

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

February 2024



Thank you for donating your valuable time at the Janesville Performing Arts Center. We appreciate your assistance in providing a quality experience for audiences of all ages as they attend performances throughout the season. JPAC is an important part of this community and our volunteers play an important role in that!

The following material is an overview of usher guidelines, theatre policies, basic building information, and emergency procedures.

Please contact me if you have questions about any of this information. We welcome your input.

Gratefully,

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JPAC VOLUNTEERS

The JPAC Volunteers serve the front-of-house needs of the Janesville Performing Arts Center (JPAC). We are a group with a professional image and each of us must adhere to the policies and procedures of the group. As a volunteer usher, you play a significant role in assuring that the many events at the Janesville Performing Arts Center run smoothly. Though you may not realize it, you are a major reason why our events are so successful. When you are here, you become a public relations representative for JPAC. Many of our patrons will come into direct contact with only you. All of our guests – both young and old – are very important people and deserve our warm and positive help. Therefore, your courteous and upbeat attitude, warm smile, helpfulness, and dedication to working events are extremely valuable to JPAC. Remember, you are representing the Janesville Performing Arts Center. Please do not share any negative opinion of any performance or event content; we are the advocate for all of our artists. The impression we make on our young guests is especially important, for they are our audience of the future.

GENERAL USHER REQUIREMENTS

- Physical requirements may include, carrying up to 15 pounds, walking up and down staircases, standing for at least 30 minutes, and the ability to read tickets.
- Volunteers must be 15 years of age or older.
- Volunteers must be comfortable interacting with the public in a welcoming manner.
- Volunteers are expected to stay through the entire performance and complete all assigned tasks.
- JPAC reserves the right to appoint and/or terminate volunteer ushers if deemed necessary.

We strive to make our volunteering opportunities accessible to the largest number of people possible. If you have accessibility requirements that you aren't sure could be accommodated, please contact us so we can work together to accommodate you in this or another assignment.

INFORMATION FOR USHERS

CONTACT INFORMATION

Janesville Performing Arts Center: 408 S. Main Street, Janesville, WI 53545

Mailing Address: PO Box 8104, Janesville, WI 53547

Volunteer Coordinator: Alexis O'Connell, alexis@janesvillepac.org

Box Office: 608-758-0297 x1

PARKING

Parking is free and available in the JPAC parking lot. Guests and Volunteers often will have to park on the street or other public lots in the area during especially busy events.

USHER SIGN-UP

We use Sign Up Genius to coordinate our shift sign ups. Each Monday, the volunteer team will receive an email with the upcoming schedule as well as a link to the Sign Up Genius. We typically schedule shifts two months in advance. If you have trouble with the Sign Up Genius, email the volunteer coordinator for assistance.

USHER MEETINGS

There will be an usher meeting prior to the start of each performance to disseminate information to the ushers in preparation for the performance. The start time posted on Sign Up Genius is the time you need to arrive by. Please be on time! Please sign in for attendance purposes and to ensure that an usher's hours of service are recorded. The Sign In Sheet is located in the Usher Cabinet.

The House Manager will disseminate the following information at these meetings:

- The expected attendance for the performance
- Specific timings regarding the performance
- The procedure for controlling and seating the guests who arrive late to the performance
- Assigning Roles for before and during the performance

USHER REQUIREMENTS

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- The Janesville Performing Arts Center is committed to providing quality customer service to the organizations who use the facility and to the guests who attend the performances.
- Ushers play a key role in customer service. It is essential for all of our ushers to seize the opportunities they have to make a positive impression upon everyone they come into contact with.
- It is particularly important for our ushers to understand all of the JPAC usher responsibilities.
 - Special attention should be devoted to protecting the performance environment and to prevent disruptions from occurring.
 - Extra special attention must be devoted to familiarizing yourself with the Emergency Procedures. Ushers provide a critical role in guest safety.
- We recommend that our ushers review the contents of the Usher Manual often.
- Ushers are required to carry out all procedures in the manual in a courteous and professional manner.
- Ushers who are unable or unwilling to perform according to the Performing Arts Center's standards will be dismissed.

TRAINING

- Ushers are required to read the Usher Manual before working any performances.
- All volunteers must sign a Code of Conduct prior to any volunteer shift.

UNIFORM

- All ushers should adhere to the dress code to present a cohesive, professional appearance.
- As a representative of JPAC, please arrive to usher with a professional level of personal hygiene. Please refrain from wearing strong perfume, cologne or aftershave when ushering.
- The dress code is as follows:
 - White Tops (button up, polo, or JPAC shirt) and Black Bottoms. Please avoid wearing open-toed shoes or Jeans.
 - Name Tags. Ushers are required to wear their name tag. Name tags are given after an usher has volunteered for 5 or more events.

FLASHLIGHTS

- All ushers are requested to carry a small, working flashlight when serving as an usher. JPAC has a supply in the Usher cabinet.

SCHEDULING

- JPAC utilizes an online tool for all usher scheduling. Slots are filled on a first-come-first-serve basis.
- To access the online tool, click on the link in a recent Volunteer Update email.
- If you have never used the site, you must register. If you have previously used the site, you can login.
- Follow the instructions on the screens to sign up for and cancel performances.

- Sign Up Genius will send email reminders 2 days prior to the event you signed up for.
- We request that you sign up to usher at least once a month. If an usher has a history of failing to sign up they will be dismissed from the program.
- If you need to change your schedule less than 48 hours before the performance, please call the Volunteer Coordinator. Otherwise changes should be made through Sign Up Genius.

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

- JPAC relies upon our ushers to be present on the dates when they are scheduled; we depend upon our ushers to arrive on time.
- JPAC does not expect or require our ushers to report when they are ill. Please call the Volunteer Coordinator if you are unable to volunteer.
- Please note ushers are expected to park on the street or near the library so guests can park closer to the building.
- On occasion JPAC will open the house early, if this is the case, we will inform you at the time of sign-up.

POLICIES REGARDING WATCHING PERFORMANCES

- Ushers must remain in their assigned positions, until released by the House Manager.
- Ushers may neither go themselves nor escort guests to any backstage area unless specifically instructed by JPAC Staff.
- Ushers must remain quiet and refrain from talking inside the theatre as they watch a performance.
- Ushers are required to sit in the designated seats for the following reasons:
 - To be available for guest assistance.
 - To be accessible for emergencies such as theatre evacuation.
 - To monitor the audience and ensure that guests are having an optimum experience.

HANDICAP LIFT OPERATOR

- Handicap lift operators are responsible for assisting guests requiring lift services.
- Greet the guest, politely verify that they require the lift services.
- Ensure the lift is on the proper level and hold the door open for the guest. Inform the guest to hold onto the handrail inside the lift and not to touch or lean against the walls. Inform them that you will operate the lift controls and all they have to do is hold on or sit tight. Close the lift door and press and hold the up or down button from outside the lift (only one guest should occupy the lift at a time).
- When the lift stops moving, release the button, open the door for the guest, and say something like “Enjoy the show!”

COAT CHECK/MERCHANDISE

- This person is stationed in the coat check room and is responsible for checking and hanging coats during performances.
- Coat check is free with a suggested donation. Any donations that are given must be put into the donation box.

- This person is also responsible for selling any JPAC merchandise and should be trained properly on the Square System (Credit Card Reader)
- You may also frequently get asked questions about where things are and the wifi password. This position should familiarize themselves with these answers prior to their shift.

STORING AND SECURING BELONGINGS

- Ushers may store belongings in the assigned usher seating areas, or in the Box Office. Items stored in the Box Office cannot be accessed until after the performance. Cellphones must be turned off or silenced until the performance ends.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

- Ushers may consume food and beverage until guests arrive. All food and drink consumption must cease while greeting and assisting guests.
- Consuming alcohol while ushering is not permitted.

WEATHER

- The occurrence of inclement weather is when we need our ushers the most! Please keep in mind that we rarely cancel a performance ahead of time. While we assume ushers will make every effort to arrive for their scheduled shift, we fully expect volunteers to put their safety first regarding the weather.

USHER SURVEY

- Volunteer feedback is important to us, so all ushers with a valid email address will receive an usher survey at the end of the season.
- If a volunteer has any comments, ideas, or issues at any time during the season, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at sales@janesvillepac.org.

WORKING WITH HOUSE MANAGERS

- The House Manager will alert ushers when the house is about to open and when they may be seated. Should any issues or questions arise during the ushering shift, ushers are encouraged to seek out the House Manager.
- At the end of the show, please do not leave without checking in with the House Manager.

TERMINATION OF USHER STATUS

- Although we hate to do it, if a volunteer fails to attend three usher assignments with no prior warning and/or fails to uphold the rules and values presented in this handbook, they will no longer be allowed to usher.

INFORMATION ABOUT JPAC

RESTROOMS

Restrooms and drinking fountains are located in the main Lobby hallway.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost and found articles should be turned in to the box office. Items can be inquired about during our Box Office Hours.

FOOD AND BEVERAGES

Outside food and/or drink are not allowed inside the theatre (unflavored water in bottles with spill-proof caps are permitted). Garbage cans are located by the doors.

RECORDING

Recording and photography devices are strictly forbidden during all professional performances. If you see this occurring, you should ask the guest to stop. If they continue, report it to the House Manager/JPAC Staff.

CELL PHONES

The use of cell phones is not allowed during a performance. Ideally, cell phones should be turned off. The lights from cell phones are a distraction to performers and other audience members. Guests should also turn off beepers, electronic watches, video games, and tablets prior to the performance.

NO PETS

No pets of any kind (apart from service dogs) are allowed on the grounds or in the theatre. If you encounter a non-service animal, please note their location, and inform the House Manager immediately.

WHEELCHAIR SEATING

Wheelchair seating is available at these locations in the theatre (J22, J23, P23, P25, P12, P14). Transfer seats are located at (M1, J122, G23, J101, M2, G22). This seating can be pre-arranged with the Box Office.

BOX OFFICE

For ticketed events, the Box Office is open 1 hour prior to the performance.

Online tickets can be purchased 24 hours a day at www.janesvillepac.org

HANDICAP ACCESSIBILITY

JPAC is handicap accessible. There is wheelchair seating in the back rows of the theatre as well as J22 and J23. There is a lift from the lobby to the theatre floor.

HEARING DEVICES

JPAC has installed a hearing system that allows the patrons to connect with their own device.

Instructions can be found here: <https://janesvillepac.org/faq>

USHER PROCEDURES

SCANNING TICKETS INSTRUCTIONS

- Cordially greet all guests who pass through the entrance to the theatre.
- Ask all guests to present their tickets to ensure everyone entering is authorized to be here.
- Make sure the tickets are actual tickets and not the email or receipt. Guests may have tickets, printed paper from home, or confirmation on their phone. They must show you a QR code.
- Scan the code using the JPAC scanners.
- Direct them to the box office if they need additional tickets or if their tickets are for the wrong date. Prohibit anyone who does not have a ticket from attending the performance.
- Be sure to check or ask if their tickets are for the main floor or the balcony. Direct the guests inside the appropriate doors.
- Keep the flow of guest traffic moving quickly, but safely.

ADMISSION POLICIES

- All guests entering the venue for a ticketed event must possess a valid ticket. We do allow lap seating for children who do not require tickets.

BEFORE THE HOUSE OPENS

- There is a lot of activity before the theatre opens for seating, and ushers must stay out of the house while artists and technicians are present in the house or on the stage. The House Manager will let ushers know an appropriate time to enter the theatre and begin prepping their stations.
- When the house opens, ushers are expected to be ready at their posts.
- Ushers are responsible for staffing the main theatre entrance and the balcony (when applicable) to prevent guests from entering the theatre without tickets.
- Please prevent guests from entering any of the seating areas of the theatre until the house manager has given permission to open the house.
- Ushers should familiarize themselves with the theatre layout and gather programs to distribute.

OPENING THE HOUSE

- Generally, guests are allowed to have access to their seats approximately 30 minutes before a performance.
- When it is time to open the theatre for seating, the House Manager will direct ushers to move into their assigned positions.
- Please DO NOT open the doors until the House Manager directs you to.
- Ensure that programs are available to the guest if applicable.

ESCORTING PATRONS TO THEIR SEATS

- All ushers are required to follow this standard operating procedure for escorting guests to their seats:
 - As the guests approach to be seated, an usher should greet them politely by saying, “Good Evening!” or “Good Afternoon!” depending on the time of day.
 - Offer to escort all guests to their seats by asking, “May I show you to your seats?” (Some guests will know where their seats are located and they do not need usher assistance.)
 - Guests are not allowed to bring food or beverage into the Performing Arts Center. Unflavored water in bottles is permitted, but not encouraged. Food/Drink purchased from JPAC are allowed.
 - Ask the guests to present their tickets and check the section, row and seat number to be certain that the guests are in the proper area.
 - All guests should be escorted directly to the row in which they belong.
 - Make certain that the guests know the seat numbers which identify their seats.
 - Conclude by saying, “Enjoy the performance!”

RESPONDING TO SEATING PROBLEMS

- It is not possible for the same tickets to be printed twice.
- Remember to ask to see the tickets of all the guests involved in a seating conflict. Before entering the row, check the identification where the seating problem exists. Inspect the tickets of all the guests who are involved in the situation. Inspect each group separately to make sure they are correct. Never have two sets of tickets in your hand at the same time!
- Check to make sure that all the guests are holding tickets for the performance which is currently taking place.
- Check the date/time printed on the tickets to be certain that all of the guests are present on the correct date.
- Check the section, row and seat numbers printed on the tickets; the guests may be seated in the wrong section or in the wrong row. Check the seats which are occupied by the guests and compare that with the seat numbers printed on the tickets to be certain that the guests are occupying the correct seats.
- The usher must notify the House Manager or the Box Office immediately if they are unable to resolve the seating problem.
- Do not reassign guests without permission from the Box Office or House Manager.

THE PERFORMANCE IS ABOUT TO BEGIN

- The lobby lights are flashed in sequence a few minutes prior to the start of the performance as a signal to the audience that the performance is about to begin.
- The following duties must be carried out when the lobby lights are flashed:
 - Quickly escort guests to their seats before the performance begins.
 - If possible, the ushers should inform the guests in the lobby areas that the performance is about to begin.

- Remove the excess programs and stack them neatly where they will not pose a trip hazard.
- The house lights will be dimmed, signifying the start of the performance. All interior doors leading in and out of the theatre must be closed uniformly at this time.

RESPONDING TO LATE PATRONS

- The artists who perform in JPAC wish to perform in a controlled environment, free of disruptions. Likewise, guests do not want to be distracted.
- The ushering staff is responsible for enforcing the late-comer policy. Therefore all of the ushers are required to remain standing in their assigned positions, outside of the theatre, until the break for late-comer seating occurs or until the House Manager has released you.
- Ushers seated closest to the doors are designated as late-comer seaters. As soon as the house lights dim at the start of the performance, no one may be seated.
- Ushers should offer an explanation to the late-arriving guests as to when they will be allowed to be seated.
- In situations when a late-comer misses the break to be seated, the ushers have permission to seat late-comers in the closest available seats.
- The ushers may use their flashlights to light the aisles and steps for the guests as they escort them to their seats.
- The ushers are allowed to be seated after they have escorted the late-comers to their seats. Occasionally it may be necessary to wait until intermission to seat late-comers.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

- Ushers should sit at their assigned location, as assigned by the house manager.
- Monitor the doors while the performance is in progress to prevent guests from entering the theatre at inappropriate times.
- Make yourself available for guests to report an emergency if necessary.
- When ushers are seated inside the theatre, and the performance is in progress, they are responsible for the following duties:
 - Monitor the behavior of the audience:
 - If a guest is taking photos, text messaging or using an electronic device of any type, during an event where it is prohibited, pursue the problem and attempt to locate the guest. Direct the guest to stop. Contact the House Manager whenever this problem occurs and ask for additional assistance, if necessary.
 - Notify the House Manager immediately if a guest creates a disturbance.
 - Notify the House Manager immediately if a guest develops a medical problem or falls inside the theatre. We will need to collect their name and the circumstances of the event for an incident report.
 - Keep all of the interior theatre doors closed while the performance is in progress.
 - At intermission, make certain that all of the theatre doors are opened and aisles are clear.

AT INTERMISSION

- All of the theatre doors must be uniformly opened when the house lights are brought up to full intensity at the intermission.
- Ushers should remain near their assigned areas during intermission to answer guest questions. Prevent guests from bringing food and beverages into JPAC. All of the theatre doors must be closed uniformly when the house lights are dimmed at the end of intermission. Some guests may be late in returning to their seats. When these circumstances occur, wait for an appropriate time in the performance to seat them.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

- Help clear the house of guests and close theatre doors when empty as soon as the performance is over.
- Pick-up any garbage on the floor or seats.
- Any “gently used” programs may be reused if there is a repeat performance.
- Check out with the House Manager and return usher badges and flashlights to the Usher Cabinet.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

The ushers must understand the procedures to be followed if they become involved in an emergency situation. Notify the House Manager IMMEDIATELY of any emergency situation occurring in or around JPAC.

Our guests see you as a representative of JPAC when you are ushering. You may be the first person on the scene to help a guest or you may assist staff in directing guests. Regardless of the specific situation, the most critical response in any emergency situation is to remain calm. Panic may be as big a problem as the cause of the emergency. Remain calm and follow instructions given to you by the House Manager or JPAC staff member. Please assist us in keeping our audiences calm as we navigate the situation at hand.

MINOR ACCIDENTS AND FALLS

- Ushers should stay with the injured person and send another usher, or guest, if necessary, to get the House Manager.
- If the guest insists that they do not need assistance but appears injured, note the guest’s appearance and where the patron is sitting, and report the incident to the House Manager immediately. Should a guest request a bandage or ice pack, those items are available from the House Manager or Box Office.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

- Determine injury or problem.
- Notify another usher to alert the House Manager/JPAC Staff.
- Always remain with the guest until help comes.

- Volunteers are not required or expected to assist in any first aid procedures.
- If you choose to offer first aid, you do so as a “Good Samaritan” and not as a representative of the Janesville Performing Arts Center.
- There is a first aid kit located in the Usher Cabinet for minor medical needs. You can also get a can of soda (for diabetics) and bottles of water for medical needs only from the bar.

FIRE AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES

- The House Manager, JPAC staff member, or stage manager will instruct the ushers when it is necessary to evacuate the building.
- Guests should be directed to exit via the regular and emergency exits. DO NOT allow guests to exit onto the stage.
- The following announcement will be made from the public address system to inform the guests that it is necessary to interrupt the performance:
 - *Ladies and gentlemen may I have your attention please: It is necessary to discontinue the performance and to dismiss the audience immediately. We request that you follow the directions of the ushers at the back of the house and leave in an orderly fashion. Do not exit onto the stage. Please continue out of the building and keep walking away from the building. Thank you and you may exit now.*
- Ushers should be stationed at the following locations:
 - One at each of the back doors to hold doors open and direct guests out the back of the house out of the building.
 - One at each side of the house, to hold doors open and direct guests out the side doors and out of the building.
 - One at each side of the stage, to direct guests away from the stage, out the side doors and out of the building.

TORNADO WARNING

- In the event of a tornado warning, an announcement will be made with shelter directions. Ushers should also take shelter in adherence to the announcement, helping any guests in need along the way.
- When the warning is over, an “all clear” announcement will be made.
- Designated shelter location is in the basement hallways.

SNOW/WEATHER

- In the event of a cancellation due to weather, ushers will be contacted via email as soon as the decision is made.

SEATING CHARTS

ODDS: House Right
 EVENS: House Left

Janesville PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Main Floor

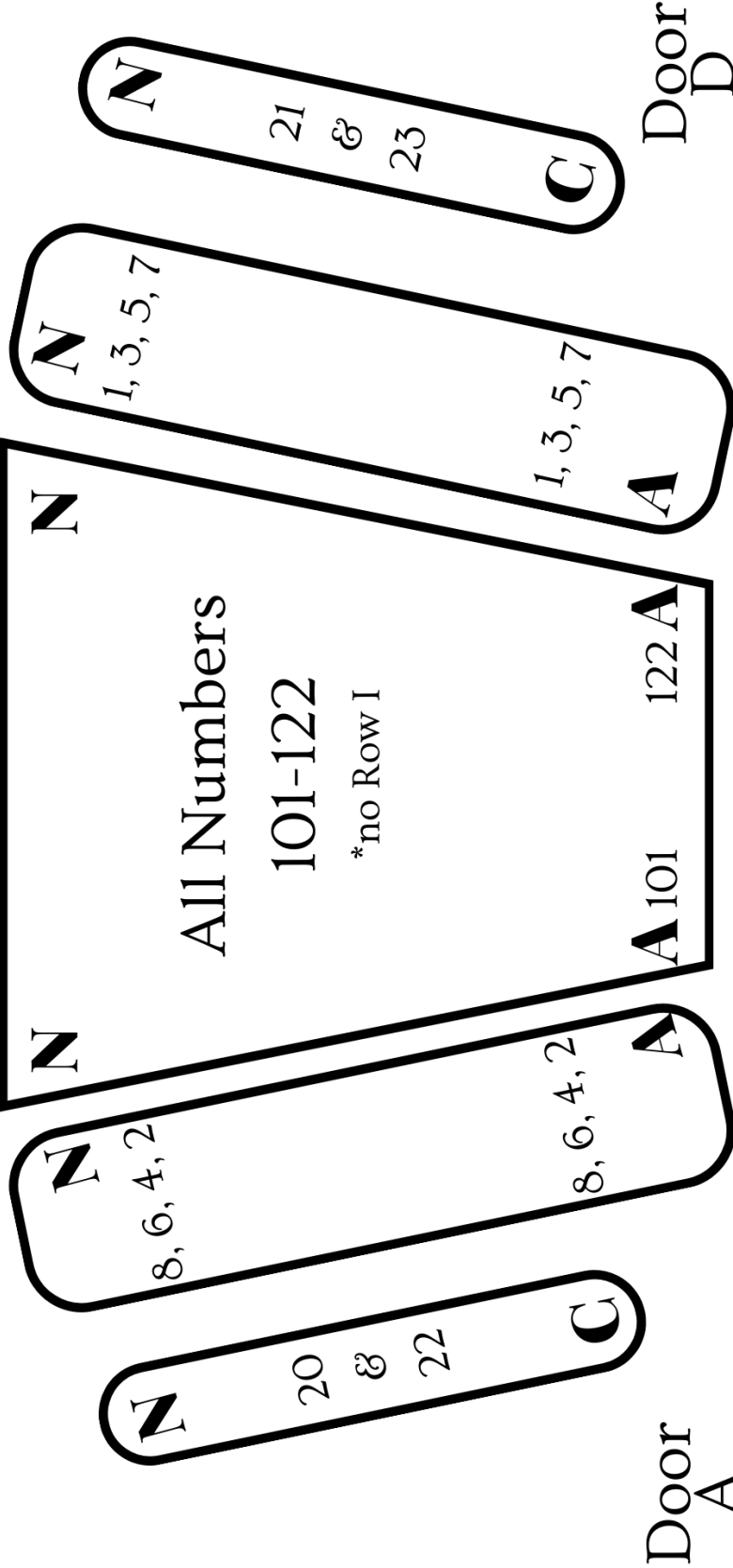
Door B Door C

Row P
 10 8 6 4 2

Row P
 101-105

Row P
 118-122

Row P
 13 15 17 19 21



Balcony:

