

Captain

Job Description

As Captain, you play a pivotal leadership role in the smooth running of the event. The Captain controls the house (that is: the hallway; everything inside the doors to the event space, including the audience seating, up to the front edge of the stage). You lead a team of ushers who will take direction from you. Your calm and competent manner will reassure and encourage your team and festival goers alike. You co-operate with the event Stage Manager to manage the event, and report to the Volunteer Manager. Your main responsibilities are:

- To prepare the audience area of the event space before you open the doors
- To signal the usher you have assigned to Front of House (hallway); and when the event has started
- To start and end the event on time, on the call of the stage manager
- To manage lineups, and the entrance and exit of the audience
- To oversee collection of ticket stubs
- To manage reserved seating, special seating requests, rush seating for students, and admission to latecomers

Step-by-Step

Before the event

In the Volunteer Lounge before the event, pick up the clipboard with your event template. This template contains detailed information about the event: exactly what kind of event it is, when it should begin and end, and who should appear on stage, what size of audience to expect. Please review the event template carefully. Any special information about the event will be found there. You will also be provided with comment cards, Reserved Seating signs to be used as necessary for corporate sponsors or Author Patrons, author signing name cards, and a ziplock bag to hold ticket stubs.

If for any reason you can't make a shift, you must let the Volunteer Manager know immediately, as this is a crucial job.

Meet your team in the Volunteer Lounge half an hour before the event start time, where you will explain the event, assign jobs, and address their questions or concerns. Remind them that they are on duty while in the event venue and should not sit down during the event. Before you go up to the sixth floor, you should assign which team member will be inside the venue, and which member will stay in the hallway as Front of House usher. Feel free to set up a rotation, but bear in mind that opening the doors to the event is always disruptive. A rover can be sent up to relieve the Front of House usher for a few minutes, during events that are longer than an hour. Assign one of your ushers to the FoH and send him/her up twenty minutes before event start time. Communicate any relevant information about the upcoming event. Make sure there are programs on hand for the

ushers to distribute, FoH pick up programs from the stash on the sixth floor ready to distribute during the line up. During the event, it is important to communicate to the FoH usher about whether latecomers may be admitted. This is done on a case-by-case basis, and is your call.

Once you go upstairs, assign positions for emergency evacuation and review the location of the fire exits and correct procedure for evacuation with your ushers.

Inspect the event space. If there is nothing to be loaded in or out, **close the doors to the venue.**

If patrons from the previous event have remained in the auditorium as a way to reserve seats for your event, please explain that there is no reserved seating, and that for safety reasons, the room needs to be cleared to prepare it for the next event. Have them join the lineup outside the auditorium. There may be an occasional exception if you are dealing with someone elderly or who has special needs. In such cases, you make the decision, but be careful not to set a precedent that will raise expectations among our audiences.

If the room needs to be reconfigured, this will be noted on the event template. Please work with the Holiday Inn banquet staff on setup. They understand how to efficiently change seating from one configuration to another. If rows need to be added or rearranged, consult with banquet staff; they will provide more chairs. Your team should assist with this, if they are physically able.

Please ensure that the auditorium is neat, that there are enough chairs set, and that they are straightened, rows orderly, rows and aisles clear of programs, water glasses or personal possessions left behind, and everything is prepared for the safety and comfort of our audience. If more chairs are needed, ask Holiday Inn staff for more, and help set them up.

If the water station needs to be replenished, please alert Holiday Inn banquet staff.

Distribute comment cards onto seats; make sure your ushers are ready with the programs to hand out. Place Reserved Seating signs as noted on the event template. Funds team volunteers will usher Author Patrons and Corporate Sponsors to these reserved seats when the house opens.

Please watch the patron lineup in the hall and send one of the ushers to help FoH Attendant with crowd control. This involves calming and reassuring the audience that they will be seated soon. Kindness is the keyword. You should put a team member in position outside the closed doors to assist as the line up forms.

Decide on a case-by-case basis whether to allow the elderly, folks in wheelchairs, etc. to be seated in the house before it opens to the general public. The Front of House Attendant will bring to your attention anyone who might require this early seating.

Place the author name cards on the signing table (s), and plan a signing line up strategy if the crowd is large. Communicate this plan to your ushers so they are ready to direct people as soon as the event is over.

Confer with the event Stage Manager who will determine when the stage, sound and lights are ready. When you get the green light, and you are satisfied that the house is ready, make sure your ushers are in position, then open the house.

Monitor ticket-taking at the door. Be prepared to trouble-shoot.

When the audience is seated, and FoH usher has confirmed no more stragglers, the event Stage Manager will send the message to the Writers Services desk in the Author Hospitality Suite that the wranglers may bring their authors upstairs. This call should be made **no later than five minutes before event start time**. The Captain will report to the Box Office if any seats are available for rush tickets. If there is an unavoidable delay after the doors are open, the event Stage Manager will call the Author Hospitality Suite to let them know.

When the authors come up to the venue, confirm with the wrangler(s) whether the author(s) will pose for pictures with fans during or after the book signing, which follows the event.

Unless the event is sold out, you can allow student rush ticket holders to be seated, and then admit volunteers (other than your own ushers) on a rush basis, keeping in mind that each room has a maximum body count for fire safety. (This is noted on the event template.) If volunteers come in on a rush ticket and are wearing a Festival scarf, please ask them to remove the scarf before sitting down.

The Stage Manager controls the movement of the authors. When the host and authors are standing off stage and are ready to go, and sound and lights are ready, the Stage Manager will give you a thumbs up that the event can begin. Be sure to inform the FoH usher that the event is beginning. Close the doors.

At some point during the event, a Attendance Tracker volunteer will enter discreetly and gather attendance numbers. It may not be right at the beginning of the event, however.

You make the final call about when the doors close, as well as whether to seat latecomers once the event begins. Our policies are covered during training: use your best judgment and where unsure, ask the Producer or her assistant for direction. **Please make every effort to start your event on time.**

During the event, you and your usher should not congregate, but be stationed in different parts of the room. But make sure your usher is at the ready to quickly get into position as the conversation winds down, to receive the cordless mics from the Stage Manager and walk them to audience members for the Q&A. There should be no delay in beginning the Q&A on this account.

During the Event

Please ensure that all areas of the Event form are filled out, and take note of rush seats, and comp tickets.

The Festival has an “open” admission policy. That is, although anyone may attend, we reserve the right to refuse admission or to eject a patron if he or she is belligerent , rude, or obstructive to you, your team, other patrons, writers, or moderators. You should ask parents with infants or young children to sit near the exit, if possible, and quickly offer to usher them out if the baby starts to fuss. Use your best judgment; if a problem seems to be developing, use the festival phone at the ticket desk to call the Marketing Manager or Artistic Director for back-up. Phone numbers are on the event template.

You may be expected to deal with people with various issues or minor medical emergencies (such as fainting); however, if anything or anyone seems beyond your comfort level, please do not hesitate to call the Production Manager.

If necessary, alert the Festival Producer or Assistant Event Production Coordinator about conditions in the room, temperature, lighting, sound issues, etc.

In an emergency, contact Holiday Inn staff for immediate help. Call the front desk and ask for the Manager on duty.

After the Event

Author book signings take place in the event venue. Keep an eye on the clock; if there is an event to follow shortly afterward in that venue, you may need to move the book signing along with a word to the wrangler(s). Be prepared to ask fans to keep the line moving, and use your ushers to keep the line tidy.

Oversee the pickup of debris and left articles by your team before leaving the event space. If you find items for the lost and found, please take them to the Festival Box Office on the first floor, and attach a note regarding where and when the item was found, along with your initials. Make a note on your event template.

Turn in ticket stubs (in the ziplock bag provided) to the Box Office, and complete all required stats before returning your event clipboard to the Volunteer Lounge.

Turn in any completed comment cards, with the clipboard, to the Volunteer Lounge.

Thank your team, and congratulate them on a job well done! Take a moment to enjoy Festival hospitality in the Volunteer Lounge.

