



SOLVANG
FESTIVAL
THEATER

Red Coat Volunteer Usher Policies & Procedures 2013

Solvang Festival Theater
420 Second Street
Solvang, CA 93463

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 917
Solvang, CA 93464

Business Office
433 Second Street
Solvang, CA 93463

Phone: (805) 646-1789
Fax: (805) 686-5912
theaterfest@verizon.net

House Managers: Brittany Mullenary & Jenny Miller

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Volunteer Commitment of Time	2
SFT Volunteer Card	2
Professionalism	3
Dress Code	3
Tact & Diplomacy	3
Arrival Time & Attendance	3
Distracting Behavior	3
Upon Arrival	4
Before Leaving	4
Where Ushers May Sit During the Performance	4
Aisle Usher and Job Description	5
Aisle Ushers perform the following duties	5
Ticket Takers Job Description	6
Duties Include	6
Directors Job Description	6
Emergency Procedures	7
Medical Emergency Procedures	7
Emergency Power Outage	7
Fire Evacuation Procedure	8
Earthquakes	8

Introduction

Our team of Red Coat Volunteer Ushers is an integral part of Solvang Festival Theater (SFT). We depend upon the professionalism of our ushers from the moment the patrons enter the lobby until the last guest has left the theater. For many patrons, the ushers are the only SFT representatives with whom they have face-to-face contact. A positive usher/patron experience can foster positive public relations for SFT and the reverse is also true.

As a volunteer usher for SFT you are called upon to interact graciously and responsively no matter what the circumstances. This may be quite challenging at times, especially when confronted with a difficult situation requiring immediate attention. We ask that you prepare to meet this challenge by reading the current volunteer handbook and requesting clarification as needed.

This handbook is your guide to continued success as a SFT Volunteer Usher. Please keep this booklet on hand as a useful reference tool.

We appreciate your generous gifts of time and talent. With your dedicated service we will continue to sustain an environment in which our players and our audience can best give and receive the magic that is Solvang Festival Theater.

Volunteer Commitment of Time

We ask that you commit to serving as an usher at least 4 times each calendar year.

SFT Volunteer Card

In appreciation for your volunteer service as an usher at Solvang Festival Theater, volunteers receive the benefit of earning credits toward tickets. Each volunteer receives a SFT Volunteer Card which is validated for each volunteer shift. The card holds up to eight validations which can be remitted for tickets from the PCPA Box Office. When the card is full you will receive another blank card. A card with eight (8) validations is redeemable for two (2) tickets; cards with four (4) validations may be redeemed for one ticket. At this time the Volunteer Card has no expiration date, but you are encouraged to redeem your cards at least once yearly.

The SFT Volunteer Card is redeemable for tickets to performances at the Marian, Severson, or Solvang Theater. Tickets are subject to availability and are not valid for Saturday evening performances in Solvang and Sunday matinees in Santa Maria. Benefit performances, special events and Allan Hancock dances are not included. Please redeem the card in person at the box office during the regular business hours of Tuesday–Sunday 4:30pm–8:00pm. Please do not redeem your card for tickets during your shift.

Volunteers receive one validation (“punch”) on their card for every performance for which they usher. **Volunteers who arrive more than 10 minutes late with no phone call to the House Manager may forfeit their validation for that shift.**

Professionalism

Our volunteer ushers are ambassadors of goodwill and service to the patrons of our theater and community.

Your careful attention to demeanor, behavior, and appearance is greatly appreciated.

Dress Code

- Black pant or skirt
- White shirt or blouse (clean and properly fitted)
- Red vest or jacket (you may borrow one from the coat closet during your shift)
- Quiet, comfortable shoes
- SFT volunteer usher nametags are to be worn during your volunteer shift
- NO FRAGRANCE POLICY. Refrain from using cologne, perfume, and other scented products on the days that you usher
- No cellphone devices, pagers, or beeping electronic watches are allowed to be worn during your usher shift

Tact & Diplomacy

Every encounter with a patron should be handled with courtesy and respect. Even when a patron has erred, it is important that no volunteer or staff person responds in a manner that would make the patron feel uncomfortable. Elements of tact include choice of words, gestures, and tone of voice.

Arrival Time & Attendance

All volunteer ushers are expected to arrive every evening at 6:30pm, appropriately dressed and ready to provide usher service. Please note, there are no “first-come-first-served” job assignments, be prepared to receive your assignment after you arrive. Volunteers with limitations regarding job assignments need to provide this information to the house manager. Be prepared to remain for the duration of the performance. Ushers may be asked to arrive earlier for special events.

In the event of illness while on duty, an usher may be excused after notifying the House Manager. Cancellations due to schedule conflicts should be communicated as soon as possible, preferably 1–2 weeks or more before the scheduled shift. If you need to cancel due to illness or emergency on the day of your shift, please notify house management at either 451-8211 or 717-5000.

Distracting Behavior

Chatting with fellow volunteers during the performance is not allowed. If you need to communicate something urgent, do it as discreetly as possible. If you need to have a cough drop during the performance please unwrap it before the performance begins. Gum chewing is not appropriate.

Upon Arrival

1. **Deposit your SFT volunteer “punch card” into the container at the Company Store.** Be sure that your name is on your card
2. **Receive your volunteer assignment** from the House Manager
3. **Convene with fellow ushers on the benches in front of the Company Store for the Pre-show Usher Briefing and Review of Emergency Procedures.** It is absolutely vital that ALL volunteers listen to this presentation, which includes safety information, important updates, and special information about the performance as it relates to house management

Before Leaving

- Complete all duties specific to your assignment
- **TIP UP** theater seats. Pick up any printed material that is left behind
- **TURN IN** any lost items
- Help fold blankets
- Return your Red Coat on a hanger to the coat rack

Where Ushers May Sit During the Performance

The House Manager will let you know each evening where you will be able to sit.

Aisle Usher and Job Description

The three main expectations of the volunteer assigned to usher in an aisle are to:

1. **Ensure the Safety & Comfort of Patrons** (offer assistance)
2. **Accurately Seat Patron** (look closely at everyone's ticket)
3. **Monitor Distractions** (and report violations to house management)

Aisle Ushers perform the following duties:

- **CHECK** tickets with regard to **Date/Time, Section, Row, and Seat Number** then **LEAD** patrons to their assigned seats. **ADVISE** patrons to use the handrails before leading them down the stairs. If the patron has arrived on the wrong day, date or time, politely direct the patron to the box office for assistance and inform the house manager.
- **Offer to Assist** physically limited patrons but avoid touching a patron who has not consented to your assistance (e.g., you may offer your arm, but do not take the patron's arm unless they specifically ask). If a patron cannot physically get to the location of the assigned seat, contact the house manager to reseat the patron. Avoid "gridlock" in the aisle during this process by finding a temporary spot for the patron until the situation is resolved.
- **ALWAYS INFORM** the House Manager when patrons have special requests regarding seat changes or if there are any seating conflicts.
- **RESPOND** to medical emergencies with the assistance of another usher. One usher stays with the patron, while the other usher locates and informs the house manager (please refer to the full section on EMERGENCY PROCEDURES).
- **REPORT** violations of theater policy to the House Manager as soon as practically possible (cellphone use/texting, cameras, animals, babies, distracting behavior, etc.)

Ticket Takers Job Description

The Ticket-Taker STAND at the main lobby doors with the ticket box in position and open the lobby doors when instructed to do so by the House Manager.

Duties Include:

- **GREET** all patrons and welcome them to the theater and take their tickets in hand.
- **ANSWER** patron question regarding length of show, and location of restrooms. Suggest presale concessions.
- **CONFIRM** the **EVENT**, the **DATE**, and the **TIME** of the performance on the ticket.
- **CONFIRM** the **SECTION**, the **ROW**, and **SEAT #**
- **DIRECT** patrons with ticket problems to the Box Office or House Manager.
- **TEAR** tickets, retain the small stub and return the larger portion to the patron.
- **DIRECT** patrons to the entrance closest to their section.
- **The Myth of the “Duplicate Ticket”**

When this happens *the usher will encounter two sets of tickets that—at first glance—appear identical. However, they are not identical:* each ticket includes a number on the bottom of the ticket which identifies the patron who purchased that ticket. The usher can easily resolve this confusion by simply excusing themselves to step away and ask the house manager to take both sets of tickets to the box office to confirm the rightful “owner” of the ticketed seats.

- **CHECK** the inside of the ticket stand for any ticket stubs that may have dropped past the box. Check the date on loose stubs to confirm they are from the current performance.
- **GIVE** stubs to Company Store Volunteer for counting

Directors Job Description

LOOK at **SECTION**, **ROW** and **SEAT** to **DIRECT** patrons to the aisle ushers that will take them to their seats.

Emergency Procedures

The time may come when you will play an important role in responding to any emergency situation. You may be the first person on the scene to help a patron or you may assist in directing patrons in an evacuation. Regardless of the specific situation, the most critical response in any emergency situation is to remain calm so that you can think clearly.

Medical Emergency Procedures

If the emergency is of a serious nature and the patron cannot be moved

(chest pains, serious fall, etc.):

- One usher must remain with the patron to keep the area calm and clear
- A second user must advise the House Manager of the situation, the nature of the emergency, and the location
- The House Manager will assess the situation calling 911 if necessary and posting an usher in front of the theater to wait for paramedics
- The House Manager will advise the Stage Management of the situation and remain in the theater to monitor the situation
- When paramedics arrive the posted usher will direct them into the theater. The paramedics will be directed to the patron through the closest possible lobby door. The paramedics will remove the patron
- In the event the Stage Management stops the performance, the House Manager will make an announcement to the audience regarding the situation and ask patrons to remain seated. The performance will continue once the emergency team has left the house

If the medical situation is not serious and the patron can leave the theater, please escort them to the lobby depending on the demands of the situation. Inform the House Manager immediately and remain with the patron until dismissed by the House Manager.

Emergency Power Outage

If the power goes out during the performance, remain calm. Inform the patrons seated in your section that the emergency lights will come on and the House Manager or Stage Manager will make an announcement to the audience as to whether or not the performance will continue. The patrons are asked to remain in their seats until the announcement has been made. If we cannot reach the power company by phone, we will wait approximately 20 minutes before canceling the remainder of the performance. In the event the performance is cancelled, the House Manager will inform the audience of ticket exchange procedures and instruct the ushers to open the doors. Flashlights will be required to assist the patrons exiting the theater. All ushers assigned to the theater house should always have a flashlight with them in the theater.

Fire Evacuation Procedure

If a fire alarm goes off during any performance, the theater must be completely evacuated. Remain calm and respond immediately. All ushers assist the audience members to the nearest exit, starting with row "M." Ushers should not leave the theater until all audience members in their section are out of the building. Patrons with walkers and wheelchairs exit last from their sections. The House Manager is the last person to leave the theater making sure that the theater is completely vacated. As patrons are exiting the theater, the Lead Concession volunteer will direct patrons to move away from the theater. Inform patrons to stay out of the street due to the emergency vehicles arriving. After the audience members are out of the theater, ushers should join the patrons, but remain in eyesight of the House Manager. The House Manager will notify the ushers and audience when they can reenter the theater. The House Manager will communicate with the Stage Manager regarding contact with emergency responders and decisions regarding reentering the theater.

Earthquakes

Some earthquakes may be very minor and may not disturb the performance. In the event of a major earthquake that requires building evacuation, observe the following procedures:

1. Personal Safety

Make sure that you are in a safe place and stay there until the shaking stops. You cannot help patrons if you are injured yourself. Realize that patrons will look to you for support and directions.

2. Attempt to Calm Patrons

Talk to patrons in your section and relate that the exits are being checked to determine safe evacuation routes. Until this has been determined, patrons are safest in their seats.

3. Wait for Evacuation Procedures

The House Manager and the Stage Manager will check for safe evacuation routes. When the routes have been determined, you will be given instructions on how to direct patrons.

4. Assist with Evacuation

Follow the instructions of the House Manager or Solvang Festival Theater staff and direct patrons to safe evacuation routes. When your area has been fully evacuated, report to the House Manager at outside location.