1. **Ways To Be the Actor Everyone Wants to Work With**

*By Adriana Nocco*

As a person who has been performing throughout most of her life thus far, I have witnessed many fellow performers act in a disrespectful manner (sometimes unintentionally) during rehearsal processes I’ve been a part of, and even during performances themselves. (Not to say that actors are the only people I believe are capable of being disrespectful or that actors are the only people I have witnessed being disrespectful. I’ve just witnessed them most often since most of my experience within the theatrical world has involved working directly with actors.) I myself, as an actress, have also made some foolish, disrespectful mistakes in past rehearsals and performances that I now regret immensely. I especially regretted having made those mistakes when I made my directorial debut last year at college and experienced firsthand how blatantly disrespectful actors could be/can be perceived to be. Even though actors are volunteers, we are expected to demonstrate professional ethics and work habits. If these ethics and habits are not demonstrated, not only do one’s chances of being cast dramatically decrease but also people simply do not wish to associate with them or support them in any of their theatrical endeavors. Therefore, I have compiled a sassy and sarcastic yet serious list of what I believe to be respectful “rehearsal/performance protocol” for actors.

Rehearsal/Performance Protocol

1. Rehearsals start at EXACTLY the time specified on the schedule! PLEASE be attentive and ready to work at call time, which means do everything you need to do ahead of time BEFOREHAND

2. Turn off your phone and your mouth unless you are granted permission to use either of those things or they are 100% necessary. They are distracting, they prevent you and your fellow actors from hearing important notes or instructions, and they slow down the rehearsal process entirely. Also, please keep them turned off backstage during performances. (One might think that goes without saying. Apparently not.)

3. As soon as you know you cannot attend a rehearsal, will be arriving later than call time, etc., you must immediately contact the stage manager. If you regularly fail to do so, a responsible actor will replace you. Yes, it is that serious.

4. No guests at rehearsals unless you have informed the director about them ahead of time. Often, they prove to be utterly distracting.

5. PLEASE DO NOT BRING OBNOXIOUS FOODS TO REHEARSAL.
\*Note: definition of “obnoxious” = smelly, sticky, and/or loud to open, like a pungent tuna salad sandwich or a bag of Nacho Cheese Doritos (these are my personal favorite chips, but WE ALL SUFFER FOR OUR ART, PEOPLE!)

6. There is no better way to instantaneously bring a show to a halt than by spilling Throat Coat all over your costume, the props table, and everything on the props table. ABSOLUTELY NO FOOD OR DRINK BACKSTAGE DURING PERFORMANCES!

7. ALL LINES/SONGS MUST BE MEMORIZED BY THE DATE ON WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO BE OFF-BOOK. I have worked with actors who have literally tried to step onstage with their scripts during dress rehearsal after having put off memorization throughout the process because “it’s not a big deal.” This is a gigantic pain and slap in the face in the eyes of everyone else involved with the production and hinders literally everything.

8. The way to ask for a cue when you drop a line is by saying "Line." Simple enough. Do not say, “Um, I know this one,” “I totally had this last night when I was practicing,” “I’m so sorry, give me one second,” or “I’m just so off today, my throat hurts and I think I might have nodes and I’m going to go on vocal rest forever starting tomorrow.” Just. Say. Line. Above all, keep character, keep it moving, and stay in the scene!

9. Every time you receive a note, write it down and apply it to your work. It is exceedingly frustrating for directors to act like broken records when it is time for notes because you were too lazy to commit your notes to memory the first time they were given. It is also exceedingly frustrating for your fellow performers who have come prepared because your laziness slows down the rehearsal process significantly. And no one cares about how wonderful your memory supposedly is. No one feels like risking the possibility of jeopardizing the quality of the show just so you can try to prove a point.

10. If you have a problem with another actor, member of the production team, or anyone/anything that could be getting in the way of your having a successful rehearsal process, talk to the stage manager or director. They will keep things confidential and help in any way they can/see fit. Do not post passive-aggressive social media statuses that you know will pop up on everyone’s News Feed.

11. Don’t give other actors notes, and don’t accept notes from other actors. The ONLY people who should be giving notes are the director, assistant director, and stage manager. You are a cast member, same as them, and deserve respect, too; behavior that is both condescending and undermines authority figures within the production should not be tolerated.

12. Wear the costume assigned to you unless it is choking you to death or has spontaneously caught fire. Your personal opinion of it does not matter.

13. During performance weekends, THE. SHOW. IS. YOUR. LIFE. YOU LIVE AND BREATHE IT. Additionally, being always present during tech week is non-negotiable unless there is a rare circumstance that the production team was informed about WAY in advance or a life-altering emergency.

14. Tech rehearsals can be grueling, so be patient while the crew fine-tunes cues and equipment. Give them the respect they deserve, pay attention, stay quiet, and be ready for instructions as they move from scene to scene. Just because a specific part of the process might not directly involve you does not mean it should be treated with disrespect, not to mention the fact that the crew’s work WILL directly affect you later.

15. The members of your show’s backstage team are beautiful, wonderful gods. Remember that. And don’t forget to thank the stage manager when they give you a call time (“15 minutes!” “Thank you 15!”). They MUST hear a “thank you” to know that you have heard the call and are ready to go.

16. NEVER touch someone else’s prop unless specifically instructed to do so, and DO NOT BRING PROPS HOME WITH YOU. The props master must know where every prop is always.

17. Unless you must improvise in each situation or improvisation is part of your show, don’t ad-lib. The show is written the way it is for a reason. Also, do not spontaneously decide that you are going to do a prank show, and throw everyone’s hard work out the window. The words of the writer(s) should never be messed with, and neither should the vision of your director.

18. If the production team tells you that actors’ attendance and assistance at strike is mandatory, then actors’ attendance and assistance at strike are mandatory. It is simple. It is not optional. It does not mean that you are excused from strike. It does not mean that strike is only mandatory for people who have fewer lines than you do (yes, I’ve encountered dreadful people with this sort of superiority complex). It is mandatory for EVERYONE, so get with the program.

19. Always give 110% and keep your focus, it is your time to shine.

20. Always stay positive, patient, and respectful of everyone you work with: the staff, the crew, the directors, the designers, the other actors, and yourself! If you don’t, you simply will not get cast again in the future, and no one will bother to work with you. The theatre world is chock-full of talent and is also rather small, so people WILL remember your antics.