





SHOW CHOIR STAGE SAFETY CHECKLIST



by Rick Roe

The phrase “break a leg” has been a long-standing tradition in the theatrical world. Some attribute the origin of this custom to John Wilkes Booth breaking his leg on that fateful evening at Ford’s Theatre.



Others say this phrase was said by understudies to the actors as they went on stage in hopes they would get their big chance at the lead parts. Even others attribute the custom to the bending of the leg to bow or curtsy in curtain calls thereby wishing them a performance that prompts numerous curtain calls.

Whatever the origin, the reality is that a broken leg or any other performance mishap for that matter is not a good thing. In another article on our blog, we talk about safety for staging and risers. This article covers how to set up trussing, wiring, lighting, costumes, props, and special effects in ways that keep performers safe.

Trussing

Trusses erected for lighting, microphones, or scenery must be properly secured with recommended anchoring devices like guide wires. Equipment should be added to the rigging from the outside in, while factoring in proper weight distribution. All equipment mounted on the trusses must have safety wire retention in the event of loosening. Before you hang anything, you should know your equipment's weight, truss, and anchor capacities.

Wiring

Lighting, monitors, microphones, and other electrical equipment should have cables secured to the floor with gaff



tape to eliminate potential trip hazards. Duct tape leaves a sticky residue and is not recommended. Securing potential hazards with gaff tape helps prevent trip hazards on the stage.

Lighting

Strobes and other dynamic lighting effects can dramatically add to the performance; these effects, however, can distract and visually impair performers and create hazards for missteps or falls. Lighting designers need to consider these possibilities while setting and adjusting lighting equipment. Also, make sure that your stage wings have sufficient lighting for performers when they're entering and exiting the stage.

Costumes

Sometimes, costumes are in styles that performers don't normally wear, particularly long flowing gowns and high heeled shoes. Multiple dress rehearsals help the performers feel at ease when wearing expensive and often fragile costumes. Costumes should be examined for trip hazards when they are being designed or chosen. Costumes should be inspected prior to every performance for loose hems, seams, or trim. Additionally, big-brimmed, floppy hats can potentially cause vision obstruction. When dancers are worried about head pieces falling, they can be distracted.

Props

As with costumes, the choirs need rehearsals with props until they're comfortable using them. Canes, parasols, and other props can trip up performers, whether they're amateurs or professionals. Performers should use the regular props in rehearsals until they feel familiar. Performers should always have plenty of practice with any new elements.

Special Effects

Fog, bubble machines, confetti, and other special effects are often used with Show Choir performances. As with lighting, special effects can be very dramatic but also pose safety hazards. Excessive moisture on the stage introduces slip



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hazards. Condensate collection pans under special effects generators will greatly reduce stage moisture and slippery surfaces. If you are considering using pyrotechnics, make sure you understand your fire code regulations. Always have professionals install and manage special effects elements to ensure that no incidents occur.

Conclusion

When setting up for performances, directors and stage managers should make sure to pay careful attention to every aspect of the performance, not just the stages and risers.

Lighting, costumes, props, and special effects can make your

production even better; just make sure you use them properly. When these recommendations are applied, you can proceed with peace of mind and continue the old traditions when saying, "Break a leg!" See additional articles at <https://performance.stageright.com/blog>

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