



BEYOND THE STAGE

Dramaturgy Notes for the Illinois Shakespeare Festival



A HIRE ARTFORM

The Illinois Shakespeare Festival (ISF) is recognized in part for many of the stellar actors that grace the stages at Ewing Theatre and the Center for the Performing Arts Theatre each year. Never forget that behind every actor and piece of theatre is a myriad of theatre professionals and long-time students of the arts.

From carpenters and painters to costume drapers and stage management, every aspect our productions makes its way through many hands before landing onstage. The brief spans of performance represent a culmination of months of effort from our talented and dedicated production staff. Designers and craftspeople from across the country apply to be a part of the following areas: costuming, front of house, lighting, props, scenic art and carpentry, sound, and stage management. Every year, more than seventy technicians are employed, alongside interns, seeking to hone their skills within a professional work environment.

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In the same way that ISF views auditions and digital submission to cast our actors each season, part of our team must also sort through mountains of application materials for our offstage positions. That individual is Production Manager, Elena Hansen.

While Hansen is a recent addition to the Illinois State University community, she has extensive stage and production management experience. She has found herself well at home among those making sure that the big picture moments of the Festival line up right on time.

As a representative of ISF, Hansen attends theatre conferences such as the South Eastern Theatre Conference and the United States Institute for Theatre Technology events to attract talent from across the nation.

After viewing resumes, combing through cover letters, and contacting references, an interview process can begin. With nine different types of paid positions to fill, as well as nine types of internships, there is really no limit to the kinds of experiences that find themselves represented in the 350+ applications that are received each year.

Either remotely or in person, promising applicants will answer an array of questions in considering their expertise and, more importantly perhaps, their potential fit within the workings of the Festival. Other members of the design and management staff help gauge these values, but Hansen remains the constant point of reference for applicants and anyone entering a

contract with ISF. That certainly is not a matter she takes lightly. It is her word that is first representative of what freelancers and students can expect from the Festival as an employer.

This trust that ISF has built up over the years, by Hansen as well as her predecessors, is reflected in returning staff and the ongoing patronage of many individuals in the arts community. The quality of work the Festival enjoys is in many ways a reflection of the lengths our casting and hiring managers go to make sure that a diverse cast of skilled characters is not just something we talk about onstage, but offstage as well.