it. If you receive any argument, alert the FOH Manager.
- Should a wheelchair patron enter the theatre, one of you should leave your position to assist them to the elevator and into the orchestra section of the theatre. Or, if the FOH Manager is handy you may ask her/him or escort the patron.
- After everyone is in, then you may take a position inside the theatre. You may be assigned to a particular exit, or you may be asked to help in the coat check after the performance.

COAT CHECK

- There is no charge for the coat check, but the tips help pay for annual volunteer meal, parking and other volunteer activities.
- The coat hangers are all numbered (in sequence) and the tag is on the hook. Give the tag to the patron, and place the coat on the proper hanger. You may have to move some of the racks around to make room, but you should try to keep the sequence in order to make it easier to distribute the coats at the end of the performance.
- After everyone is in, then you may take a position inside the theatre. You should be located near the main exits so you can get to the coat check easily at intermission and at the end of the performance.
- When distributing coats, place the tags in your pocket, and give the patrons their coats. This avoids delays, and with help it does not take long to return the tags to the proper hangers after everyone has received their coat.

USHERING AND GENERAL SEATING PLAN (see last page for seat map)

Seat numbering:

The seats are all numbered on the edge facing up when the seat is in its upright position. The numbers beginning on the north end (farthest from the main doors) starting at 1 and numbered upwards proceeding towards the main doors (House-left). Generally the lower numbers 1-10 are in the far section (House-right) 10-20 are in the centre section, and 20-up are in the near section (House-left).

Row numbering:

The rows are numbered on the arms of the end seats and are alphabetical starting near the stage either at **A** in the Orchestra or **AA** in the balcony and ascending up the alphabet the farther back you go.

Orchestra Section:

This is the proper name for the main floor section. Rows are A to R, with A-G in the section closest to the stage, and H-R in the section further back.

Balcony Section:

Rows in the balcony have double letters and are AA to OO. AA to FF are in the first or lower section of the balcony, and rows GG to OO are in the second or upper section.

Opera Boxes:

These boxes are reserved for patrons or companies who make a special donation to the Theatre. Please give this as a reason if anyone asks. Before the performance it is permissible to allow the curious to see what the view is like from the boxes, but only patrons with tickets should be

allowed to sit there. In some exceptional cases, usually requested by the show's promoter, you will be asked to re-seat those with Opera box tickets as the play is not properly viewable from those seats. The FOH Manager will tell you where they can be re-seated. If a patron has an Opera Box Ticket, it will be either designated as Opera-Orch. or Opera-Balc. It will then be designated as Left or Right meaning House-Left or House-Right (your right or left when you face the stage), the next designation is either 1 or 2, with 1 being the box closest to the stage and 2 the box behind the first.

Wheelchairs:

If patrons tell the box office that they will arrive in a wheelchair, arrangements are made to remove seats in row G in the Orchestra so that the wheelchair can be placed in the empty space. There are platforms placed on the floor in these spots to help support the chair. Some wheelchair patrons would rather and are able to be seated. In this case, you can normally store the wheelchair under one of the opera boxes, except for unusual circumstances. Please consult the FOH Manager in this event. After seating these patrons, the Front-of-House Manager should be notified where they are located in the event of an emergency.

Hearing Aids:

Please ask the FOH Manager about the system for the hearing impaired.

Ushering Duties:

- Prior to the performance, at least one volunteer should be at the main doors both in the Orchestra and the Balcony to ensure patrons do not enter the theatre until told it is alright to do so by the FOH Manager.
- When working as an usher, you are expected to show people to their seats. You should never stand and point. Also, you should always offer assistance or ask if you can show patrons to their seat instead of waiting for them to ask. In some instances when help is offered, it is refused, especially by patrons who are familiar with the Theatre. However, we should always offer.
- When ushering in the Balcony, patrons seated on the far side of the lower section can be directed to pass through the balcony lounge (if the lounge is open). This avoids climbing to the second level and then coming back down. Usually the balcony lounge opens for this purpose when people are seated into the upper balcony section.
- You should always be on the lookout for cameras and sound recording devices, unless the FOH Manager has advised that they be all right for that particular performance. Please check with the FOH Manager before each performance.
- Food and beverages, with the exception of bottled water, are strictly prohibited in the auditorium. These items should be politely confiscated at the door.

- If you notice any items such as umbrellas, purses, binoculars, programs, etc. are placed on the balcony ledge, please have the patron place them on the ground or in coat check.
- When the performance begins, volunteers should be posted in the following positions:

Orchestra:

- 2 at the main entrance
- 2 at the far exit
- 1 at each back exit

Balcony:

- 2 at the main entrance
- 2 at the far exit
- 1 at each of the emergency exits in the upper section

These positions should be maintained whenever practical. In the event of an emergency, you should ask the patrons nearest your position to use the exit by you. Because the upper balcony doors are emergency only, and the steps are fire-escape type grates, patrons with high-heels should be directed to either remove their footwear or, in inclement weather (winter), use one of the other exits where possible. You should stay until you are last out, and you should offer assistance at all times. Volunteers working the main entrance should, in an emergency, direct patrons to use the exit to Oak Park, which is just outside the auditorium, rather than to go through the lobby.

Sometimes temperature control is an issue in our theatre. Please do NOT open the upper balcony doors to cool down the balcony. We work in a large, older building, and the system does eventually kick in. If you have several and/or nasty complaints, alert the FOH Manager.

Latecomers will only be allowed to enter the auditorium at an appropriate time when there is a break in the performance, as directed by the FOH Manager. Where possible, they should be taken to the nearest empty seat, and they can occupy the correct seat after intermission.

At intermission, you should assist patrons in finding the rest rooms and the bar. The bar is open during the hour prior to house opening and then again during intermission. It is closed at all other times unless the client has specified otherwise. The Balcony Lounge bar is open when our audience count exceeds 600; please make patrons aware of this when they arrive. Once the initial crowd is out at intermission, others may leave their position as long as one or two volunteers stay by the main doors. Patrons cannot use the exit doors to go outside for a smoke break. They must use the front lobby doors.

Also during intermission, you may be one of two people assigned to stand at the bottom of the stairs by the stage. This is to prevent both staff and patrons from

going on or backstage. It is a professional courtesy extended to artists and is also a matter of security. Please politely refer any argument to FOH. If you are assigned to this position, you will take it up again at the end of the show and remain there until all patrons have left the house, or until FOH indicates that it is ok to go. If for some reason you cannot stay at your post for the required duration, it is very important that you inform your team leader so he/she can make sure the position is filled.

At the end of the show, you should remain behind to see that all patrons exit safely. Volunteers posted at the far exit in the Orchestra should see that these doors, which open into the parking lot, are held open. Please ask patrons to watch their step.

After everyone is gone, you should then check the seats for any items left behind. Programs and left items should be picked up, and if previously instructed, some programs are to be recycled. You do not have to pick up what would be considered garbage, such as Kleenex, gum, etc. Crash bars and locks have recently been added to the hall doors, both upstairs and down. These doors usually remain locked until ½ hour before the performance and are closed and locked when most or all patrons have left. For security and technical purposes, neither patrons nor volunteers are to come back into the hall without permission from FOH once the doors are closed and locked. Both volunteers and patrons are encouraged to use the Oak Park exit just outside the hall doors.

In summary:

- Program givers: please mention coat check is available.
- Coat check people: if possible during intermission stay around to help people to find the washroom.
- The Capitol Theatre has a no photography/no recording policy. This stands at all times unless otherwise informed by the FOH Manager. This is especially important during dance shows.
- NO SMOKING allowed in the building or between entrance doors. There is a substantial fine for those caught smoking in the building. Also, no food or drink allowed in the auditorium, with the exception of bottled water. Please be alert to this during intermission, making sure somebody is at the doors to watch for drinks and foods.
- Unless cleared by FOH, absolutely NO ONE is allowed backstage or on stage. Any argument should be referred directly to FOH.
- FOH exclusively controls the opening of the main doors.
- At intermission and after the show, do not open the doors until the big chandelier lights, or 'house lights' are up and the applause is over.
- It is very important that for the first 15 minutes of the show, one or two ushers stand by the doors in the balcony and orchestra level to sit latecomers. FOH will allow entry at the appropriate time. Tell people at the door where to sit as quietly as possible, unless it is a rock concert.

- Once you have been assigned a station, cover one of the emergency doors and sit as close to it as you can. Avoid bunching up. Also, please take your positions once the main doors are open.
- Should anyone enquire if the performers will present themselves after the show, ask them to enquire with you again during intermission or after the show, and verify with the FOH.
- Those assigned to stand at the foot of the stairs leading to the stage to discourage people from going on stage or backstage are to stay there for the duration of intermission and after the show until all patrons have left the hall. If for some reason you are unable to stay at your post, you must alert your team leader so these positions can be covered. Any argument from staff or patrons should be referred directly to FOH in the lobby.
- After the show please lend a hand picking up left over programs and inserts. This moves peoples quickly out of the auditorium.
- After the show, please lend a helping hand if you notice the coat check is busy.
- After the show, please return nametags to their box - do not leave them on the table.
- If you can't stay for the entire performance, inform your team leader before you leave.
- If ever there is a question that you are not sure of or feel uncomfortable answering, please inform the patron that you will return with an answer and come see the FOH on duty. We are more than happy to assist.

Thank you, and ENJOY!