

Volunteer Usher Guidebook

American Players Theatre’s volunteer ushers are an integral part of the APT experience and work with the 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.



Finding the right words to talk about our values is hard. We tried did our best here, but wanted to say that it's not the words themselves that are important (yep, kind of ironic given we're all about words), it's the ACTIONS behind them.

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

- We WORK TO MAKE EVERYONE FEEL WELCOME.
- We aim to be clear on APT's purpose and each of our roles in that purpose.
- We Strive to create an environment of trust.
- We depend on each other for honest and responsible communication.
- We encourage people to express themselves. There is no question you can't ask.
 - We Listen. (to what is being said and to what's NOT being said.)
 - WE TREAT EACH OTHER WITH RESPECT. MANNERS MATTER.
- We take personal responsibility for the quality of our own work experience as well as the work experiences of others.
 - We foster individuality and personal strengths.
 - We TAKE PRIDE IN OUR WORK and HOLD OURSELVES TO A HIGH STANDARD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT.
 - We rely on each other to live up to these aspirations and forgive each other when we fall short.
- We CELEBRATE IN raising the bar.
 - Delight in
Revel in
set off on

We've been told many times there's something "magical" about this place. So this is our sincere attempt, as awkward as it may be, to write down what we know to be true. The "magic" of APT doesn't just happen. It's hard work. And it's on purpose.

"THEATRE IS A SCHOOL WHERE WE ARE NEVER DONE WITH LEARNING."

Core Values

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- We strive to create an environment of trust.
- We depend on each other for honest and responsible communication.
- We encourage people to express themselves. There is no question you can't ask.
- We listen (to what is being said and what's NOT ~~being said~~).
- We treat each other with respect. Manners matter.
- We take personal responsibility for the quality of our own work experience as well as contribute to the work experiences of others.
- We foster individuality and personal strengths.
- We take pride in our work and hold ourselves to a high standard of accomplishment
- We rely on each other to live up to these aspirations and forgive each other when we fall short.
- We celebrate / get off on / revel in / delight in raising the bar.

We've been told many times there's something "magical" about this place. So this is our sincere attempt, as awkward as it may be, to write down what we know to be true. The "magic" of APT doesn't just happen. It's hard work. And it's on purpose.

"Theatre is a school where we are never done with learning"

Contact Information

USHER E-MAIL: 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 E-MAIL: 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 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 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 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 the largest number of people possible. If you have accessibility requirements that you aren't sure could be accommodated, 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 out, 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 direction, 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 tear 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 tearing 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 200's 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

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. Ushers

Attendance and Punctuality

It is vital that ushers arrive on time and ready to work. At the usher call-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.

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.

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 e-mail in advance to become official. To be added to the Google Group, please email ushers@americanplayers.com.

Arrival Time

Arrival time is one hour before show time. For example, if the show time is 7:30 PM, ushers are expected no later than 6:30 PM. Please note, from the parking lot the Hill Theater is a 10-minute hike and Touchstone Theater is roughly a 5-minute walk. Ushers requiring a shuttle ride to the Hill Theater should meet the Shuttle Driver at the Shuttle Stop a half hour before call time.

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

Standard usher seats for the Hill Theater are Row Q Seats 201 through 206, and Row Q Seats 610 through 615. Any additional 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

APT ushers are required to wear their usher smocks so that both patrons and House Staff can locate them as needed. 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 e-mail address will receive an usher survey after their first ushering shift. However, if a volunteer has any comments, ideas, or issues at any time during the season, please contact the House Manager via ushers@americanplayers.org.

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.

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

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 in 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. In the Hill Theater, a loop system has been installed 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.

APT's Sexual Harassment Policy

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

Because people have different tolerances, APT defines conduct as unwelcome when the person subjected to the offensive behavior considers it unwelcome. APT defines sexual harassment to include, but not be 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

Reporting Sexual Harassment

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

The House Manager

Operations Manager (Cari Stebbins)

Managing Director (Carrie Van Hallgren)

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 it is addressed. The person raising 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 reach a resolution to an issue that is acceptable to both the complainant and the respondent through mediation. APT's Managing Director or designate will attempt to facilitate a mutually acceptable resolution between the two parties. This process involves as few people as necessary in the conversation, with each step being clearly discussed with the complainant and respondent.

Example: Alma (respondent) gives her fellow staff members hugs and kisses on the cheek on a regular basis. Alfred (complainant) does not want to be hugged or kissed and has done his best to communicate this to Alma, yet the behavior continues. He feels uncomfortable and this is affecting his work. In this case, 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 desired, 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 desired goal 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 desired, 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: Actions are 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 wishes, 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 Sexual 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 wishes for a full investigation which might result in disciplinary action.

Reporting Steps for a Formal Complaint

STEP ONE: Quinn should document (in writing or oral recording) what happened and talk with their supervisor or an APT senior 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 desired, Artistic Director, will meet with Quinn in a safe environment to discuss the complaint.

STEP FOUR: The Managing Director and, if necessary or desired, 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 this 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 needed.

Violation of APT's sexual 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.

Thank you for your interest in assisting American Players Theatre as an usher.

We look forward to working with you!