Working backstage in the Theatre

**Roles behind the scenes**

There are many jobs in the theatre that do not involve being on stage but backstage and many people with a love of the theatre business prefer to be involved in the background, doing jobs that are vital in keeping the show running smoothly and looking great.

**So what jobs are available backstage in the theatre?**

**Props Manager**The props manager looks after the props department, buying props or overseeing their construction, then looking after them during the production, making sure they are in the right place at the right time. Theatres may have a stock of props that the manager is also responsible for taking care of and maintaining.

**Stage Hand**  
Stage hands or stage technicians are responsible for moving scenery to the right place at the right time, a vital role in any production. Qualifications are not required for this role, but experience will go a long way, as will any electrical and carpentry skills which allow the stage hands to help out the carpenters and electricians.

**Wardrobe Supervisor**  
The Wardrobe supervisor is in charge of the dressers and other wardrobe department staff. They work with the costume designers and make sure the costumes are clean, in good repair and on the right actors at the right time in the production. Costume complexity can vary hugely from play to play, and for smaller companies one person may cover the roles of costume designer, dresser and wardrobe person.

**Lighting Designer and Technician**Lighting is an integral part of any production and the role of the designer is to make sure the actors and scenery are lit in a way that adds to the story and complements the action happening on stage. Lighting designers are often freelance and will design the lighting for the production then hand over to the lighting technician who will make sure the design is carried out.

**Technical Manager/Director**The technical manager is in charge of the technical side of the production, from the stage design to the lighting and props; they make sure everything goes to plan. This role may involve managing a permanent staff of technicians or temporary workers that change from production to production. They may have to turn their hand to a range of tasks in an emergency, so practical, electrical and carpentry skills are all useful.

**Stage Manager** -- Responsible for the total production from opening night until strike.  Everything is their problem.  They ensure the look of the show and contact the appropriate person if things are not maintaining their look.

**Behind The Scenes**

A crucial part of a live performance happens behind the scenes, both before a production is mounted and during its run.

**Scenic Construction** -- Builds the set designed by the set designer.

**Scenic Painter** -- Once the structural pieces are built, this crew paints the scenery to create the illusion of the world of the play, creating the structural environment of the piece.

**Prop Master** -- Acquires the list of objects the set designer and director put together of all things attached to the set or carried onto it by an actor.  The set is like an empty house you purchased.  Whatever you bring into the space is a prop, such as furniture and luggage carried on by the performer.

**Prop Prep** -- Works with the prop master to find, build or secure props for the play, including some rehearsal props that do not have to be the real thing. This is a fun crew because you do research for pictures, receive research from the set designer, go shopping, and get to create many things for the set

**Electrics Prep** -  Selects lighting instruments from a list, learns how to hang the lights in designated spots in the theater according to the light plot.

**Costume Prep** -- Works in the costume shop learning to hand sew and machine sew while creating costumes. We deal with shoes, hair, costume props (purses, jewelry, cigarette cases) - whatever the performer wears on his body or is directly related.

**Sound Crew** -- The sound crew locates sounds needed for the show in the sound library and from other sources.  You would learn how to record, time, and discharge cues on tapes.

**Run Crews** -- These crews are responsible for all aspects of the production during technical rehearsals, dress rehearsals and actual run. Positions include light board operator, sound board operator, flymen, props, costumes, scenery shifters. Attendance is required at all scheduled rehearsals and being on time is extremely important. With each show, the number of crew people changes, so we may need a few people or a lot of people.

**Scenic and/or Props Shift Crew** -- These crews work together before the performance each night setting up the stage and the props in their correct slot. During the show each person is assigned a list of jobs to complete and given ample time in rehearsals to know when they do what and how to do it the best way.  Tasks include activities such as moving furniture, clearing dishes, setting a lamp, removing previous scene props, etc.

**Fly Crew** -- These people pull ropes on cue during the show that brings in and out the drops that help create the scenes.  It operates on a counter weight system.

**Board Operator** – Operates the light board and executes the cues as called by the stage manager over the headsets during a show. Participates in dimmer checks each night before the house opens.

**Electric Run Crew** -- Runs dimmer checks and replaces any bulbs or instruments as needed. They generally come from the electric prep crew.

**Sound Board Operator**-- Executes sound cues as called by the stage manager.

**Costume Run Crew** -- Assists actors in the dressing room getting ready for a performance.  Assists with quick changes as needed during the show. Ensures the actors put things away properly after a performance.

**Wardrobe Crew** -- Does the washing, ironing and steaming of costumes in between shows, and general maintenance depending on the needs of the production. Duties could include polishing shoes, jewelry, checking hooks and eyes and snaps to ensure they have not been weakened during performance.  One person does not do all of this everyday; it is divided up among the crew.

**Design Assistant** -- In all areas, helps the designer do research and sometimes builds the model or draws designs, depending on skill level and desire. This position is involved from the ground up with all the prelim design discussions.  You are the left hand of the designer, handling details for him or her. A very committed and responsible position.