

Stage Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Stage manager interviews usually combine a conversation about your process with practical scenarios and questions about safety and availability.

- **Process:** Questions about how you build a prompt copy, run a rehearsal or call a show.
- **Behavioural:** Questions that ask for examples of how you have handled cast or crew issues, tight deadlines or technical problems.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations such as a missed cue, a cast injury or a late actor before curtain.
- **Technical:** Questions about cue-calling software, paperwork systems and your familiarity with QLab or Stage Write.
- **Safety:** Questions about work health and safety, risk assessments and backstage protocols.

The interview is likely to start with a general conversation about your experience, then move to specific questions about your process and past productions. You may be asked to walk through a scenario or describe how you would handle a particular backstage issue. The panel often includes a production manager, artistic director or technical director, and they will want to know about your availability for evenings, weekends and production seasons.

1. Walk us through how you prepare a prompt copy from first rehearsal to opening night.

Why they ask

This shows whether you understand the full stage management process and can keep detailed, accurate records.

How to structure your answer

A process question like this needs a step-by-step walk-through. Start with how you set up the prompt copy before rehearsals, then describe how you record blocking and cues during rehearsals, and finish with how you update and distribute the final version for the production team.

Example answer

"Before rehearsals begin, I set up a prompt copy using a script with wide margins or a digital template. I note the cast list, set layout and any initial technical requirements. During rehearsals, I record blocking for every scene, marking entrances, exits and key movements. I also log cue points for lighting, sound and flies as they come up. After each rehearsal, I update the master copy and share relevant notes with the technical team. As we move into technical rehearsals, I check that every cue is numbered and described clearly, and I make sure the final prompt copy is ready for the production week. I keep a backup digital copy and a printed version for calling the show."

2. Tell me about a time you had to manage a disagreement between cast or crew members during a production.

Why they ask

This reveals your people leadership and conflict resolution skills, which are central to maintaining a safe and productive backstage environment.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the task you had to achieve, the action you took to resolve the disagreement, and the result. Focus on how you listened to both sides, kept the production on track and maintained professional relationships.

Example answer

"During a production of a musical, two cast members disagreed about a quick change that was affecting their timing. The tension was starting to affect the rest of the dressing room. I spoke to each person separately to hear their concerns, then brought them together with the wardrobe supervisor to walk through the change step by step. We adjusted the order of the change and agreed on a clear handover. The change became smoother, and both performers were able to focus on their scenes. I followed up a few days later to make sure the solution was still working."

3. Imagine it's five minutes to curtain and a key cast member has not arrived. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your judgement under pressure and your ability to follow emergency procedures while keeping the show on track.

How to structure your answer

For a scenario question, describe the immediate steps you would take, then explain how you would communicate with the company, and finally how you would decide on a course of action. Show that you can stay calm, follow protocols and prioritise safety and the audience experience.

Example answer

"I would first confirm the performer is not in the building by checking with the stage door and their dresser. I would alert the production manager and the director immediately. If the performer cannot be reached, I would check whether an understudy or swing is available and ready. If not, I would discuss with the director whether to delay the start or make an announcement to the audience. Throughout, I would keep the rest of the cast and crew informed so everyone knows what is happening. My priority is to give the audience the best possible experience while keeping everyone safe and following the venue's emergency plan."

4. How do you ensure work health and safety is maintained backstage during a busy changeover?

Why they ask

Safety is a core part of the stage manager's role. This question checks whether you know how to identify hazards and keep people safe in a high-pressure environment.

How to structure your answer

This is a technical and safety question. Answer by describing your general approach, then give a specific example of a hazard you identified and how you dealt with it. Mention risk assessments, inductions and clear communication.

Example answer

"I start by doing a risk assessment of the backstage area before rehearsals begin, looking at trip hazards, manual handling, flying systems and quick-change routes. During changeovers, I make sure crew wear appropriate footwear and that walkways are kept clear. I brief everyone on the plan for each changeover and remind them to communicate if they see a hazard. In one production, I noticed that a set piece was being moved in the dark during a blackout. I arranged for a small glow tape marker to be placed on the floor and adjusted the crew positions so no one was working blind. That reduced the risk of trips and collisions without slowing down the change."

5. What experience do you have with QLab or other cue-calling software, and how do you keep your paperwork organised?

Why they ask

This checks your technical skills and your ability to stay organised, which are essential for calling cues accurately night after night.

How to structure your answer

A technical question like this should be answered with specific examples. Describe the software you have used, how you set up your cue lists, and how you manage backups and updates. Mention any Stage Write or similar tools for blocking notation.

Example answer

"I have used QLab for sound and video cues, and I set up my cue list with clear numbering and descriptions so I can follow it during a live show. I also use Stage Write to record blocking and keep a digital prompt copy in Dropbox so the team can access the latest version. Before each performance, I check that all cues are firing correctly and that I have a backup of the show file. I keep a printed calling script with cue points highlighted, and I update the digital copy after every rehearsal or performance so nothing gets lost."

6. Why do you want to work as a stage manager for this company?

Why they ask

Employers want to know you are genuinely interested in their work and that you will be committed to their productions, especially given the evening and weekend hours.

How to structure your answer

This is a motivation question. Answer by linking your own values or experience to something specific about the company. Be honest and specific rather than giving a generic answer about loving theatre.

Example answer

"I have followed [Company Name]'s work for some time, particularly your focus on new Australian writing and your commitment to safe and supportive rehearsal rooms. I want to work with a company that values both the artistic process and the wellbeing of the people backstage. I am used to the rhythm of production seasons and I am looking for a long-term role where I can build on my cue-calling and rehearsal management skills while contributing to your upcoming program."