

## A WELCOME AND REQUEST TO ALL STAGE MANAGERS

This letter is an introduction to your responsibilities as stage managers regarding communication with the properties department. You may have already been informed that here at the IU department of Theater, Drama, & Contemporary Dance, the props masters are responsible for the acquisition of all rehearsal props. With this in mind, it is understood that certain props are unique and/or very expensive and must be made or purchased. When the real thing (that is to say, the actual performance prop) is required in rehearsals ASAP, requests for priority should be communicated as soon as this is known. Frequently, performance props will be made available for rehearsals as soon as they are obtained, but often fragile or costly items may not be accessible for use until the beginning of technical rehearsals.

Many rehearsal props can be obtained from Property Storage. But the Prop Supervisor will be pulling all rehearsal props until the Prop Master assumes control of the show. It is your responsibility to take care of the borrowed items while they are in your possession. Occasionally, a burst of zealous energy occurs during rehearsals and something gets broken. PLEASE let me know about this in the rehearsal report so I can replace the item if necessary (particularly because the item may have been requested in advance for a future production).

When you make prop requests in rehearsal reports, please be sure to be as specific as you can about the request. For example, if you ask for "a few chartreuse-colored rolls of widgets which light up, smoke and make noises like a bear in heat," it's helpful to know:

- How many exactly? (If you don't know, it's okay to say so but be sure to give an estimate or a range)
- Which character in the show do they belong to? (The hero's roll of widgets probably looks different than the villain's)
- Does it need to be light enough to carry?
- Does it have to fit into a drawer later on? Which drawer?
- Does it get thrown around?
- Do you need a mock-up of this ASAP because the actor using it might be allergic to the color chartreuse?

Hopefully, you get the idea... Also, noting the scene and page number when the prop makes its first entrance is helpful so that the ever-evolving props list can be kept in some kind of coherent order. If there are needs which are vague in terms of specifics, please help those of us who are finding, building, and shopping for the props to know best what you'd like. For example if you request "glasses," are you talking about something to drink out of or spectacles? What's being drunk out of them? -- martini glasses will be very different than water glasses. Is there a specific color that would be best or does it even matter? Do you really mean "mug" when you say glasses? It's perfectly acceptable to make a request without having the complete information on hand. For example, you might say "We'd like to try using a glass of some kind of juice in this particular scene, but we're not sure if actor X will ever drink out of it and we might cut it after we try it. We'll let you know."

If you're using food in your show which is eaten onstage, the props list will typically note what we're planning on providing you with. For example, if the script calls for "gruel," you might see under a notes section "cold oatmeal for gruel" listed. "Whiskey" might really be tea. These sorts of decisions are made as early as possible in order for you to determine if any of the

actors involved in the scene have a food allergy or valid reason for needing another alternative. There are forms to be filled out to help determine allergies or preferences from your actors on food related items. If your show has cooked food which must be prepared on a nightly basis, a member of your run crew (under your supervision) will be responsible for making it. All food will be provided by and replenished by the Prop Master and must be notified of such replenishment several days before you run out.

Items which fall into an uncertain category between props and other departments – handkerchiefs and backpacks, for example – (is it a costume piece or a prop?) should be listed under both departments in the rehearsal report with “See Costumes, note #5” so we can figure out who will take responsibility for it.

Lastly, we work on the props list in no specific order. If there are items you require sooner rather than later, please say so in the rehearsal reports so that we can prioritize. For example, “We’re doing a run through on the 25<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. in the Wells Metz and we’d really like to try the exploding bullhorn which showers confetti so we can block the sequence appropriately,” conveys much more information (and more tactfully) than, “We need the bullhorn for tomorrow’s rehearsal.” Don’t be afraid to follow up with a phone call, or to make sure that what you wrote was clearly understood.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email.

Dan Tracy  
Properties / Paint Supervisor  
[djtracy@indiana.edu](mailto:djtracy@indiana.edu)  
812-856-4596 office  
734-634-7565 cell

## FYI on Prop Procedures

- Prop Supervisor or Graduate Prop Master will pull all rehearsal props that are known and put them in a road box, labeled, locked, and in or outside the correct rehearsal room before rehearsals begin.
- Prop Masters are the keepers of the list. This means that all adds and cuts must be noted in a rehearsal report and the Prop Master will make the corrections to the prop list.
- The Prop List will live on IU Box and is updated at the convenience of the Prop Master
- Prop Lists will now have the same format for every show and have a numbered system to refer to an individual prop. ie: A furniture prop like a sofa will be called sofa and have a number like F11101 (**F**urniture / Act **1** / Scene **1** / page **10** / prop **1**). This sort of stamps the item uniquely and allows us (if only given the number) to know a lot about this prop –this alleviates semantic problems.
- All prop road boxes, both in the rehearsal room and backstage and in the prop shop, must be locked at all times.
- Valuables, smokes, guns, pyro, etc.. must be double locked. So a locked box or bag within the locked cabinet.
- All road boxes will be labeled outside with the show name and inside with what props are on which shelf. These labels inside can move around, but there must always be a label for each prop. (regardless of whether it lives in the cabinet or on a table for the show) We are labeling it for the prop's "home" spot.
- When a show moves to the theater for first rehearsal on stage, the stage manager should move the prop rehearsal road box down the night prior.
- There should be a scheduled time where prop check-in can be observed by the director, stage manager, choreographer, and prop master. It should be the week prior to tech and maybe early in the week if changes need to be made
- Stage managers should send out their prop tracking, prop list, running sheets, and pre-set lists to the Prop Master and Prop Supervisor no later than the Wednesday prior to First Tech.
  - This allows for a double check system to the prop list, gives us an understanding on how props are being moved about in a show, allows a double check on pre-set lists prior to handing it to crew, gives us information on how to label and pre-set our road box.
- The Stage managers should stop by the Prop Supervisors Office to see me for a brief introduction and a discussion about the show before we get too far into rehearsals.
- The Stage manager running the backstage crew should meet with the prop master prior to First Tech to have a conversation about the backstage setup, paperwork, and run crew.