



Center for the Performing Arts
Empire State Plaza, Albany, New York

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

2021-22

OFFICIAL NAME: GOVERNOR NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER EMPIRE STATE PLAZA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - BETTER KNOWN AS: "The Egg"

STATUS: The Egg was built and is owned and maintained by the State of New York. The Empire State Plaza Performing Arts Center is a not-for-profit organization that is charged with programming performing arts events and coordinating all operations at the center.

MISSION: To present quality performances, accessible to all citizens of New York State, highlighting the unique and extraordinary artists from New York State, across the country and around the globe. Through partnerships and collaborations, present quality performances, spotlight emerging artists, foster relationships with resident companies, enhance activities in cultural and arts education, while remaining accountable to its public funds investment.

THE FACILITY: Even before its construction was complete, The Egg was capturing attention. In fact, this distinctive and ingenious addition to the Albany skyline is still one of the first shapes to catch your eye as you approach the city—it stands in an unmistakable contrast to the angular designs surrounding it.

The construction of The Egg began in 1966 and was completed twelve years later in 1978. It was designed by architect Wallace K. Harrison, whose many accomplishments include Lincoln Center, Rockefeller Center, and the United Nations Headquarters. The Egg houses two theatres - the 440 seat Lewis A. Swyer Theatre and the 980 seat Kitty Carlisle Hart Theatre.

OPERATIONS: The Empire State Plaza Performing Arts Center Corporation is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by a number of government officials. Operations are managed by a full time staff and supported by theatre technicians who manage the presentation of the performances. The Center presents the majority of performances, although other organizations also sublet the theatres for additional shows.

VOLUNTEER USHERS: The Center relies on over 200 individuals who volunteer their time in assisting in "front of house" operations. This guide is intended to familiarize volunteers with the policies and procedures that are in place to ensure a positive experience for theatre patrons that attend performances throughout the year.

HOUSE MANAGER CONTACTS

House Management Supervisor/Operations Coordinator:

Keegan Bushey: Ushers@TheEgg.Org

House Manager: Zach Wilkens

ORIENTATION: It is required that all volunteer ushers attend an orientation session on an annual basis. These sessions will provide you with important safety information and familiarize you with ushering procedures, staff, fellow volunteers and the theatres themselves. Annual orientation meetings are typically held in September. If you are joining as a volunteer after this session, please arrange for an individual orientation with the House Manager. Volunteers that do not attend are ineligible to usher until the next orientation.

COVID: The Egg will closely follow all recommendations made by the CDC. This means that requirements for staff/volunteers/patrons will modify depending on the state of the pandemic. The Egg takes health and safety seriously and will do everything necessary to ensure that requirements are met on a day to day basis. Procedures will most likely change from show to show, depending on the requirements. All volunteers will be notified of changes to the requirements prior to the next performance. We ask that volunteers take the requirements seriously and to act accordingly. Masks may be required of both the vaccinated and the unvaccinated. Please bring your own mask if masks are made mandatory for the performance. Disposable masks will be available. If you are experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID leading up to the show you are scheduled to volunteer for, please notify Keegan and please stay home. If you are experiencing symptoms on the day of the performance, please notify Keegan and stay home. We kindly ask for your patience and understanding with this matter.

It is asked of the volunteers to assist in making sure that patrons follow the requirements as well. Should any volunteer encounter a patron that refuses to follow any of the requirements made for a performance, the volunteer is to inform Keegan or the house manager and they will resolve the situation. We do not ask for volunteers to engage further with patrons that refuse to follow requirements after they have been asked to. We also ask that any opinions or feelings regarding COVID/Vaccinations be kept to yourself when you are volunteering at The Egg. If a patron expresses their opinion or feelings about the matter, we kindly ask that you do not engage in it and continue helping other patrons.

SIGNING UP FOR PERFORMANCES: We use a computer program called “signup genius” for signing up for shows. This is the industry standard now. If you do not have an account, please go to www.signupgenius.com and register your email address. The password should be whatever is easiest for you to remember. Keegan will release show sign ups 1 month prior to their event date on a month to month basis (example: July show sign ups would be posted in early June). Please keep in mind that things could change that would result in the addition/subtraction of ushers (such as venue change).

Throughout the season more shows are added to our calendar and occasionally a single show or two may be put out for sign up. In those instances, it will be first come first serve. But rarely will there not be a full batch of shows going out at one time.

If you need to cancel for a show(s) please remove yourself from the sign up. SignUpGenius is set up in such a way that it will notify Keegan immediately that you have cancelled. If for some reason you cannot access SignUpGenius, feel free to send Keegan an e-mail and let him know that way. It is suggested that you use the SignUpGenius first if possible.

If you are running late or have to make a last minute cancellation, please e-mail Ushers@TheEgg.Org. You can also call The Egg Box Office 473-1845 and ask them to pass along the message.

Also, from time to time we have trouble getting enough ushers to volunteer for some shows and Keegan may send out an email asking for help. It is imperative that volunteers make the effort to help out whenever they possibly can. Volunteering for events that you are not familiar with is encouraged. We invite you to step out of your comfort zone and experience something new at The Egg.

"3 STRIKE POLICY" : A volunteer that earns 3 strikes will be removed from the volunteer list indefinitely. Cause for strikes will be: 1. Late without giving prior notice. 2. No show without explanation. 3. Having to be reprimanded during a performance. 4. Insubordination that exceeds a warning. 5. Violating dress code repeatedly. Volunteers will be informed of any and all strikes.

Note: Medical/family/vehicle emergencies are excusable for #1 & #2. Some form of notice would be appreciated.

DRESS CODE: White shirt/blouse and black pants/skirt are requested. Name badges will be provided. If you need/lose a nametag, you must give House Management more than 24 hours notice for a new nametag.

ARRIVAL TIME: Typically, arrival time is 75 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the performance (i.e., arrive at 6:45 PM for an 8:00 PM performance). Please plan to arrive on time.

PARKING: Please note that there is a \$5 fee to park in the Visitors Parking Lot at the Empire State Plaza. If you choose to park in this lot, it is extremely important that you watch for signs directing you to the visitor parking lot. Should the lot be full, signage will indicate alternate levels of parking. You may also choose to park in the EAST GARAGE or on STATE STREET – where parking is free of charge in the evening and on weekends, subject to availability.

SIGN-IN: Upon your arrival please sign your name next to the position you wish to assume for the scheduled performance. Occasionally, you may be requested to change positions to facilitate more efficient event coverage. Your cooperation is appreciated.

GENERAL PROCEDURES: Typically the theatre opens 30 minutes prior to the scheduled time of the performance. In the time leading up to the opening of the theatre, volunteers should familiarize themselves with their position assignments and co-workers. Volunteers who are not working inside the theatre itself should report to their positions immediately to direct patrons as appropriate and be prepared to answer questions that may arise. The House Manager will indicate when it is permissible to “open the house” and begin admitting patrons into the theatre. Unless arranged for otherwise, all volunteers are expected to stay until the patrons have left the theatre. It is requested that volunteers go through the theatre and retrieve any printed programs that have been left behind.

POSITION ASSIGNMENTS: Concourse greeters are positioned near the elevators leading up from the parking garage, near the box office and/or near the elevators that lead to the theatres. Plaza greeters are positioned at the Plaza level. The greeters are expected to welcome patrons and direct them to the box office and/or elevators as appropriate.

PROGRAM PREPARATION: Most performances have a printed program and often have additional pieces that must be inserted in the program. Volunteer ushers are asked to prepare the programs upon arrival.

MEETING: A volunteer usher meeting is conducted approximately one hour prior to the scheduled start of the performance. At this meeting you will receive an overview of the schedule for the evening and any special instructions. We ask for your full attention and understanding.

PROGRAMS: Unless directed otherwise, all patrons are offered a printed program prior to entering the theatre. Elevator lobby greeters are positioned outside the elevators on the theatre level. Here patrons are directed to the theatre entrance that is closest to their reserved seat Door Captains are positioned just inside the doors of the theatre and are responsible for directing patrons to their general seating area. The door captains also coordinate the timely opening and closing of theater doors at intermission and following the performance.

SEATING USHERS are positioned in sections throughout the theater and assist patrons in finding their specific seat locations. Feel free to ask Keegan or the house manager where your position is if you are not familiar with it.

MERCHANDISE VOLUNTEERS assist with the setting up and selling of artist's merchandise in the theatre lobby. We need more people to help with this if possible. Most bigger shows that are outside promoted have their own sellers, but many shows presented by The Egg require us to sell. Also, most Support acts need a seller as well. Keegan or the house manager will train you on this.

It can be fun and is usually pretty easy. Sometimes you may even get some free Merchandise from the Tour person in charge. You will still get to see the show if you do this as well.

TICKET TAKERS are positioned at the entrance of the lobby in the Hart Theatre. We scan tickets once the lobby opens in the Hart. In the Swyer we scan when the house opens and are positioned just inside doors to the theatre. Tickets should be checked for accuracy (correct show; date) and then scanned.

Some patrons will have a print at home ticket. They can be scanned just the same as a "hard" ticket. Keep in mind that some print at home tickets may be hard to scan due to poor ink quality. If ever an issue, please let the house manager or Keegan know.

Some shows may also have Ticketmaster tickets. When this occurs there will be people from the promoter who will scan those tickets. In the case that patrons do not have tickets, incorrect tickets or require a "lap pass" for an infant, ticket takers should direct patrons to the box office on the Concourse Level.

Ticket takers should remain in position until the lobby is clear, and should remain in their positions during performance to take tickets from latecomers. The house manager will let you know when it's okay to leave your position. (usually 20-30 min.) If there is an opening act you would stay through intermission until the headliner goes on stage.

REPORTING PROBLEMS: Occasionally, volunteers may encounter a problem or situation that requires professional assistance. Seating problems, patron complaints, medical concerns and other issues that cannot be resolved easily should be immediately reported to the House Manager or Operations Manager (Keegan). In the case that the House Manager or Operations Manager is not readily located, volunteers should find the closest Egg Staff member, usually our Audio Engineer or Lighting person are located at the back of the theatre and have radios, and can contact one of us.

This should only be in an emergency situation. If not a serious problem, wait for the House Manager or Operations Manager to become available. If it is a dire emergency and all other options have been exhausted, volunteers may use the red emergency telephones, which are located in the elevator lobby of the Hart Theatre next to the emergency stairwells, and in main lobby of Swyer next to both emergency stairwells. If you pick up the red phone it will automatically connect to the NYS Police, which are only a couple minutes away on the main concourse. If minor problems are solved without assistance, it is still requested that the incident be reported to the House Manager.

WHEELCHAIRS, WALKERS, ETC:

Hart Theater: Some of our patrons will be in wheelchairs, use a walker, or have a difficult time with stairs. Most of the time they will have purchased a tickets to sit in our ADA row (The "P" Row) that consists of removable red chairs. In the event that a patron is unable to walk stairs and would like to sit in the "P Row", we ask that the usher assigned to that spot seat them there. If there the row is already sold, and a wheelchair patron requests the "P Row", please contact a house manager or Keegan so that they may arrange a seat exchange between patrons sitting in the "P Row" and our wheelchair patrons. If a wheelchair patron can transport from their chair to a seat, be sure to collapse it and store it right next to them for safe keeping. Please do not place it behind the patrons.

If patron is unable to transport from their chair, please remove a red chair and place it closest to the light/soundboard as possible in a stacked fashion. In the event that there is no room to store chairs, please contact a house manager or Keegan and they will remove the chairs from inside the theater. In the event that a wheelchair patron or a patron who has a difficult time with stairs, has tickets in the Pit area or close by, please contact a house manager or Keegan. They will escort the patron through the backstage area to their seats. They will also arrange for the patrons to exit the same way.

*****The Egg is in possession of 2 wheelchairs and a bariatric wheelchair. If patron requests, or if the need for one comes about, either Keegan or the House Manager needs to be notified and they shall distribute the wheelchairs as necessary*****

Swyer Theater: In front of our theater seating on the left and right sections, we have a few black cushioned chairs that are removable. Patrons may have already purchased tickets that specify the "wheelchair section". If they haven't and cannot do stairs, please follow the same procedure as the "P Row".

PATRONS WITH CLAUSTROPHOBIA, VERTIGO, AGORAPHOBIA: *For our ushers that are concourse/plaza greeters:* In the event we have a patron(s) with claustrophobia, agoraphobia or vertigo, please send the patron(s) to the box office or tell an elevator operator and they will contact Keegan. Keegan will meet the patron(s) on either the concourse or plaza and escort them up to either theater. After the performance, they may leave via the fire stairwells at their own leisure. This procedure is only for patrons with phobias.

***Thank you for taking the time to read
these guidelines carefully and for
volunteering your time!***