



**Handbook**

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**CONGRATULATIONS!** You have joined a prestigious opera company with a reputation for world-class productions and excellence. Following are the guidelines for the San Francisco Opera Supernumeraries.

### **WHAT IS A SUPERNUMERARY?**

A supernumerary or “Super” is a nonsinging actor (extra), often called a “spearcarrier,” who typically appears in opera. As a supernumerary volunteer you are a valued member of the Opera Company, which consists of many talented artists. Our cooperation is an important part of the Opera's organization; with that in mind, it is essential for us to maintain a proper and professional manner at all times and to abide by the rules.

### **THE SUPER COORDINAOR**

The Super Coordinator is a Company staff member who is responsible for casting the Super roles. Our present Super Coordinator is April Busch; her email is **ABusch@sfoopera.com**, and her phone number is **415) 565-6481**.

Most productions will have a Production Super captain (PSC). The PSC is an experienced Super who is familiar with the Company staff, procedures, and policies. The PSC will be your primary contact with the production team. Some of the PSC duties include the following:

- Acting as liaison between the Supers and the Company.
- Providing Supers with up-to-date rehearsal and performance schedules.
- Maintaining the sign-in procedures, and making certain that each Super has, or can find a copy of the *Handbook*.
- Collecting and maintaining emergency contact information for each Super in the show.

Remember, your first contact should always be the PSC, not the Super Coordinator!

### **WEB SITE**

The Supers maintain a Web site called *The Spearhead* at [spearheadnews.com](http://spearheadnews.com), which features news, casting updates, rehearsal schedules, photos and interviews.

If you are in a production, you should check your email daily for rehearsal schedule updates.

## **CASTING PROCESS**

The Super Coordinator, working in conjunction with the costume shop and other opera staff, makes the preliminary casting choices for each production.

Afterward, the stage director or assistant director (AD) makes further casting decisions based on the director's artistic vision; in some cases, the director may overrule casting decisions made by the staff. The stage director's decision is final.

The primary criterion for many shows is often costume size. Note that having performed a role in a previous production of an opera is no guarantee that you will have that role again.

The schedule of casting decision dates will be posted on the Auditions section of our Web site. Again, if you cannot commit to EVERY rehearsal and performance, it is your ethical responsibility to so inform the Super Coordinator immediately upon receiving an invitation to be in a production. Then it will be decided if that is problematic.

## **COSTUME FITTING**

After you have been cast in a show, you will be asked to make an appointment for a costume fitting. The appointment will be arranged by the Super Coordinator. It is important to honor your scheduled time; if you find yourself running late or need to reschedule, call the Super Coordinator.

The costume shop is located at 170 Ninth Street, between Mission and Howard. Ninth is a Tow-Away zone from 4 to 6 p.m. The Civic Center BART Station is two blocks away.

Please show up for your appointed time only. Bring no guests or children. Also note that we have been requested to ask that you use good personal hygiene and wear appropriate undergarments. Wear NO perfumes or colognes.

## **SCHEDULES**

Rehearsals are held in the Opera House, Zellerbach Rehearsal Hall (inside Davies Hall), and other locations around the city. You will be given a preliminary rehearsal schedule with their dates, times, and locations.

It is mandatory that you be present for *all* rehearsals and performances for which you are called, unless you have been officially excused in advance. Your absence from just one rehearsal may cause production delays; it is your responsibility to remember your staging and any staging changes.

In case of illness, emergency, or unavoidable lateness, call your PSC as soon as possible! You will be given the PSC's cell number and e-mail address after you are cast. If you cannot reach the PSC, call the Super Coordinator. Please make these calls yourself unless you are absolutely unable to do so.

The initial rehearsal schedule is often tentative and subject to change, although the dress rehearsal and performance schedule is fixed. Before you leave each rehearsal or performance, make sure you know when you are called next. Also check your emails regularly.

## **REHEARSALS**

Please arrive at least 15 minutes before the posted start of a rehearsal. Rehearsals begin promptly at the appointed time. You are expected to be ready to go on stage at the time the rehearsal is called. **DO NOT BE LATE!** The secret of being on time is to add some "slack" to allow for traffic, finding parking, and the unexpected. We cannot emphasize enough how tardiness is not acceptable.

Arriving before the call time gives you an opportunity to check in, receive staging notes or revised schedules, don appropriate rehearsal attire, stow your personal items, and so forth.

No sandals or open-toed shoes are allowed for any rehearsal.

Whenever you are in the Opera House be sure to turn off any acoustical nuisances such as cell phones, pagers, and watch alarms.

Any use of alcohol, drugs, or smoking is prohibited.

Please be aware that you cannot wear glasses during a performance so it is a good idea to rehearse without your glasses—or to wear contact lenses.

Sign in as soon as you arrive. The sign-in sheet is posted on the Supers' call board in the entrance hall and in a prominent place at other rehearsal sites. The PSC should be present and will guide you. Signing in is the only way for staff to know that you are present. The sign-in board may have other useful information; please check it as you sign in. These sheets are also used to tabulate your stipend; If you do not sign in you are presumed absent and may be replaced.

No unauthorized guests, including children, are ever permitted backstage.

You will receive a name tag that you are required to wear during the rehearsals. Return them after the rehearsal. Be aware that your time in rehearsal will be used as efficiently as possible; however, operatic

productions are complicated and can involve periods of inactivity. Bring along a book, magazine, iPod, knitting, or other quiet amusements for those stretches. Under no circumstances are you to leave the area unless you have been officially dismissed. **PLEASE** be quiet during rehearsals. A rehearsal is a working session and those involved in the production must have quiet in order to work. Do not talk to stage management or performers while they are working.

Always wait where stage personnel can easily locate you, and stay within hearing distance of the stage managers while the rehearsal is in progress. Respond promptly to your “places” call. Stay in your entrance or preset position until given further instruction. Do not wander off. Assistant Stage Managers (ASMs) are responsible for making sure everyone is in the right place and ready to go. If you have a problem and must leave the stage area after you are in place, please inform the ASM.

During Opera House rehearsals, the stage managers may ask you to sit in the auditorium. Do not use the bridge across the orchestra pit; please use the door into the lobby from the stage left hallway. When you are in the auditorium, sit on the right side of the house in the orchestra section on the first floor so that you may be easily found. No food, beverages, costumes or makeup are allowed in the auditorium! Please leave your belongings in the auditorium or dressing rooms, never backstage. Do not bring any valuables.

Do not pick up or disturb props that are not assigned to you, and never remove a prop from the stage area. For your safety, clear the backstage area as quickly and quietly as possible before a set change or large exit of other actors.

## **ON STAGE**

Follow stage directions; never stand or cross in front of a principal or chorister unless directed to do so.

Stay in character at all times. Forget that there is an audience, and if something untoward happens, such as was the case when the apple fell off of William Tell’s son’s head before the arrow was shot, the best reaction is to do what your *character* would do and simply fix it, which on that occasion was for a nearby soldier to pick up the apple and put it back on the son’s head. At other times, an action might be too distracting, and one must ignore the situation: use your best judgment.

Expect slight variations from performance to performance and adjust accordingly. If you are absolutely needed in a spot and someone else is in it, just make the adjustment quietly. Always handle any unanticipated situation as your character dictates.

It is also good to know what the dramatic action is in your scene; you should read the libretto, or at least a synopsis of the opera, as it will inform you of the character and the scene. This is particularly important if you are asked to react to the action or dialogue.

## **THE DRESSING ROOM**

On performance and costumed-rehearsal days, go directly to your assigned dressing room as soon as you have signed in. You will have an assigned dressing table space with a drawer and your name taped onto the mirror at your station. There will also be items allocated to your character, such as base make-up, lipstick, and so forth. Nearby there will be a “costume plot” with a list of the scenes you are in and a complete list of your costume inventory.

Please try not to bring things of value with you; the Company cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items. Lockers in the hallway outside the dressing rooms labeled “Super” are provided for your use on a first-come first-served basis. You will supply your own padlock. Combination locks work better as there is no place to stow a key. Some of the drawers at your dressing tables also can be locked. Please do not leave items in the drawers or lockers, as there are others who use them between your performances.

## **WIGS & MAKEUP**

Makeup-and-dress calls are usually designated at least ninety minutes before you are expected to appear on stage, which is most often at curtain time. **BE ON TIME!** All Supers need to be finished in makeup before the chorus is due; that is why it is such an early call.

Wig and makeup requirements are different for each show. Usually each Super will apply base makeup using an individually assigned makeup kit. The base makeup and sponge provided by the Makeup Department will be clearly labeled with your name and left at the dressing table counter at your assigned place. After every application, wash out the sponge with soap and squeeze it dry. Do not leave it sealed in the plastic bag, that encourages the growth of mildew. Just leave the bag open for air circulation.

For hygienic reasons, do not share your base with anyone else. If you run out, notify the makeup foreperson, who will supply you with more. You will generally apply your base makeup before dressing in costume, although you should check with your dresser first. Proceed to the makeup room as soon as your base is dry. Wait in line until a makeup artist calls you. The artist will know exactly what the makeup requirements are for the show. Once the makeup has been applied, do not alter it. If something is wrong (e.g., your makeup is running because of sweat, or your mustache is falling off), go

directly to the Makeup foreperson and you will be taken care of. Do not try to repair it yourself.

The Wig and Makeup departments have stringent health and safety guidelines. They are instructed to sanitize their hands after working on each client. Also, they are instructed to notify their supervisor immediately should a client appear to have health problems, which include open wounds or sores, conjunctivitis or other contagious diseases, intoxication, or lack of personal hygiene evidenced by body odor, dirty hair, head lice, etc. Please see the PSC, or Makeup foreperson if you have any such problems and discuss how they might be resolved.

If a wig or facial hair is to be worn with your costume a notice will be taped onto the mirror at your dressing station. If you see such a notice with your name on it, go to the wig room and ask if your hair needs to be applied before or after you are in costume, and then proceed accordingly. If you are wearing your own hair and/or facial hair, do not cut or shave it during the production run without first checking with the Wig Master.

As soon as you have made your final appearance on stage, go directly to the Wig Department to have your wig or facial hair removed. Never attempt to remove your own wig or facial hair without assistance from the Wig Staff. These products are fragile and expensive.

## **COSTUMES**

The Wardrobe Department is in charge of the costumes after they come to the Opera House from the Costume Shop. Dressers will be in the dressing room at the appointed call time to help you put on your costume. Never put on your costume without a dresser present.

Your costume must be worn as assigned. No personal adornment such as jewelry, body piercings, watches, or nail polish should be visible while you are in costume. Glasses must not be worn on stage.

Do not wear perfume or cologne.

Should you have tattoos or unremovable jewelry, talk with the dresser or Makeup Foreperson; please give them advance notice of this.

Wear suitable undergarments for all fittings, rehearsals and performances and have good hygiene, please.

The costumes you wear are handcrafted and very expensive. While in costume DO NOT EAT ANYTHING, SMOKE, or DRINK any beverage,

including plain water, which can stain silk! NEVER LEAVE THE THEATER WHILE IN COSTUME.

If you want to eat or drink during a break, wear one of the robes provided over your costume. You may bring your own robe. Your dresser can decide if you can remove any part of the costume during a break. Ask.

Your costume might become wrinkled or soiled if you sit in it while waiting to go on. Ask the dresser for tips on how to sit in a costume in the least detrimental way. If your costume needs to be repaired, please inform your dresser before leaving the theater.

Technical Staff at the Opera House are union members. Due to stringent union contract requirements backed up by potential fines for infringement, all performers must proceed to their dressing room immediately following their final stage appearance and change out of their costume.

After removing your costume, hang it in the space designated by the Wardrobe Department; if you have any costume concerns talk with your dresser.

## **FOOD**

No open food or beverages in the dressing rooms ever!

You may eat during intermissions; there are vending machines in the canteen. You can use the microwave in the canteen kitchen. You may only eat in the canteen.

## **SUPPLIES**

Bring a good makeup remover and any other product you might need. There are showers in the dressing rooms, and towels and washcloths are provided. Bring your own toiletries, soap, etc.

During long breaks you should read, do puzzles, work, knit, or pass the time in a similar, quiet manner.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Photographs are allowed; however, please observe common sense while taking photos.

- Do not take photographs in the dressing rooms.
- Do not take photographs backstage, immediately under the stage, or in the wings. Light from a flash will be visible to the audience. Even if you turn off your flash, there are issues of intellectual property and privacy.
- Never disturb a principal artist in his or her dressing room or anywhere else in the Opera House.

- An appointed representative from the PSC will coordinate a single “photo op” with each principal artist, if possible, during a run. The photo session schedule will be posted on the Super call-board and there may be an announcement. DO NOT BRING YOUR CAMERA to this. Please read the “designated photographer” section below.
- Do not interfere with other artists and dressers. Ever.
- If you wish to take photos of yourself in your costume, please do so before your final appearance on stage. After you have appeared on stage, you are required to immediately return to the dressing area to have your wig removed and to get out of costume.
- Opening and closing nights are not good times for photographs.
- Respect the privacy of your fellow Supers and all of the other artists and employees: ask permission before taking photographs; candid and secret photos are not allowed.
- Professional photography sessions occur from time to time backstage and in other parts of the House. This does not mean that you can join the professional photographers in these situations.
- Photographs are never permitted during a rehearsal, whether on stage or in a rehearsal hall.
- Audio or video recording is prohibited from both rehearsals and performances.
- Never photograph minors.

## **DESIGNATED PHOTOGRAPHER**

In order to insure that:

- Supers in a production might have the opportunity to have quality pictures taken with principals
- historic records are kept
- we respect the time and consideration of the principal artists and other members of the company

the Opera Company will appoint one designated photographer (DP) for the year. This DP will work with the PSC and the artists’ dressers to establish an appropriate time (if any) for a photo shoot. The DP’s camera will be the only one used. SUPERS ARE NOT TO BRING ANY CAMERAS TO THIS PHOTO-OP. No one other than the DP may approach principals regarding photo shoots.

The DPs will make all photos available for purchase via an outside service (e.g., Shutterfly). In the event that the DP is unable to attend a photo shoot, he or she will be responsible for identifying a replacement. He or she will also be responsible for notifying the Opera Company and PSC of this change. A Super should not assume that they can assist in this process.

The DP will fill out a form for each principal artist and give it to the Wardrobe Head. This will assist the PSC and artists' dressers in establishing a time, date, and place the photo shoots, the results of which will be posted on the Super board by the PSC. Any questions should be directed to the PSC.

### **INTERACTION WITH PRINCIPAL SINGERS & OTHERS**

You are not to speak to the principals, other than to perhaps voice a polite acknowledgement. Principals have a huge responsibility and they need their space. Give it to them.

Similar guidelines should also apply to all those working the show, including the stage crew. These are professionals and we should be as well by not bothering other artists.

### **IDENTIFICATION BADGES**

Each Super in a current production will be issued an identification badge, which expires at the end of the show. Be prepared to show this badge to the security personnel as you enter the Opera House or rehearsal hall. Keep this badge with you at all times, except when you are in costume. If you lose your badge, you will be charged \$10 to replace it. Only current ID badges will be accepted for entrance. The PSC will collect your badge at the end of your show. No exceptions!

### **DRESS REHEARSALS**

Generally, each Super receives two guest passes for the final dress rehearsal of the opera in which they appear (some operas' final dress rehearsals are closed at the directors discretion). This is a privilege, not a right. Do not abuse it. Do NOT come to a dress rehearsal unless you are on the list.

Being a Super in one production does not entitle you to come backstage during a performance or rehearsal of any other production.

If you, or one of your friends, attend a final dress rehearsal you must stay in the house. The Canteen and backstage privileges are only for Supers in that production. No exceptions!

## **PERSONAL SAFETY IN THE CIVIC CENTER AREA**

The neighborhood surrounding the Opera House has a high incidence of auto break-ins and other crimes. Supers need to be aware of personal safety at all times when in the area, and should follow these safety tips:

- Walk in pairs or groups, never alone.
- Ride or walk with each other to cars, BART, or Muni.
- Keep in mind the risks peculiar to each show; for example, how call times may require arriving or leaving when there are no crowds on the street.
- Take public transit if you can.
- If you drive, park in public parking lots (NOT the Opera's) whenever possible.
- Never leave anything that even looks valuable in your car, even if it isn't.

Remember that there is no truly "safe" time or location to park in the area, as break-ins may occur at any hour of the day or night and on any street in the neighborhood.

## **PARKING**

Supers may not park in any opera staff parking lots. Parking is available in commercial garages or lots or on the street in the neighborhood. Many on street parking spaces have a 1 or 2 hour time limit until 6 p.m., except on Sundays. Read the signs and meters carefully.

A good guide to public parking and transportation can be found on the San Francisco Symphony Web Site, [sfsymphony.org](http://sfsymphony.org). Click on "Season & Tickets," and then "Plan Your Visit," and then "Directions and Transportation." (Davies Symphony Hall is across the street from the Opera House.)

Your best options are to carpool or take public transportation. Ask your fellow Supers and your PSC about carpooling.

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

You will be asked to complete an emergency contact sheet. This information is strictly confidential, for use in a medical emergency only.

## **REIMBURSEMENT**

Supers receive a stipend of \$6 per staging rehearsal and \$11 per dress rehearsal and performances (subject to change). Stipend checks are distributed at the final performance.

## **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

To reach the San Francisco Opera on dress rehearsal and performance days, first contact your PSC. Failing that, call the Super Coordinator. Otherwise call the scheduling department.

- PSC, number to be given at casting the opera.
- Super Coordinator, April Busch: 415) 565-6481
- Scheduling Department: 415) 565-6479
- Opera Switchboard (Mon-Fri., 9 am to 6 pm): 415) 861-4008
- Security Guard Station (a last resort): 415) 557 6238

## **HELPFUL TERMS**

ZA/ZB/ZC = Zellerbach A, B, or C (300 Franklin St. at Hayes)

BS = Ballet Studio, 6th floor opera House

PCA = Piano/Chorus/Artists (piano run-through)

PCA(+) = PCA + costumes for some, usually principals

PCA+ = PCA + costumes and makeup for all

OCA(+) = OCA + costumes for some, usually principals

OCA+ = OCA + costumes and makeup for all

Tutti = all supers in scene or production

AD = Assistant Director

SM = Stage Manager

ASM = Assistant Stage Manager

PSC = Production Super captain

The key to a successful supering experience is to be professional, courteous and cooperative at all times...and feel free to ask questions. Your PSC is there to help you.

FIN

