

# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## **CARE OF THE PROFESSIONAL THEATRICAL PERFORMER**

**CSM 2016**

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Encore Physical Therapy

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## **DISCLOSURE**

**No relevant financial  
relationships exist**

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## Physical therapists and/or orthopaedist for:

110 in the Shade	Elf	Pat Joey
13	Eve/sday Rapture	Paul Simon's The Capeman
9 to 5	Evita	Promises, Promises
A Christmas Carol	Fame Becomes Me	Radio City's Christmas Spectacular
A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder	Fences	Ragtime
A Little Night Music	Finian's Rainbow	Riverdance on Broadway
A Tale of Two Cities	Follies	Ruined
After Midnight	Footloose	Scandalous
Aladdin	Fueraabruta	Seascape
An American in Paris	Ghost The Musical	Shrek The Musical
Annie	Godspell	Something Rotten
Avenue Q	Grotes	Sondheim on Sondheim
Belle Epoque	Gypsy & Dots	South Pacific
Bernarda Alba	Gypsy	Spider-man, Turn Off the Dark
Big Fish	Hamilton	Spring Awakening
Billy Elliot: The Musical	Happiness	The Addams Family
Bye Bye Birdie	Hot Feet	The Apple Tree
Cabaret	How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying (1995 & 2011)	The Book of Mormon
Carnivale	Hugh Jackman, Back on Broadway	The Drowsy Chaperone
Carousel	In the Heights	The Frogs
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof	La Cage aux Folles	The King and I
Catch Me if You Can	Legally Blonde	The Music Man
Cats	Les Miserable	The Mystery of Edwin Drood
Chaplin	Madonna Sticky and Sweet Tour	The Pajama Game
Chicago	Madonna Rebel Heart Tour	The People in the Picture
Chita Rivera - The Dancer's Life	Madonna MDNA Tour	The Producers
Cinderella on Broadway	Man of La Mancha	The Times They-Are-a-Changin'
Cirque du Soleil's Alegria	Mary Poppins	The Who's Tommy
Cirque du Soleil's Banana Sapeet	Matilda	The Will Rogers Follies
Cirque du Soleil's Corto	Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake	Thou Shalt Not
Cirque du Soleil's Kooza	Miss Saigon	Titanic
Cirque du Soleil's Vaqueal	Monty Python's Spamalot	Waiting for Godot
Cirque du Soleil's Wintuk	Movin' Out	Yanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike
Clifford the Big Red Dog	Motown	War Horse
Come Fly Away	Motown Newsies	West Side Story
Contact	Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme	White Christmas
Cry Baby	On the Twentieth Century	Wicked
Curtains	Once	Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown
Dames at Sea		Young Frankenstein
De La Guarda		
Don't Dress for Dinner		

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand basic musical theatre terminology
- Understand the variety of physical stressors associated with a theatrical production
- Understand the typical schedule and cycle of a theatrical production

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the regulations of Actors' Equity Association as they apply to caring for performers
- Understand the role of a physical therapist in providing onsite care

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## Theatre...

“There are those rare people who can look at the world and see things that the rest of us don’t see until they show us: these are the writers.

There are those special few who can take that vision and turn it back into a world: these are the directors, designers.

There are fearless beings who live in that world and show us who we are: these are our actors.

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There are dedicated people who know why that world matters so very much: crew, theater staff, producers, investors, managers, marketers.

And then there are the people who step forward and say, ‘Show me this world. Open me. Change me;’ these are our audiences.

And when all of these people come together and say, ‘Yes,’ there is theatre.”

Jordan Roth, Tony Award acceptance speech, June 2012

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## DEFINITION

“MUSICAL THEATRE”

Theatrical productions enhanced by music, song and dance

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## HISTORY

- MUSICAL THEATRE DATES BACK FAR LONGER THAN MODERN (CONTEMPORARY) DANCE AND ALMOST AS LONG AS BALLET
- EARLIEST EXAMPLE:  
JOHN GAY'S *THE BEGGAR'S OPERA*, PERFORMED IN LONDON IN 1728

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Currently... SHOWS UTILIZE ANY AND ALL STYLES OF DANCE:

- JAZZ
- TAP
- BALLET
- MODERN
- BALLROOM
- HIP HOP

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## VENUES

- New York, USA: BROADWAY
- London, UK: WEST END
- Other major cities around the world
- TOURS: National, International
- REGIONAL, SUMMER, DINNER THEATRE
- CRUISE SHIPS, THEME PARKS
- INDUSTRIALS (business, marketing)

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## U.S. ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION

- LABOR UNION, FOUNDED 1913
- CONTRACTS FOR DIFFERENT VENUES
- RULES GOVERN EVERY ASPECT OF THEATRE WORK
  - ♦ Applies to work hours, rehearsals, set conditions, travel, health and safety
  - ♦ Current rule book for Broadway shows and tours is 163 pages
- NON-UNION SHOW – less protection

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Please keep in mind this unique aspect of the musical theatre world:

**THE PERFORMER IS  
NOT PAID IF HE or  
SHE MISSES A  
PERFORMANCE**

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## TRAINING OF PERFORMERS

WHO IS YOUR PATIENT?

**EVERY PERFORMER IS  
EXPECTED TO DO EVERYTHING**

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## TYPES OF PERFORMERS

- STARS
- PRINCIPALS
- FEATURED
- ENSEMBLE (CHORUS, "GYPSY")
- STANDBYS
- SWINGS

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A SWING IS A  
CAST MEMBER WHO  
COVERS ALL OR SOME OF  
THE ENSEMBLE ROLES

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## STAGE CONDITIONS

- STAGE USUALLY NOT SPRUNG  
(due to technical requirements)
- Tracks, slots
- Turntables
- RAKE (INCLINE)

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## RAKED STAGE

**STAGE IS INCLINED:**  
HIGHER IN BACK THAN FRONT  
("upstage" back – "downstage" front)

- IMPROVES AUDIENCE SIGHT LINES
- IMPROVES PERSPECTIVE – DESIGN TRICK
- AFFECTS BODY ALIGNMENT

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## RAKED STAGE

**USUAL RAKE**  
(maximum without prior notice to U.S. Equity)

- ½ INCH RISE PER 1 FOOT (~4%)



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## STAGE CONDITIONS

- STAIRS



Hamilton

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

**STAGE CONDITIONS**

- TRAPS
- ELEVATORS (small or large)



- TREADMILLS
- TRAMPOLINES
- LADDERS



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**STAGE CONDITIONS**

- UNEVEN OR IRREGULAR SURFACES



**War Horse**



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**STAGE CONDITIONS**

- SMOKE
- HAZE
- PYROTECHNICS

**Billy Elliot**

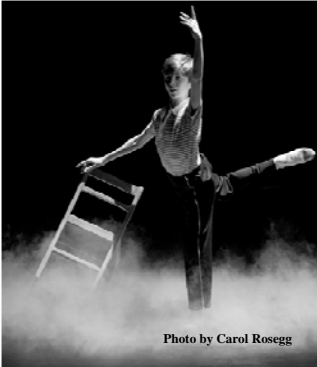


Photo by Carol Rosegg

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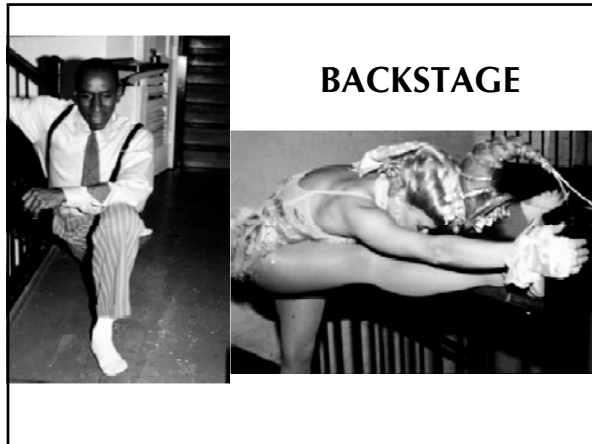
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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer



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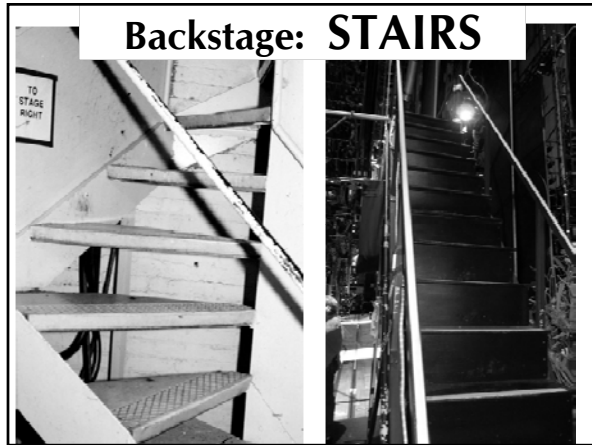
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**Performers' other activities**

- **ACROBATICS**
- **AERIAL WORK**
  - ◆ **FLYING (IN HARNESS)**
  - ◆ **SILKS**
- **PUPPETRY**
- **MOVING SET PIECES**

**War Horse**  
Photo by Paul Koloff

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer



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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## HEAD-DRESSES



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## WIGS



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## With hats



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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

With wireless microphone transmitters



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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## STAGE COMBAT, PRATFALLS

- RESULTS IN BONE CONTUSIONS
  - ♦ PELVIS: ILIAC SPINES, SACRUM
  - ♦ HIP: GREATER TROCHANTER
  - ♦ KNEE: TIBIAL TUBERCLE
- COSTUME DEPARTMENT
  - ♦ PADDING (FOAM, VISCOELASTIC)
  - ♦ UN-WEIGHT (DONUT CUSHION)



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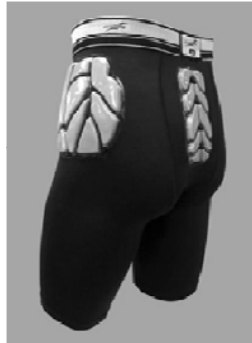
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## STAGE COMBAT, PRATFALLS

- PROTECTIVE SHORTS
- WITH VISCOELASTIC INSERTS
    - ♦ VOLLEYBALL
    - ♦ FIGURE SKATING
  - *E.g.,* Zoombang (less bulky than others), McDavid HexPad



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## “LIFE-CYCLE” IN MUSICAL THEATRE

1. UNEMPLOYED – AUDITIONS
2. WORKSHOP or LAB
3. PRE-PRODUCTION
4. PRODUCTION – REHEARSALS
5. 10 OUT OF 12's
6. PREVIEWS
7. RUN OF THE SHOW

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## 1. UNEMPLOYED – AUDITIONING

- RECEIVE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE
- DANCERS: CLASS TO KEEP IN OPTIMUM SHAPE FOR AUDITIONS
  - ♦ Ballet, theatre dance, jazz, tap
- AUDITIONS
  - ♦ STRENUOUS, REPETITIVE
  - ♦ PERFORM “FULL-OUT” WITH UNFAMILIAR MATERIAL
  - ♦ INJURY: NO INSURANCE COVERAGE

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## 2. LAB or WORKSHOP

- SHOW IS BEING CREATED – then shown to producers for financing
- 4 TO 8 WEEKS
- Hours: 10 AM to 6 PM, 1 hr break
- IF “WORKSHOP” CONTRACT
  - ♦ VERY SMALL SHARE OF PROFITS
  - ♦ FIRST RIGHT OF REFUSAL FOR ROLE IN PRODUCTION (IF THE SHOW GETS PRODUCED)
- WHEN DONE, UNEMPLOYED

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## 3. PRE-PRODUCTION

- SHOW BEING CREATED
- DESIGN and manufacture/purchase
  - ♦ SETS
  - ♦ PROPS
  - ♦ COSTUMES
  - ♦ SHOES
  - ♦ PUPPETS
- GENERALLY NO MEDICAL INPUT regarding ergonomics

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## 4. PRODUCTION: REHEARSALS

- 5 to 6 WEEKS
- Hours: 10 AM to 6 PM, 6 DAYS PER WEEK, 1 HOUR BREAK
- CREATIVITY: what works, what doesn't?
- REPETITION
- COSTUME AND SHOE FITTINGS
- THIS IS THE PERIOD WHEN THE DANCER STOPS TAKING CLASS

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## 5. Tech Rehearsals (10 OUT OF 12's)

- 10 - 14 DAYS
- NOON to MIDNIGHT, 2 hr. dinner break
- FIRST TIME IN THEATRE, USING THE 'REAL' costumes, shoes, props, puppets
- STANDING, WAITING while technical aspects (lights, scenery, etc.) finalized – then dancing full-out
- EXHAUSTION

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## 6. PREVIEWS

- 4 - 6 WEEKS
- 8 PERFORMANCES PER WEEK (PAYING CUSTOMERS)
- Plus: REHEARSALS 1 to 6 PM on days with one performance
- DAILY CHANGES IN SHOW may be "put in" that evening – or not
- Hard, tedious work; little chance to recover from exhaustion

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## 7. RUN OF THE SHOW

- 8 SHOWS PER WEEK (6 DAYS)  
TWO DAYS WITH TWO SHOWS
- REHEARSALS  
CALL TIME: 30 minutes before curtain
- HAZARD CALL – FIGHT CALL – LIFT CALL
- PRODUCTIONS RUN FOR YEARS...

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Please keep in mind this unique aspect of the musical theatre world:

## REPETITION

SAME SHOW,  
8 PERFORMANCES PER WEEK,  
FOR AS LONG AS TICKETS SELL

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## TIME OFF FROM WORK

### LIMITED !

- OFF 1 DAY PER WEEK (sometimes 2)
- WORK MOST HOLIDAYS
- VACATION:
  - ♦ 2 WEEKS PER YEAR
  - ♦ PLAN FAR IN ADVANCE:  
Only one female and one male ensemble member can be off at the same time

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## LIFE ON TOUR

- **UNION VS. NON-UNION**
- **LIMITED TIME IN EACH VENUE**  
1 week or split week: may travel on their “day off” (non-union)
- **TECH REHEARSALS IN EACH VENUE**  
in addition to regular rehearsals
- **SET THE SAME – BUT BACKSTAGE CONFIGURATIONS DIFFERENT**

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## LIFE ON TOUR

- **DIFFICULT FOR PERFORMERS TO:**
  - ♦ **FIND HEALTHY FOOD**
  - ♦ **ACCESS DANCE CLASSES**
  - ♦ **ACCESS GYM**
  - ♦ **DEVELOP A REGULAR FITNESS ROUTINE**
  - ♦ **FIND PERFORMING ARTS MEDICINE PROFESSIONALS**

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## PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

- **LACK OF JOB SECURITY (“GYPSY”)**
  - ♦ **Scrambling to get work**
  - ♦ **No health insurance if not working a minimum number of weeks per year**
  - ♦ **Financial strain when not performing (unemployment insurance limited)**

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

- **WHEN INJURED**
  - ♦ **LOSS OF IDENTITY**
  - ♦ **DAMAGE TO REPUTATION IN THE THEATRE WORLD**
  - ♦ **FEAR** that they may not get hired by certain directors / choreographers if they are known to have been injured

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## PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

- **AGING**
- **CONCERNS WITH TAKING CLASS**

Chorus Line



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## Injury Prevention



A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## WARM UP

- DON'T ASSUME THEY DO THIS, OR KNOW THE BEST WAY !
- NEEDS TO BE ACTIVE EXERCISE, NOT ONLY PASSIVE STRETCHES

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## COOL DOWN

- RARELY DONE
  - ♦ THEATER CLOSES
  - ♦ COMMUTE HOME
  - ♦ TIRED FROM LONG DAY
- SHOULD INCLUDE
  - ♦ PASSIVE STRETCHES
  - ♦ SELF MASSAGE (e.g., ROLLER)

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## *RAKED* STAGE

- INSTRUCTION SESSION FOR CAST: 30-60 MINUTES
- KNOW THE PHYSICAL DEMANDS REQUIRED FOR THE SHOW
- REALIZE THAT THE RAKED SURFACE (*i.e.*, STAGE) MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## **RAKE: THE BASICS**

- A RAKED SURFACE AFFECTS CENTER OF GRAVITY
- A RAKE EXAGGERATES INEFFICIENCIES
- COMMON AREAS OF BREAKDOWN: NECK, LOWER BACK, LOWER EXTREMITIES

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## **Rake instruction session**

- Posture guidelines
- Stabilization exercises
- Cool down: undoing the stress of the rake

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## **Puppets**



- On rare occasions (*namely, one*) we've been brought in during the design process

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## *The Addams Family*



- The prototype of this tentacle was longer and heavier than the piece pictured here
- Holding it was very stressful on the shoulder girdle and trunk
- It was not used for the Broadway show

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## **Puppets**

- Sometimes, we are brought in at the beginning of production after the design process is complete



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## *War Horse* Intervention

- Injury prevention talk to horse teams, specifically focusing on mechanics
- Individual screenings of each actor to establish baseline and address underlying weaknesses
- Small group sessions for each position
- On-site physical therapy; off-site massage and acupuncture

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## Puppets

- Most often:  
The medical team is not brought in to advise on ergonomics until after an injury has happened or Actors' Equity is involved



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## Props and Stage Equipment

Case Study:  
Nessarose  
Wheelchair

WICKED



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Before



After

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## ON-SITE CARE

- Physical therapist or athletic trainer – working together with off-site physician

- Care usually provided backstage:

VERY LIMITED SPACE

NOT MUCH PRIVACY



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## ON-SITE CARE

- Practitioner should be experienced
  - ♦ Work alone – only medical person on-site
  - ♦ Often first to assess performer
  - ♦ Advise management as to whether it is safe for the performer to go on
  - ♦ Need to be able to differentiate:
    - Issues of maintenance / preventive care
    - Problems requiring physician evaluation and treatment

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## INJURY ASSESSMENT

- PHYSICAL THERAPY or ATHLETIC TRAINER EVALUATION
- PHYSICIAN EVALUATION
  - ♦ HISTORY AND PHYSICAL EXAM
  - ♦ DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING
  - ♦ TREATMENT PLAN
  - ♦ WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE AUTHORIZATION (U.S.)
  - ♦ MEDICATIONS (NSAIDS mask pain)

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## NSAIDS- ORAL

- Prescription and over-the-counter
- VOCAL IMPLICATIONS
- MUSCULOSKELETAL IMPLICATIONS



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## NSAIDS – TOPICAL

- SKIN ABSORBS MEDICATIONS WELL
- SYSTEMIC LEVELS CAN BE ACHIEVED
- DELIVERY: GEL vs PATCH
- MEDICATIONS:
  - ♦ VOLTAREN (DICLOFENAC)
    - \* OFF-LABEL (IN USA)
    - \* OVER-THE-COUNTER AROUND WORLD
  - ♦ ANY OTHER NSAID

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## **CONCUSSIONS**

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## The Nitty-Gritty: Care



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## If a performer is injured...

- DO THEY AGREE TO BE OUT?
- IS THERE A COVER FOR THEIR ROLE?
- IS THEIR COVER READY?
- FOR 1 - 14 DAYS: THE SWING COVERS
- FOR MORE THAN 2 WEEKS:  
CONTRACT CAN BE TERMINATED  
Unless they get explicit management  
permission – or take a medical leave

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## U.S. Equity: MEDICAL LEAVE

- DURATION: 1 TO 12 MONTHS  
(assuming show is still open)
- REPLACEMENT PERFORMER IS  
HIRED: limited contract for the exact  
length of time of the medical leave
- NOTICE OF RETURN: management  
must be informed 4 weeks prior
- CAN ONLY BE EXTENDED ONCE

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## MEDICAL LEAVE: How long?

- ALLOW TIME FOR:
  1. RECOVERY from injury or surgery
  2. REHABILITATION
  3. ATHLETIC or DANCE CONDITIONING
- NO SLOW RETURNS – the first week back the performer must do 8 shows without modifications
- NEED TO PREDICT THIS IN ADVANCE

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## MEDICAL LEAVE

### CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED BY U.S. WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE

- PRIOR TO THE END OF THE LEAVE, the insurance company may terminate:
  - ♦ DISABILITY PAYMENTS  
“The performer can do limited-duty work”
  - ♦ PHYSICAL THERAPY TREATMENTS  
“Not medically necessary”

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## SUMMARY

- COMMUNICATION IS KEY
  - ♦ WITH PERFORMER
    - Education about injury, recovery
    - Nutritional and psychological issues
    - Reassurance, support, resources
  - ♦ WITH MANAGEMENT
    - Work-related injury vs. privacy
    - Variability of individual recovery

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer

## SUMMARY

- REHABILITATION
  - ♦ Manual therapy
  - ♦ Strengthening, stretching
  - ♦ Proprioceptive re-training
  - ♦ Technique re-training
  - ♦ ASSESS REASON FOR INJURY (see the show!)

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## SUMMARY

- REHABILITATION
  - ♦ CONDITIONING
    - \*AEROBIC
    - \*DANCE-SPECIFIC
    - \*PROGRESSION TO HIGH LEVEL
  - ♦ Fully ready to return to the stage (all 8 shows) without risk of re-injury

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## Care Suggestions

- PROTECT THE PERFORMER FROM MANAGEMENT PRESSURE
- BE REALISTIC: COMBINE PALLIATIVE WITH THERAPEUTIC
- BE SPECIFIC: EXPLAIN YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS
- RULE OUT PROBLEMS WHICH REQUIRE CESSATION OF DANCE

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# Care of the Professional Theatrical Performer



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**Thank you  
to the performers,  
stage management  
staff, and stage crew  
who helped make this  
presentation possible**

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