

history theatre

Volunteer Manual



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Jill Vaughn is the Audience Services Manager at History Theatre. She just completed her 10th season at History Theatre. Jill started as the Audience Services Associate in Sept of 2005 in which she was the Volunteer Coordinator for 4 years. Within that time she also became the Group Sales Manager. Jill has always coordinated all the accessibility at History Theatre with hiring interpreters and audio describers to starting new programs such as an accessibility training for staff and volunteers and captioning fall 2015.

David Rummel is the Box Office Manager part of his duties include the day to day working with the volunteers. He schedules everyone in their shifts and works with you if conflicts or changes need to be made. David has been in the theatre biz for 28 years from working in New York City for a ticket call center to multiple theatres in the Twin Cities.

History Theatre
30 10th Street East
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651-292-4323 x 102

Welcome

History Theatre is able to successfully meet its mission because of the generous contributions of time and effort from community volunteers. Volunteers provide excellent service as ushers and front-of-house staff, caring and capable attention during special events, and helping hands during large projects. In exchange, History Theatre provides training, ticket vouchers, and a volunteer appreciation event.

History Theatre's Mission

History Theatre entertains, educates, and inspires through creating, developing, and producing new and existing works that explore Minnesota's past and the diverse American experience. Its work provides a unique lens which links our past to the present, explores our common heritage, and illuminates our understanding of what it means to be American.

The Organization

History Theatre is the national leader in the commissioning and developing of new theater works based on history, and an essential cultural destination for artists and audiences. Its work provides a unique lens which links our past to the present, explores our common heritage, and illuminates our understanding of what it means to be American. History Theatre is a three-time IVEY Award winning theater, and is recognized nationally as a leader in producing historical work.

For more than 38 years History Theatre has produced brave, entertaining explorations of all the histories that make up our diverse community. Each year History Theatre produces a season filled with excellent plays and musicals while developing new scripts through workshops and staged readings. Since 1978, the company has staged more than 115 world premieres, working with nationally recognized playwrights such as Jeffrey Hatcher, Kevin Kling, Craig Wright, Frank McCourt, Doris Baizley, Melanie Marnich, Kim Hines, John Olive, and Kira Obolensky.

The Stage

History Theatre is housed in a 587-seat, thrust stage theatre designed by Ralph Rapson. No seat in the theatre is more than 40 feet away from the stage.

History Theatre's Customer Service Goal

History Theatre strives to provide exceptional person-center service in every interaction by anticipating the changing needs of artists and patrons. History Theatre's customer service goal is to be known as the **"Friendliest Theatre in Town."** This means regardless of when things are hectic and confusing, patrons are always treated with politeness and respect. Additionally, the History Theatre expectation of its staff is that they treat the Volunteers with utmost respect. If a volunteer ever feels that they have been treated wrongly by History Theatre staff please bring this complaint to the Audience Services Manager.

- **Use welcoming body language by smiling, standing up straight, and making eye contact.**
- **Say what you would like to see and use positive language** "Please, keep the food in the lobby" sounds much nicer than "Don't bring food into the theatre." Another example is "Please, speak in a whisper." rather than "Do not yell."
- **Keep your personal opinions to yourself.**
- **Avoid confrontation.** Never argue with a visitor. Listen to their concerns, resolve the problem if you can, and get the House Manger when needed.

- **A little bit goes a long way. Even though at times things may seem rushed, always keep a positive attitude and a friendly smile.**

Enrollment in the Volunteer Program

Volunteering with History Theatre is a privilege and comes with high expectations of professionalism and responsibility. The volunteer program is created with the intention to support the growth of the Volunteer by matching their interests with the needs of History Theatre. History Theatre has several opportunities for volunteering but the majority of our volunteers support the theatre through ushering.

All Volunteers with History Theatre must meet the following Qualifications

- Must be 13 years of age or older.
- Possess excellent customer service skills.
- Be comfortable in an environment that might require flexibility and adaptability.
- Have the ability to work as part of a team and apply feedback.

Compensation

- Ushers are allowed to watch the show on the night of their usher commitment.
- Event Volunteers get a complementary ticket to see the show on any night other than the night they are volunteering; this will be as a voucher to return at later date.
- All the other positions get one complementary ticket per four hours worked, redeemed through the Audience Services Associate or History Theatre staff member.

Physical Demands

While volunteer ushering with History Theatre, volunteers must be willing and able to stand for up to one hour and climb stairs comfortably. History Theatre will attempt to make any reasonable accommodation if notified prior to shifts or when applicant goes through training.

Dismissal and Retirement

Volunteering with History Theatre is a privilege with high expectations of professionalism for our volunteers. We could not do without our volunteers and we value all the work they do, regarding them just as we would paid staff. Likewise, any issues with volunteers are handled in the same way that we would handle issue with staff. An incident, or not following History Theatre policies and Volunteer responsibilities as described in this manual, will be handled as follows:

- 1) A verbal warning will be given by the House Manager.
- 2) If ignored, the Audience Services Manager will have a conversation with the Volunteer, either by phone or in person.
- 3) If the improper behavior continues, the Volunteer will be retrained in the expectations of the position and in customer service etiquette.

- 4) If after these reminders and retraining, dismissal will be given.

Enrollment in the Volunteer Program cont.

Although not foreseen, immediate dismissal could be given after multiple violations in one evening. For immediate dismissal to occur the Audience Services Manager and Audience Development Director must agree on the grounds for dismissal and will have a discussion with the volunteer to investigate the incident.

The Audience Services Manager and Audience Development Director also reserve the right to retire volunteers who can no longer adequately perform their volunteer duties. If after reminders and retraining, a Volunteer is still failing to meet requirements, the Volunteer will be asked to meet with the Audience Services Manager and Audience Development Director to discuss terms of retirement. Such terms will include a personal thank you as well as complementary season tickets for upcoming History Theatre seasons.

Theater Customer Service

Volunteers of the theater serve an ambassador role, representing the theater and being a primary point of contact and interaction for patrons. It is important to appear and address patrons in a manner that positively represents the theater and maintains an environment of exceptional personal-centered service.

Theater is the perfect venue to learn and utilize such level of service. In an environment that calls for punctuality, clear communication, collaboration, and going with the flow, customer service can make or break a show for some patrons. With person-centered service, one should strive to make the best experience possible for patrons and to make things right with them. Keeping calm under pressure and remaining polite is vital, especially if a patron is upset. It is important to keep a “show must go on” mentality when trouble arises, for only the worst of events will derail a performance. Quick thinking and spontaneity in line with knowledge of the theater’s procedures can solve most problems that occur and Volunteers are expected to enforce certain rules and regulation of the theater on their own. However, if a problem appears that a Volunteer cannot handle, they should alert a House Manager and let them handle the issue.

The best ways to practice person-centered service are through actions such as the following:

- Smile when greeting patrons.
- Be proactive and ask them how you may help (“Can I help you to your seat?” etc).
- Stay visible and available but don’t hover.
- Be adaptable, empathetic, patient, and consistent.

Volunteers are only as good those that work with them. You should feel supported by the Front of House staff and other volunteers. If you do not, please let the Audience Services Associate know the specifics of the issue in order to resolve the problem.

Volunteer Positions

Ushering

The majority of our volunteers assist History Theatre by ushering for productions. We expect ushers to work for more than one production. This way ushers are able to become familiar with the theatre which allows them to better serve History Theatre patrons. Ushers assist patrons in many ways through answering questions, helping them find their seats, and through excellent customer service.

Administrative/Clerical

History Theatre often has both ongoing and short term projects which are administrative in nature. A volunteer in this capacity would be paired with a History Theatre staff member working on a specific project or area. The projects range in time commitment from once a month, to once a week. Placement is made by the Audience Services Associate. Then the Audience Services Associate, History Theatre staff member, and Volunteer check in after four shifts to ensure that all parties are good fits for the tasks required.

Events

Throughout the year History Theatre hosts several events. Volunteers assist staff in various ways during these events. Volunteers who work events are flexible and take direction well. The tasks are as assigned and the Volunteer must be able to work under pressure and remain calm.

Education/Community Outreach

History Theatre has partnerships with many local schools and adult groups. A volunteer who wishes to assist us in this area would work closely with our Group Sales Manager and Audience Services Associate on assigned projects.

Artistic/Production

History Theatre has an extensive artistic and production staff. Volunteers who assist in this area would be paired with a staff member and work on specific projects usually associated with a specific production.

Internships

Provides a learning experience for a student to learn more about the operations of a theatre. With a designated duration, interns are interviewed and paired with a History Theatre staff member who provides the best fit to the student's interests and needs.

If you are interested in taking on a volunteer role listed above of personal interest to you, please contact the Audience Services Associate to discuss such opportunities.

Volunteer Ushering

Overview

As a volunteer usher your primary responsibility is for the safety and comfort of the History Theatre's patrons.

All Volunteer Ushers Must

- Work with the House Manager and Front of House staff to greet patrons and show them to their seats.
- Assist with any issues that come up during the course of a performance such as seating concerns, falls or other medical events, or conditions which require evacuation.
- Assist persons who may have different needs, i.e. wheelchair access, frail persons, and children. Report safety concerns to the House Manager, and Audience Services Associate.
- Graciously respond to patron requests, i.e. provide directions, restrooms, and parking facilities.
- Be willing to make a commitment to work five shows per season to the best of your ability.
- Be comfortable dealing with large groups and individuals with different needs.
- Be comfortable in an environment that might require flexibility and adaptability.
- Be able to climb stairs and stand for up to one hour at a time.
- Be trained prior to ushering to learn policies and practices and to become familiar with History Theatre. Further, all ushers must attend a biennial training to be updated on History Theatre procedures and to further growth as a volunteer.

Appearance and Conduct

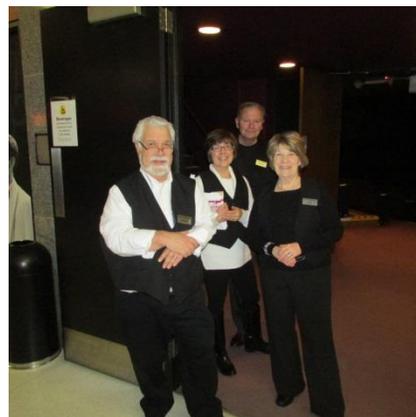
All ushers must adhere to the Usher uniform. The uniform provides a visual signal to patrons that those wearing the uniform are ushers ready to be of assistance. If an usher does not come in uniform, they will not be allowed to usher.

Volunteers must arrive wearing:

- Black or white shirt/blouse or sweater
- Black pants (no Jeans)/skirt
- Black shoes (no athletic shoes)

History Theatre will provide:

- Black usher Vests
- Volunteer/usher name tags
- Optional flashlights



Skirts should be no shorter than just above the knee. If you want to wear a sweater over your shirt/blouse, that must also be black or white.

Please no chewing gum.

Volunteer Ushering Roles

Ticket Verifier

Ticket Verifiers are positioned in the lobby next to the main entrance doors to the theatre and standing on the granite flooring. Their role is as follows:

- Stay near the doors, never retreating into the inner lobby of the theatre.
- Greet and welcome patrons to the theatre, handle any questions about the theatre or the performance (where restrooms are located, length of show, how long intermission is, etc.).
- Check the patron's ticket to ensure correct time and date.
- If the patron has a ticket to a different show, direct the patron to the Box Office where a Box Office Associate will try to rectify the situation.
- After checking the ticket, direct the patrons to the correct doors of the theatre.
- Return to the door during intermission to enforce History Theatre's policies not allowing food in the theatre as well as to answer any further questions.



Seat Escorts

The Seat Escorts' primary responsibility is to seat patrons both on the main level as well as in the balcony. History Theatre's balcony is accessed by 15 stairs; there is no elevator access to the balcony. Seat Escorts:



- Greet the patron and walk the patron to their seat.
- Once at the seats, distribute programs to the patrons.
- If there appears to be a double seating issue, double check the time and date on the tickets as well as the seats.
 - If the tickets appear to be the same, take one ticket from each party and have the standing party go either to the back of the house, inside the inner lobby, or to the front of the house near the stage. Keep the aisles clear to allow other patrons to continue to be

seated. Bring the tickets to the House Manager and quickly convey what has been done and where the issue is occurring.

Hearing Enhancement

Hearing Enhancement is the first position to be removed if there is a lack of volunteers. The Hearing Enhancement table is set up in the lobby across from the Box Office and will have a sign, pen, sign-out sheet, headphones, and hearing enhancement devices. The volunteer is responsible for:

- Taking down the full name of the patron and number of the corresponding hearing enhancement device. This service is provided free of charge but to ensure safe return an identification card is kept until the device is returned.
- During intermission and after the show, the Hearing Enhancement Volunteer returns to the table and assists anyone either returning or asking to try the devices.

*All volunteer ushers must be able to fill at least two of these roles. Occasionally additional roles are added, these will be assigned by the House manager on the night of a show.

Scheduling Procedures

Scheduling

Scheduling takes place before the start of the season. A letter detailing the upcoming season will be sent to the Volunteer's home along with a calendar; form to fill out, and upcoming training schedule. Please return schedule to History Theatre by the date on the form. We will email out schedules as soon as possible. If a volunteer begins volunteering during the middle of the season the schedule will be worked out between the Audience Services Associate and the new volunteer.

Commitment

A fully functioning team of volunteers consists of nine volunteers and the House Manager at each performance. We understand that emergencies do happen which may require you to cancel your shift but when scheduling make it a priority to come to each shift.

Changing Dates

All date changes need to be made by phone or email; this helps to ensure accurate records. Please let the Audience Services Associate know as soon as possible when you need to reschedule your shift.

- **On the day** of your shift if you are unable to make it call **651-292-4323 x 100** to talk to someone in the box office or leave a message on this answering machine as it is checked prior to all performances and your absence can be relayed to the House Manager.
- **As soon as you know of a scheduling conflict** call the Audience Services Associate at **651-292-4323 extension 102, or at volunteer@historytheatre.com**.

Replacements

The Audience Services Associate will be in charge of all replacements. This ensures that the History Theatre will have enough volunteer ushers with the capabilities to fill each shift and that the ushers are properly trained.

Please do not bring friends/family that have not gone through training without approval from the Audience Services Associate.

Procedures

Punctuality

Ushers are expected to arrive on time and be ready to work at the start of the shift. Please be dressed in your uniform and use the facilities prior to the start of the shift. Tardiness delays the entire team and causes the House Manager to have less time to properly go over shift details.

Shifts typically start one hour prior to the start of the show. This allows the House Manager half an hour to assign duties and go over any special notes for the show. The house opens half an hour before the show starts and ushers need to be in position five minutes before house opens. **Never open the house doors or allow a patron to enter until the House Manager tells you the house is open.**

Etiquette with Performers and Patrons

Ushers are not allowed under any circumstance to approach a performer or celebrity patron attending a performance to ask for an autograph or to pose for a photograph.

Personal Belongings

Personal belongings need to be stored on the coat rack brought out to ushers by the House Manager. The rack is then placed in our basement offices which are kept locked. History Theatre is not responsible for lost or stolen items, so please leave valuables and large sums of money at home.

Intermissions

When intermission begins:

- Ushers are to return to their assigned area so that they are available to assist and direct patrons.
- Seat Escorts maybe assigned a position by the House Manager during intermission.
- Intermission is a break for the audience, but not for the staff.
- One usher will also be assigned to stay near the Pre-Order Drinks table.
- During intermission, ushers are usually free to use the restroom; however, one usher must always cover each of the doors and the Pre-Order Drinks table until all drinks have been picked up.
- History Theatre Volunteers are allowed to have a complementary fountain soda or coffee, if available, at the end of the intermission. They must wait until all the patrons have been served. If a Volunteer would like a beverage at the beginning of the show they will need to pay for the beverage. Volunteers will not be served alcohol during their shift.

End of Performances

When the performance has ended:

- Ushers are to stand at the doors and assist patrons with any further questions.

- After all the patrons have left, ushers will walk through the seating aisles and help clean up any debris. Any lost items will be given to the House Manager. When the House Manager sees that most of the patrons have left they will bring out gloves and trash bags. Please do not start cleaning until all the patrons have left the theatre.
- When the House Manager says the house is clean then return to the back of the theatre to collect your personal belongings.

Backstage/Onstage

No Ushers are allowed to go backstage or onstage unless otherwise instructed by the House Manager.

Cell Phones

Ushers are not allowed to use cell phones while ushering. We request that you turn them off before your shift starts. If there is an emergency that you must attend to, tell the House Manager who will hold on to your phone for you during the show and will then find you if you are needed.

Parking

- There is metered parking surrounding the theatre, with meters free after 5:00pm from Monday-Saturday and Free all day on Sundays.
- There is parking available in the 7 A Underground Ramp on Exchange Street. The Entrance is between Wabasha and St. Peter Street. This ramp is connected to the Theatre via Skyway by taking the elevator to the 2nd floor and turning Left. The cost for this ramp is \$6.00 in the evening and weekends and hourly during the weekdays. Costs are subject to change.
- The cost of parking is tax-deductible for History Theatre Volunteers (be sure you save your receipts.) History Theatre cannot reimburse volunteers for parking expenses.

Theatre Polices

Smoking

History Theatre is a non-smoking facility. A designated smoking area is located outside on the ground floor level on the Cedar Ave side of the building. At times smoking is allowed on stage as part of the production. History Theatre is currently utilizing vapor cigarettes; this is subject to change depending on the director's choice. Volunteers will be told prior to the performance and signs will state when smoking will be present.



Food and Drink

Beverages purchased at History Theatre Concessions are allowed into the theatre. Outside beverages are not allowed into the theatre. Food is never allowed into the theatre as they distract from the production and cleanliness of the theatre.

Photographs and Videotaping

Photographs and video taping by patrons and Volunteers is not permitted. If someone is taking photographs or videotaping bring this to the attention of the House Manager. Occasionally, History Theatre will videotape or have photographs taken for archival or marketing purposes; Ushers will be

notified when this is happening by the House Manager.

Theatre Policies cont.

ADA/Wheelchair Access

If you encounter a patron with an ADA/wheelchair ticket seat, please escort them to the proper seat. If you encounter a patron with a ticket for an area other than the accessible seats and needs to have access to accessible seats, notify the House Manager.

Duplicate Tickets

In the event that there seems to be a duplicate ticketing situation, read all tickets separately; check the date, time, and performance name and ticketed seat(s). If one of the patrons is at the incorrect performance send them to the Box Office to acquire a seat for that show. If you are unable to solve the problem, have the standing party move either to the inner lobby or down to the stage, chose the way that is closest, and keeps the aisles open. Bring one ticket from each party to the House Manager who will then resolve the issue.

Late Seating Policy

History Theatre reserves the right to delay seating if necessary. Late seating is up to the discretion of the House Manager. Volunteer Ushers do not need to help with late seating unless asked by the House Manager.

Electronic Devices

There is an announcement at the beginning of the performance to turn off cell phones, pagers, and similar items.

Aisle, Stairs and Landings

All aisles, stairs, and landings must be kept clear as per Fire Regulations and Codes. Patrons are NOT allowed to stand or sit in these areas.

Threatening, Abusive, or Vulgar Language

History Theatre expects volunteers to treat everyone with respect and any threatening, abusive, and vulgar language will not be tolerated. If you encounter any of the above language from patrons, fellow volunteer, or History Theatre Staff member report the language to the House Manager who will work to dissipate the situation. If you ever feel threatened or unsafe please find the House Manger immediately and let them work to resolve the situation.

Emergency Procedures

Medical Emergency

If a patron falls, one Volunteer will stay by the patron, observing and reassuring, and one will go to Concessions and notify them that there is an emergency and that the House Manager is needed. The House Manager will bring a first aid kit and phone to the fallen patron and assist as needed. If further help is needed, House Manager may ask that 911 be called or that the volunteer assist by keeping crowds away or by meeting the ambulance. The House Manager will obtain patron's name and phone number and have them fill out a form for follow-up done by staff later in the week.

Where emergency supplies are located:

- First Aid kit is located in the Box Office.
- Phone is located at in the Box Office.
- Fire Extinguisher is located outside the house left backstage exit doors on floor and in the Box Office.

Evacuation

- The patrons in sections A, B, would go out the exit on House Left.
The patrons in sections D,E would go out the exit on House Right.
The patrons in section C would go straight onto the stage and toward the left.
- The patrons on the left in the balcony would go down the left stairs and out the loading dock (turning right as they leave the theatre). The patrons on the right in the balcony would go down the stairs on the right and out the main entrance on Cedar Ave and 10th Street.
- The safest place for everyone to meet is in the Health Parking Lot which is located across 10th street.
- In the event of an evacuation we **cannot** use the elevators so those with accessibility needs will be directed to the terrace (main entrance on the corner of Cedar and 10th Street) and then the emergency personnel will be informed of their location.

Severe Weather

The production will stop and the House Manager will give a speech to the entire house. The ushers job is to help the patrons know where to go during any severe weather when we are asked to take shelter. The safest place in the History Theatre is downstairs in the hallway where the House Manager stores the vests on the Lower Level.

*Two Volunteers will be assigned each show to assist those with accessibility needs.

*For both the severe weather and evacuation Ushers do not have to volunteer to help if not comfortable however they must let the House Manager know when they are assigning duties at the start of the shift. Additionally, we can never physically force a patron to stay or go.

Accessibility

Wheelchair Accessibility

- The wheelchair entrance to the building is located on Cedar Street, half way between 10th and Exchange Streets (during construction this has been moved to Wabasha St).
- There is an elevator immediately to the right of the Cedar Street entrance.
- There are six accessible seats for wheelchairs and additional seats for companions.
- The restrooms on the lower level have wheelchair-accessible amenities.
- There is a spare wheelchair in the box office should a patron need additional assistance.

For patrons with limited mobility, or needing additional assistance with seating, there are 20 seats that can be reached without having to go up or down any stairs. These seats are located in Row K on the main floor of the theater. History Theatre has a balcony; there are 15 stairs to get up to the balcony, there is no elevator access to the balcony.

Hearing Enhancement Receivers

- There are 23 hearing enhancement receivers for patron to use.
- Receivers are available in the lobby 30 minutes before the start of the show.
- Receivers are available on a first-come-first-served basis.
- Receivers are free of charge but a photo I.D. and phone number is required.

American Sign Language & Audio Description

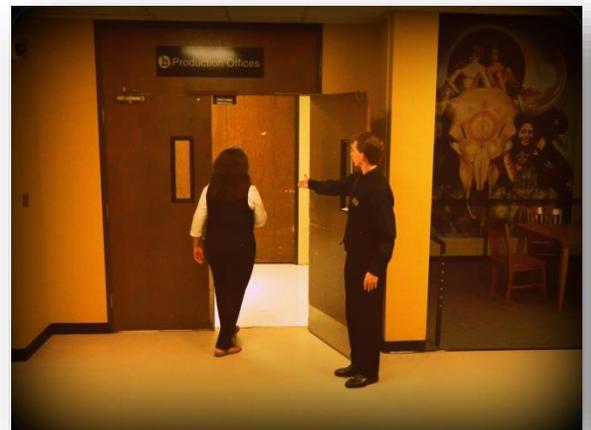
History Theatre provides ASL interpreted and Audio Described performances once for each production.

Low-vision Services

History Theatre provides audio described performances once for each production. Braille and large-print playbills are available at the box office before performances.

Working with People who have Different Needs

- **Put the person before the disability.** When speaking to individuals speak to them not to their disability. Rather than saying “the blind patron to the right of the front door” say the “the patron standing to the right of the front door who is blind.”
- **Interact with the patron who has a disability.** Never assume that just because someone has a disability (physical, mental, emotional), that he or she cannot appreciate your attention. Ask the patron questions and give them the same quality experience you would afford any other patron.
- **Speak directly to the visitor with a disability, not to his or her companion.** If a visitor with a disability is visiting History Theatre with a companion, never speak “through” the companion. Asking questions of the companion such as, “Do you think she might want to sit further to the left” alienates and objectifies the patron with a disability. Ask her directly if she would like to move.
- **If a patron who is deaf asks you a question through an interpreter, direct your answer to the patron, not to the interpreter.**
- **Ask if you may offer assistance, but never force your help.** Many patrons with disabilities make their way around without assistance. Never assume anyone needs your help. When helping patrons down the steps **offer your arm but never grab the patrons arm**, allow them to choose if they want your help.

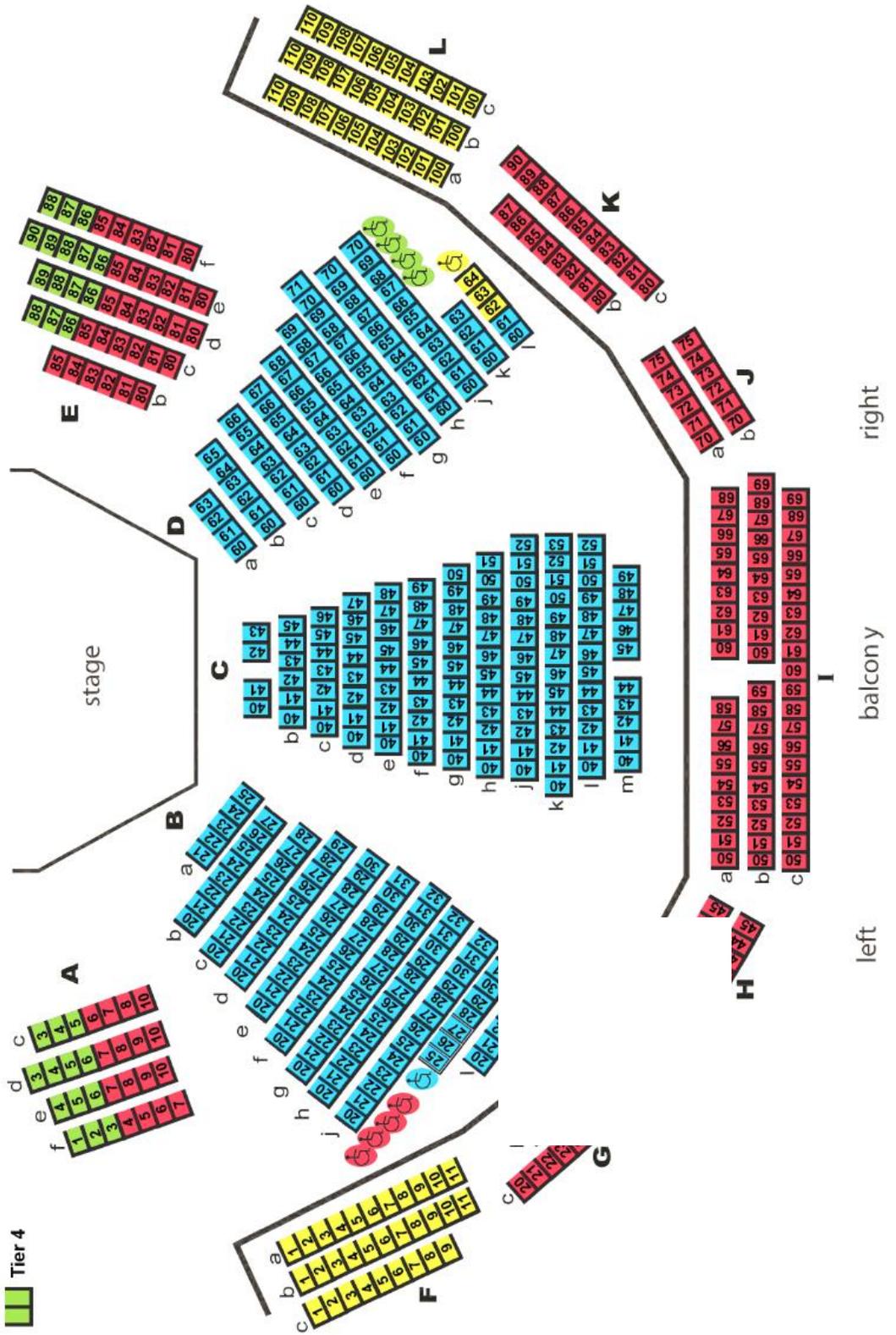


Seating Chart and Sample Tickets

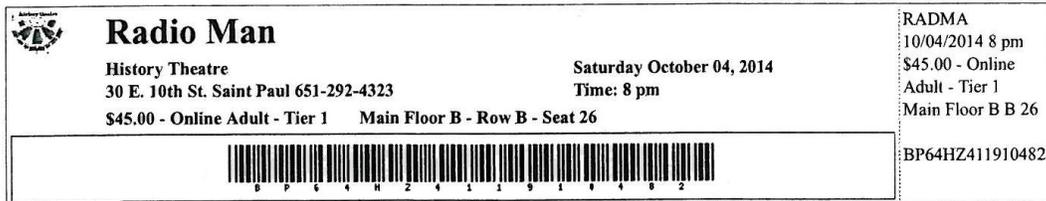
history theatre

(Crawford Livingston Theater)

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4



Sample tickets include: box office printed, online, and printed from email



RADMA
Olberding
10/4/2014
45.00
B-26
Main...
Sale 275093



Note: Patrons may also use their cell phones to present their tickets through ones they have received via email.

History Theatre Volunteer Agreement

This agreement is to certify that have read the Volunteer Manual and understand my duties and the responsibilities as a Volunteer at History Theatre.

Sign:

Date:

Contact Information:

(Please Print Legibility)

Full Name:

Preferred First Name:

I am able and willing climb stairs:

Yes

No

Full Address:

I am willing to be on Call:

Yes

No

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Additional Information:

Birthday

Month:

Day:

Favorite Animal:

Favorite Vacation Location:

Previous or Current employer(s)

Emergency Contact Information:

Emergency Contact Name:

Relationship:

Emergency Contact Phone Number:

Allergies or other medical conditions: