

# Volunteer Usher Guidebook

American Players Theatre’s volunteer ushers are an integral part of the APT experience and work with front-of-house staff on the welcoming, guidance, safety, and comfort of all patrons. At APT, we strive to ensure that each and every patron has an extraordinary experience, and our ushers are key to that effort. We ask for, and appreciate, your adherence to our policies, procedures, and protocols. They’re all designed to serve this agenda. Your hard work helps to keep everything running smoothly and ensures our patrons have the best possible experience.

## THANK YOU!

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*Please read this guidebook fully before signing your usher agreement letter.*

*We encourage volunteers to refer to it as needed throughout the season.*

# APT VALUES

How we treat each other MATTERS. How we work with each other MATTERS. How we make ART matters.

Over time, we've found some ideas that help us bring our best selves to our work at APT. They aren't the only ideas, and they may change over time. These ideas, today, seem to be our best expression of who we want to be.

We believe that EACH member of the APT community plays a vital role in creating a unique and personal experience for our audience.

We aim to be clear on APT's mission and how each of us contributes to that mission.

We work to make everyone feel welcome.

We believe that a rich diversity of people, ideas and experiences gives us strength.

We strive to create an environment of trust.

We treat each other with respect and kindness.

We depend on each other for clear, honest, and responsible communication.

We value the learning that comes from difficult conversations.

We listen to what is being said and to what's NOT being said.

We encourage each other to express ourselves. There is no question we can't ask.

We embrace individuality and personal strengths.

WE ENDEAVOR TO CREATE A SPACE WHERE PERSONAL AGENCY THRIVES.

We each take personal responsibility for the quality of our work environment and the work environment of others.

WE TAKE PRIDE IN OUR WORK & HOLD OURSELVES TO A HIGH STANDARD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT.

We find joy in challenging ourselves to do better.

WE RELY ON EACH OTHER TO ASPIRE TO THESE VALUES & FORGIVE EACH OTHER WHEN WE FALL SHORT.

WE BELIEVE THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO LEARN.

This is what we know to be true: The "magic" of APT doesn't just happen. It's hard work. And it's on purpose.

## Core Values

How we treat each other matters. How we work with each other matters. How we make art matters.

Over time, we've found some ideas that help us bring our best selves to our work at APT. They aren't the only ideas, and they may change over time. These ideas, today, seem to be our best expression of who we want to be.

- We believe that each member of the APT community plays a vital role in creating a unique and personal experience for our audience.
- We aim to be clear on APT's mission and how each of us contributes to that mission.
- We work to make everyone feel welcome.
- We believe that a rich diversity of people, ideas and experiences gives us strength.
- We strive to create an environment of trust.
- We treat each other with respect and kindness.
- We depend on each other for clear, honest and responsible communication.
- We value the learning that comes from difficult conversations.
- We listen to what is being said and to what's NOT being said.
- We encourage each other to express ourselves. There is no question we can't ask.
- We embrace individuality and personal strengths.
- We endeavor to create a space where personal agency thrives.
- We each take personal responsibility for the quality of our work environment and the work environment of others.
- We take pride in our work and hold ourselves to a high standard of accomplishment.
- We find joy in challenging ourselves to do better.
- We rely on each other to aspire to these values and forgive each other when we fall short.
- We believe that there is always more to learn.

This is what we know to be true: the “magic” of APT doesn't just happen. It's hard work. And it's on purpose.

## **Contact Information**

USHER EMAIL: [ushers@americanplayers.org](mailto:ushers@americanplayers.org)

Use this email to contact the House Manager. Emails to other staff or department accounts are not guaranteed to be forwarded to the House Manager.

HOUSE MANAGER OFFICE: 608-588-9204

Use this number to leave a message for the House Manager. If it's the day of your usher assignment, call the Day-Of Contact, listed below.

GOOGLE GROUP EMAIL: [apt-ushers@googlegroups.com](mailto:apt-ushers@googlegroups.com)

Use this email to post to the Google Group. You can also create a post, and browse other posts, directly in the Google Group.

DAY-OF CONTACT (Box Office): 608-588-2361

Please note: The Box Office will be the contact ONLY on the day of your show if you are late, or if you are unable to attend due to an emergency.

EMERGENCY DAY-OF CONTACT (Hill Information Booth): 608-588-9269

An emergency number for friends and family to reach ushers and patrons during shows.

## **Office Hours**

The House Manager's office hours vary greatly both during the season and in the off-season. For the fastest response, please contact the House Manager via the email listed above. You may also leave messages on the House Manager's voicemail and they will be returned as soon as possible.

## **Volunteer Usher Duties**

### **General Usher Requirements**

- Physical requirements may include carrying up to 15 pounds, walking up and down staircases, standing for at least 30 minutes, and the ability to read tickets.
- Ushers must be 15 years of age or older.
- Volunteer ushers must be comfortable interacting with the public in a welcoming manner.
- Ushers are expected to stay through the entire performance and complete all assigned tasks.
- APT reserves the right to appoint and terminate volunteer ushers if deemed necessary.

*We strive to make our volunteering opportunities accessible to everyone. If you require accommodations to be able to volunteer or have questions about opportunities, please contact us, so we can work together to accommodate you in this or another assignment.*

### **Aisles**

Aisle ushers stand at the top of the aisles and hand out programs, answer questions (or direct patrons to the info booth), keep glass bottles out of the theater, and guide patrons to their seats. If a conflict arises, such as duplicate seating, ushers are expected to alert the info booth or find the House Manager. At intermission, ushers stay visible in the lobby to answer any questions that arise and look out for glass bottles being carried into the theater.

### **Concessions**

The concessions stand usually needs help pre-show and/or during intermission to retrieve refrigerated items and pour hot drinks. A separate orientation is given for this immediately after the usher meeting each show. Concessions ushers will be appointed by the house manager and need to be able to follow directions, be quick on their feet, and work well in a team. Concessions ushers do not handle money.

### **Tickets**

Ticket ushers stand at the front door of the Touchstone Theater or, occasionally, at the top of the path of the Hill Theater to scan tickets, greet patrons, and direct them to the proper aisle. Please check date, time, and performance as thoroughly as possible, and most importantly verify the patron is at the correct theater (Touchstone vs Hill). When scanning tickets, ushers should politely direct the patron to the proper aisle as listed on their ticket. For example: “Good Evening! Let’s see... you’ll be going to Aisle Three today, which is one more aisle to the right. The 200s are on the left hand side. Enjoy the show, and don’t forget to turn off your cellphone!” Ticket ushers should have sharp eyesight for reading tickets.

### **Touchstone Stage Monitors**

For some shows in Touchstone, the House Manager may assign ushers to monitor the entrances to the stage. Ushers assigned to this duty should be able to be firmly polite with patrons.

**Following a performance, all ushers are expected to help gather lost items and litter.**

## **Volunteer Basics**

### **Covid**

Because APT is a fully vaccinated workplace, we will be requiring proof of vaccination for all ushers this year. COVID policies for patrons are under discussion, but at this point our policy will be as follows: Masks will be optional in the Hill Theatre and around the grounds, and no proof of vaccination is needed. In the Touchstone Theatre, masks and proof of vaccination/negative test WILL be required. As was the case last year, policies could change throughout the season. With that said, remember that vaccination will be required for ushers regardless of venue.

### **Attitude and Conduct**

Our volunteer ushers work very closely with our patrons and are expected to reflect APT's core values of patience and courtesy in their interactions with both staff and patrons.

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

It is vital that ushers arrive on time and ready to work. At the scheduled usher arrival time, the Assistant House Manager or House Manager will lead an important orientation regarding the performance. If an usher is late to this orientation, they may not be permitted to work.

If you are ill or have been a close contact of someone with COVID-19 at the time of your scheduled usher assignment, you must remain at home. Please contact the House Manager or Box Office as soon as possible.

For cancellations, contact the House Manager as soon as possible so the position can be filled. If an usher finds their own substitute, please contact the House Manager in advance.

### **Arrival Time**

Arrival time is one hour before show time AT the theater you'll be ushering in. Please note, from the parking lot, the Hill Theater is a 10-minute hike and Touchstone Theater is roughly a 5-minute walk. For example, if the show time is 7:30 PM, you should arrive at our parking lot no later than 6:20 PM for a Hill show and 6:25 PM for a Touchstone show. Ushers requiring a shuttle ride to the Hill Theater should meet the Shuttle Driver at the Shuttle Stop a half hour before they are scheduled to arrive.

### **Google Group**

The APT Usher Google Group is an online forum for ushers to connect with each other about ride shares, switching usher dates, or simply to discuss ideas related to ushering at APT. Any date switching via this forum needs to be communicated to the House Manager by phone or email in advance to become official. To be added to the Google Group, please email [ushers@americanplayers.com](mailto:ushers@americanplayers.com).

## **Dress code**

All volunteer ushers are required to wear the provided smock and nametag during the performance so as to be easily identifiable to both patrons and staff. Otherwise, ushers for the Hill Theater should dress comfortably for the weather. Please note that APT does not provide rain gear for volunteers, but ponchos are available to purchase in the Gift Shops. We recommend shoes that cover and protect toes, and are comfortable to hike in. Please refrain from wearing strong fragrances, as some of our patrons may be sensitive.

## **Storing and Securing Belongings**

Ushers may store belongings in assigned usher seats or in the Information Booth (Hill) or House Manager's office (Touchstone). Items stored with House Management cannot be accessed until after the performance. Cellphones must be turned off until the performance ends.

## **Usher Seating**

Seating options are at the discretion of the House Manager, and will be listed at the usher meeting before the performance. Ushers are expected to remain in assigned seating. Violation may result in usher termination.

## **Before the Show**

There is a lot of activity before the theater opens for seating, and ushers must stay out of the house while actors and technicians are present in the house or on stage. The House Manager or Assistant House Manager will let ushers know an appropriate time to set down their belongings. When seating begins, ushers are expected to be ready at their posts.

## **Intermission and Post-Show Requirements**

Please be respectful of our patrons during intermission and provide assistance as needed. After the show, all ushers are expected to help pick up any discarded items in the house before leaving.

## **Food and Beverage**

Ushers may consume food and beverage until patrons arrive. All food and drink consumption must cease while greeting and assisting patrons. **Consuming alcohol while ushering is not permitted.**

## **Working with the House Managers**

The House Manager or Assistant House Manager will alert ushers when the house is about to open and when they may be seated. Should any issues or questions arise during the ushering shift, ushers are encouraged to seek out the House Manager or Assistant House Manager. At the end of the show, please do not leave without checking in with the House Manager or Assistant House Manager.

## **Weather**

The occurrence of inclement weather is when we need our ushers most! Please keep in mind that we rarely cancel a performance ahead of time. While we assume ushers will make every effort to arrive for their scheduled shift, we fully expect volunteers to put their safety first regarding the weather.

## **Usher Survey**

Volunteer feedback is important to us, so all ushers with a valid email address will receive an usher survey at the end of the season. However, if a volunteer has any comments, ideas, or issues at any time during the season, please contact the House Manager at [ushers@americanplayers.org](mailto:ushers@americanplayers.org).

## **Termination of Usher Status**

Although we hate to do it, if a volunteer fails to attend two usher assignments with no prior warning and/or fails to uphold the rules and values presented in this handbook, they will no longer be allowed to usher.

## **House Rules and Policies**

*House Rules are APT's theater policies for patrons.*

### **No Carry-ins**

Carry-ins of food and drink are not allowed in the theater, with the exception of water bottles. Drinks purchased at the concession stand may be brought into the seating area Up the Hill and in Touchstone, but no glass bottles are allowed. Drinks in glass bottles must be poured into a cup before entering the theater. Cups are located at Concessions or the Hill Information Booth.

### **No Video Cameras, Still Cameras or Recording Devices of Any Kind**

Cameras and other recording devices are not allowed in the theater during the performance. If the stage is empty, patrons may take a picture of the bare set. If you see someone taking pictures or recording during the performance or curtain call, note their location as specifically as possible and inform the House Manager immediately.

### **Late Seating**

Patrons who arrive late will be seated at an appropriate interval during the performance at the discretion of the House Manager.

### **Aisles Must Remain Clear at All Times**

Please keep the aisles clear, as they will be used by our actors. Wheelchairs, crutches, bags, etc. must be kept under the seat or in designated areas.

## **No Infants and Children Under the Age of Six at Performances**

If you do encounter an infant or small child, please note their location and inform the House Manager immediately.

## **No Pets**

No pets of any kind (with the exception of service dogs) are allowed on the grounds or in the theaters. If you encounter a non-service animal, please note their location and inform the House Manager immediately.

## **No Smoking**

There is absolutely no smoking in either theater. If you see someone smoking outside the designated area, please inform the House Manager or kindly direct the patron to the designated smoking areas.

## **Weather**

In the event of rain, every effort will be made to complete the performance, including playing in light rain. If the show is held due to weather, the decision to play or cancel will be made within 45 minutes following the rain hold. If the show is canceled before Act I is complete, patrons may receive a refund or tickets for another performance in the current season (subject to availability). If canceled after Act I is complete, there are no refunds but patrons may exchange tickets for another performance in the current season (subject to availability).

## **Shuttle**

Shuttles to theaters begin 45 minutes prior to show time and stop 10 minutes before the performance. Patrons should be at the shuttle stop no later than 30 minutes before the performance is scheduled to begin. Service begins again at the end of the show. If a patron needs assistance getting down the Hill before the show is over, please locate the House Manager as soon as possible. Ushers requiring a ride to the Hill Theater via shuttle should inform the House Manager in advance, and meet House Staff at the shuttle stop a half hour before usher call time.

## **Wheelchair Seating**

All seats in Row F Sections 5 and 6 as well as seats Row R 319-314 (Section 3) and Row Q 215-218 of the Hill Theater, and select seats in Row E in the Touchstone Theater, are wheelchair accessible. This seating can be pre-arranged with the Box Office.

## **Assisted Listening Devices**

Assisted listening devices are available in both theaters. Please direct patrons to the Information Booth in the Hill Theater or the House Manager in the Touchstone to acquire the device. A T-coil loop system has been installed in both theaters and requires no additional devices for patrons with telecoil fitted hearing aids and cochlear implants. Further questions can be answered at the Information Booth.

## **Emergency Procedures**

### **In General**

- In the event of an announcement to evacuate the theater, volunteers should do so—but assist any patrons with mobility impairments if needed.
- In the event of an announcement indicating an unexpected intermission or temporary hold of the performance, volunteers should return to their posts.
- If a patron needs medical assistance or first aid, volunteers should alert a member of House Staff immediately.
- If a patron disturbs the performance in a manner that requires attention, volunteers should find the House Manager immediately.
- In all instances, volunteer ushers should remain calm and follow the announcements and House Manager’s instructions, placing their own safety first.
- If a volunteer feels they are in a life-threatening situation, they should absolutely remove themselves from that situation.
- Ushers are expected to assist patrons, especially patrons with mobility issues, in exiting the theater. Ushers should make sure to return walkers and wheelchairs to patrons.
- Ushers should not leave the theater without signing out with the House Manager or Assistant House Manager, unless their personal safety is at issue.
- When in doubt, volunteers should return to the Information Booth (Uphill) or House Management Office (Touchstone) for instructions.
- It is always appreciated when volunteers with first-aid or other medical training notify the House Manager or Assistant House Manager when they check in, or via email prior to their first shift.
- First-aid kits, an AED, and a wheelchair are available in both theaters.

### **Minor Accidents and Falls**

Ushers should stay with the injured person and send another usher—or patron, if necessary—to get the House Manager. If the patron insists that they do not need assistance but appears injured, note the patron’s appearance and where the patron is sitting, and report the incident to the House Manager immediately. Should a patron request a bandage or ice pack, those items are available from the House Manager, or at the Information Booth in the Hill Theater.

APT does not give out any over-the-counter medications, but the Gift Shop does have a limited selection for purchase.

## **Medical Emergency**

In case of heart attack, stroke, seizure, or other medical emergency, notify the House Manager immediately. If it is during the performance, an announcement will be made to hold the performance and either clear the house, or ask patrons to remain in their seats. If possible, the House Manager will move the person either to the lobby, or, if the situation warrants, into the Gift Shop. Volunteer ushers are expected to meet a member of House Staff at the Information Booth and await instruction from House Staff.

## **Tornado Warning**

In the event of a tornado warning, an announcement will be made with shelter directions. Ushers should also take shelter in adherence to the announcement, helping any patrons in need along the way. When the warning is over, an “all clear” announcement will be made. In Touchstone, the audience and staff remain inside the theater.

## **Rain**

In the event of a rain delay, an announcement will be made. Ushers may find shelter during the hold, but please assist any patrons with mobility impairments if needed and, if possible, report to the Information Booth for further instruction. In the event of resuming the show, ushers are expected to report back to their posts. House Staff will have paper towels ready for ushers to pass out to reseating patrons. If the show is cancelled, rained-out ushers will receive a ticket voucher to a different performance date. The House Manager will send out an email to affected ushers to confirm.

## **AMERICAN PLAYERS THEATRE’S POLICY and PROCEDURE on HARASSMENT**

APT is committed to providing a work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment because of age, creed, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, gender identity/expression, disability, veteran status, genetic information, or pregnancy.

### Definition of Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual or romantic advances, requests for sexual favors, an offensive overall environment, including the use of vulgar language, and offensive jokes, and other conduct of a sexual nature when

- Submission is in any way made a condition of employment, training opportunities or advancement
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis of any employment related decisions
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment

APT definition of sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, or taunting about a person's body, attire, gender, or sexual orientation
- Any unwanted touching or physical contact
- Unwelcome inquiries or comments about a person's sex life or sexual preference
- Leering or suggestive or insulting sounds or gestures
- Inappropriate comments about clothing, physical characteristics, or activities
- Display or transmission of materials, articles, or graffiti that is sexually oriented
- Requests or demands for sexual favors which include, or strongly imply, promises of rewards for complying or punishment for refusal

Bias-related harassment or discrimination can take many forms including, but not limited to, the following:

- Hostile, intimidating, offensive or inflammatory behavior
- Physical contact
- Inappropriate and biased verbal or written statements
- Jokes, pictures, objects
- Unequal application of policies and procedures, denial or obstruction of access to services
- Any other bias-related act or incident that substantially or unreasonably interferes with an individual's work.

Because people have different tolerances when it comes to feeling harassed, we believe that complaints are best evaluated from the point of view of the person making the complaint.

Retaliation:

APT will not tolerate any form of retaliation against individuals who in good faith report alleged violations of this policy, or who cooperate with APT's investigation of such reports, even if the reports do not reveal any wrongdoing. Any retaliation is subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal.

Reporting Harassment:

Harassment may be reported to any of the following staff at APT:

- Your Direct Supervisor
- Your Equity Stage Manager
- Managing Director (Carrie Van Hallgren)
- Artistic Director (Brenda DeVita)
- Production Manager (Michael Broh)
- Director of Communications (Sara Young)
- Operations Manager (Cari Stebbins)
- Controller (Jon Novak)

## Two Types of Complaints and How to Report Them

Two levels of complaints and their resolution paths are outlined below. Although examples are provided, the nature of the complaint itself does not dictate the method by which it is addressed. The person bringing the complaint chooses the path to resolution that feels right to them.

### 1. Informal Complaint

The goal of an informal complaint is to attempt to resolve an issue that is acceptable to both the complainant and the respondent through mediation. APT's Managing Director or designee will attempt to facilitate a mutually acceptable resolution between the two parties. This process involves as few people as necessary in the process, with each step being clearly discussed with the complainant and respondent.

Example: Alma (respondent) does an impersonation of an Indian character from a TV show, mimicking her accent and gestures. Alfred (complainant) is uncomfortable, and offended by this behavior and has asked her to stop, yet the behavior continues. Alfred wants APT's help in remedying the situation but does not feel a full investigation is warranted.

#### Reporting Steps for an Informal Complaint

STEP ONE: Alfred should document (in writing or oral recording) what happened and talk with a staff member identified in the list in this policy.

STEP TWO: The person to whom this complaint is reported will submit this complaint to the Managing Director.

STEP THREE: The Managing Director and, if necessary or appropriate, Artistic Director, will meet with Alfred in a safe environment to discuss the events. This meeting is to determine how best to address the complaint in a way that satisfies Alfred's desire of making the behavior stop and for him to best be able to do his work.

STEP FOUR: The Managing Director and, if necessary or appropriate, the Artistic Director, will meet with Alma in a safe environment to discuss the events.

STEP FIVE: Should additional discussion be necessary, meetings will be scheduled by the Managing Director. This could include meetings with either party, their supervisors or additional senior staff.

STEP SIX: A course of action is determined and communicated to both parties. The entire process will be documented in writing along the way.

An informal complaint may become a formal complaint at any point in the process if Alfred chooses, or if the Managing Director deems it necessary.

## 2. Formal Complaint

The filing of a formal complaint will result in the commencement of a thorough investigation into whether APT's Harassment Policy has been violated.

Example: Robin is Quinn's supervisor. Robin has asked Quinn on a date, Quinn did not accept. Robin continues to pursue a romantic relationship with Quinn, and jokes that they would promote Quinn if Quinn would consent to sex with them. Quinn believes that this behavior is sexual harassment and decides to bring a formal complaint against Robin. In this case, Quinn chooses a full investigation which could result in disciplinary action.

### Reporting Steps for a Formal Complaint

STEP ONE: Quinn should document what happened (in writing or in an oral recording) and talk with their supervisor or an APT staff member identified in the list in this policy.

STEP TWO: The person to whom this complaint was reported will submit this complaint to the Managing Director.

STEP THREE: The Managing Director and, if necessary or appropriate, Artistic Director, will meet with Quinn in a safe environment to discuss the complaint.

STEP FOUR: The Managing Director and, if necessary or appropriate, the Artistic Director, will meet with the person against whom the complaints/reports are brought, Robin, in this case. This meeting is also in a safe environment.

STEP FIVE: The Managing Director will conduct an investigation into the complaint. The investigation may include speaking with other staff members.

STEP SIX: An action plan will be prepared by the Managing Director and communicated to both parties. The Managing Director and Artistic Director will report incidents and outcomes to the Governance Committee of the Board of Directors. In some cases, the Board may be required to approve or be involved in the process if further action is warranted. The process may include APT working with its legal counsel.

NOTE: Violation of APT's harassment policy is grounds for disciplinary action and/or termination.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, and board members. Complaints against a board member or volunteer may be brought directly to the Managing Director.

*This revised Harassment Policy was approved by the APT Board of Directors in May 2021.*

**Thank you for your interest in assisting American Players Theatre as an usher.  
We look forward to working with you!**