



South London Theatre
Directors Handbook

Welcome to South London Theatre!

Congratulations on joining the team of directors at SLT. This guide is designed to help you understand how South London Theatre works so you can get the best experience as a director here.

Along with some important rules, this guide contains lots of advice from people who have been involved in many SLT productions which will help you find any help and support you may need.

Please be sure to take some time to read through it all as there is important health and safety information within that all directors **must** be aware of before commencing auditions or rehearsals at SLT.

South London Theatre Committee

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STAGE 1: PLANNING

“With theatre, you have to be ready for anything.” – Willem Dafoe

On completion of the submission process selected directors receive an email from the theatre committee confirming details of the season slot, show and schedule. Please take time to check all the dates and rehearsal schedule and advise the Theatre Committee if there are any problems. You will receive:

- Confirmation of the date for the season announcement - held as a social event in the SLT bar it gives a great opportunity to tell members a bit about your show and get them interested in auditioning or being part of the creative team.
- Audition schedule - two dates for your main auditions (often a Sunday and a weekday evening) and a third date (usually the following Sunday) for recalls or additional audition.
- Rehearsal schedule - 3 weekly rehearsals. Wednesdays, Fridays and Sunday afternoons or Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sunday evenings - which will have been discussed with you at the submission interview.
- The get-in date - from when your production will gain access to the theatre space, usually 9 days prior to the first performance.
- Performance dates - Tuesday to Saturday evenings unless otherwise agreed.
- Get-out date - when you, your cast and crew strike the set and clear the space ready for the next director and their team to get-in.

Please check all dates scheduled are as expected. Apart from the audition slots, it is often difficult to amend the schedule. If you have a problem or need to change your audition dates please speak to a member of the Theatre Committee or your theatre rep immediately. They will do their best to reschedule wherever possible.

Please keep the fact that your production has been chosen private. Selections are subject to the confirmation of performance rights. And we like to keep the selected shows confidential until the official Season Announcement.

The Creative Team

Putting a creative team together early is highly recommended and the size of your team an amount of help you may need will depend very much on your production - productions should have:

- An **Assistant Director**. Even the least complex of shows is a lot of work, so we do insist directors have an AD. They are invaluable with all the organisation required - from rehearsal schedules and communication with your cast, to assisting with set and costumes, and providing another pair of eyes, alternative ideas and being a sounding board when you need them.
- The **Stage Manager** provides practical and organizational support to the director, actors, designers, stage crew and technicians throughout the production process. They are the director's representative during performances, making sure that the production runs smoothly. A production must have a stage manager. will run the show for you, and you must have one. They may well need one or more **Assistant Stage Managers**.
- A **Production Designer** or **Design Team** will help bring another level to your production. They can input ideas about staging, set and scenery, costumes and lighting that you might never consider. The work can be split between a **Set Designer**, **Lighting Designer**, **Sound Designer** and **Costume Designer**, but you will then need to be able to bring all those elements together.
- **Lighting and Sound Operators** to run the lighting and sound cues for your show. A single operator may be enough depending on the complexity of the show, but you may need two operators depending on requirements. You can decide this with your designer. Operators are not generally required until the get-in week, but it's good to get people engaged as early as possible.
- You may need additional specialist help. For a musical, you will have a **Musical Director** on board, as well as a **Choreographer** or **Movement Director**. For any fight work, you will need a **Fight Director**, and if the show involves children (any one aged 18 or under), you will require **Chaperones** for all the dress rehearsals and performances (and enhanced DBS certificate holders at rehearsals where children are called).

The SLT members group page on Facebook is a great place to ask for help for your show. Your rep or Theatre Committee should also be able to suggest people you can ask. Chatting to people in our bar at social events or after shows is always a great way to meet enthusiastic volunteers.

The Theatre Rep

The Theatre Committee assigns a Theatre Rep to every production. They may be a member of the Theatre Committee or another experienced member of SLT. When choosing a Theatre Rep the Theatre Committee try to choose a Rep that has experience or knowledge that is relevant to the style or source material of the production. The Theatre Rep is there to assist the Theatre Committee in safeguarding production standards at SLT. They may attend auditions, read-throughs and rehearsals to offer advice to you on how the process is going.

They are also there for the cast, if a cast member feels that there are any problems or issues, they may discuss these with the Rep who can then work with the Director to find solutions.

The Theatre Rep regularly reports back to the Theatre Committee on the progress and has the ability to recommend a production be withdrawn from a season. This is an incredibly rare event and is always a last resort if there is deemed to be insurmountable production issues.

Designing your show

“You need three things in the theatre — the play, the actors and the audience, and each must give something.” -Kenneth Haigh

We recommend having a designer on board for your production, even if you have a very strong, defined idea for staging your show, a designer can help you to realise those ideas and thoughts and can also provide alternative ideas to shape the look and feel of the show.

There are a several considerations when putting a design together:

- Staging - SLT is a flexible ‘black box’ theatre space that can accommodate various seating layouts. But each of these affect the space’s total capacity.
- Set - an ideal set may be defined in the script. Many productions have transformed the space so don’t let it limit your imagination, but do consider the practicalities and safety within the space. If unsure, chat to the General Stage Manager about your ideas as they can advise on what can and can’t happen in the space.

- Lighting and Multimedia - Can create mood and atmosphere with or without a set. Along with any special effects or projections that may be called for.
- Sound - this may include noises off that provide an essential part of the scene, onstage radios playing or telephones ringing on cue as well as incidental music and soundscapes that add to the atmosphere. For a musical the sound will be more complex if using microphones and amplified musicians.
- Costume - from period productions to a futuristic fantasy, well considered wardrobe adds extra levels to your production. Whether it's specific outfits to define a character or to create a colour palette for the production.
- Makeup - most performances in such a small performance space don't require any makeup that wouldn't be used in everyday life. However, your script may call for makeup for a particular effect or for a certain character.

Once you've consolidated your ideas, your set design will need to be cleared with the General Stage Manager, to be sure it's both practical and safe.

Budgets

SLT is very lucky to have collected a multitude of assets over its long history - from our comprehensive wardrobe and well-stocked props departments, to furniture, rostra, scaffolding, flats, lighting and sound equipment. And for any items we don't have ourselves, our members are a treasure trove of unusual props, costumes and furniture.

But there is often a need to get a specific costume, or particular materials, or a hard-to-find prop. So all shows are granted a production budget of £200 (this is separate from rights - SLT pay for those). £200 is a maximum budget - and no director should increase it by adding their own money.

However, for some, more costly productions, a higher budget can be agreed, which is discussed well in advance when a show is accepted for the season. Do not spend anything more without the prior agreement of the theatre committee, as SLT will be unable to reimburse unauthorised overspending.

Please be sure to keep all receipts, as they need to be included with the production's expenses form at the end of the show. And wherever possible please provide VAT invoices.

Publicity

Our Publicity Director will send you the separate publicity pack document which details what SLT can provide and advice on what you should do. Please be sure to read it and take particular note of any deadlines.

The some of the things SLT provide are:

- Posters and season brochure. Our publicity Director can also design the show poster or provide all the necessary design guidelines.
- Audition notices on the SLT website.
- Facebook events for your auditions and performances.
- Show Programme

Your responsibilities include:

- Providing publicity team requested information they need within deadlines
- Sharing the official events and notifications about shows.
- Using your own social media accounts and encouraging your cast to do the same to get people interested - you can share photos from rehearsals, but please check with the Publicity Director and avoid using copyright material without permission.
- Organising a photographer to attend a dress rehearsal, for publicity photos and to go into the SLT archives - we have a list of people you can ask.

Full comprehensive details are all within the Publicity Pack.

Stage 2: CASTING AND REHEARSING

Auditions

Good auditions are the foundations for a great show. Getting the best out of them takes some preparation, but it is worth it. The dates for auditions will be given to you by the Theatre Committee as part of your schedule. How you choose to hold the auditions is your choice. Some directors choose to run auditions like a workshop, others prefer to concentrate on the script.

Provide the publicity team the details and copies of any audition pieces they require (outlined in the Publicity Pack) within the deadlines, and then let everyone know about them. Promoting auditions is a time-consuming task, so please take care to give the team the information in the correct format (see the Audition Notices document).

SLT hold open auditions - Attendees don't have to be a member to partake. (they only need to join if they are cast.) This has meant that many auditions get a lot of interest and you may have people attend that have never been to SLT before. It is best practise to make all audition attendees aware that if cast, they are required to be fully paid up members before any rehearsals start.

Auditionee's details need to be recorded and they must understand the important information that is contained on the SLT standard audition form (included with this pack). Details on the form may be tailored for your production, but the terms and conditions must remain as stated.

Diversity

An increasingly diverse audience both wants and expects to see and hear itself reflected authentically in the media and SLT is committed to actively promoting diversity and inclusion of all in all of its activities, as such we ask directors to be considerate of diversity within their production. We encourage directors to state on audition notices that all ethnicities and genders are welcome to audition. If a role is stated by the author to be a specific ethnicity for the purposes of the script then it should be cast appropriately.

Casting

Do nott pre-cast your show!! You may have an idea of who you would like for a specific part, but you cannot know who will audition. Wait and see who attends the auditions, and then make your selection. SLT prides itself on having open and fair

auditions and encourages directors to cast from an actor's audition performance. If unsure, there are always recalls.

We schedule a third audition date for recalls/call backs if you want to see anyone again or want put people together to see how they work - or accommodate someone who couldn't make your main auditions.

Many shows can be cast from these first auditions. But if you feel you cannot complete your casting, then speak with the Theatre Committee who will be able to advise and may be able to arrange an additional audition. When offering parts to your successful auditionees, it's always good to check that:

- They are aware of the performance dates.
- They are aware of the rehearsal structure and can confirm any dates they are not available.
- If they are not yet members or are their membership has lapsed they will need to join/renew.

Following up a call with an email with all the details is recommended.

Please ask your cast not to make the news public as once casting is confirmed we like to make a formal announcement on the SLT website. Once you have the details, please let Theatre Committee know and get a headshot of cast members who are new to SLT sent to the Publicity team. You will also need to let the Membership Director know of your cast details so he can send out joining details to those that need them.

It is really important that you also contact everyone that attended the auditions that have not been successful this time. People commit a lot of their time to attend, so please be courteous by contacting them.. We like to encourage people to audition for SLT again.

Membership

Due to the auditions being open to all, most shows cast at least one person who is not a current member, as mentioned above, it is the director's responsibility to make sure they are aware that they need to join before the first rehearsal (and also that no cast member has a lapsed membership). It's very easy for them to do online, so this shouldn't be a problem. Please don't leave it to the membership team to chase people.

Ticketing

The official casting announcement will trigger Box Office to set up a page for the show on our bookings site (TicketSource.co.uk). To do this the box office will require the following information from you:

- A synopsis of the play - usually the same as the season description on our website, but this is an opportunity for you to update it if you wanted to.
- The genre (comedy/drama etc).
- Cast details.
- Ticket pricing category (A or B), which will have been agreed with the Theatre Committee at the start of the season. (the higher Category B pricing is used only when shows have more expensive rights and/or production costs)
- Any advisories (e.g. adult themes, minimum recommended ages, flashing lights, trigger warnings etc) that need to be added to the TicketSource page.
- Estimated Running time (this can be a MIN-MAX time range at this point, or if it is unknown - TBA.
- To commence sales all shows will be allocated 50 seats on each night. This is usually amended after the get-in when total capacity can be confirmed.

Rehearsals

Most SLT productions will have the same rehearsal period - two two-hour weekday evening rehearsals and one four-hour rehearsal session on a Sunday, for eight weeks. Then a 'get-in week' which is actually nine days in the theatre space for technical work and final rehearsals. Rehearsals usually take place at the Old Fire Station in either the **Fly Loft** or **Kit Room** (both on 1st floor), and then the **Theatre space** during the 'get-in week'. Once in the theatre space, your production has exclusive use of the space every evening and all day on Sundays (on Saturdays, the SLT Youth Group has sole use of the building so access is not permitted).

Details of how to log into the building calendar will be sent to you with confirmation of your audition/rehearsal schedule. Please remember to check this regularly, Theatre Committee, Theatre Rep or the Building Manager will contact you if there is a need to make an amendment to the calendar that affects when or where you are scheduled to rehearse.

Planning is key to get the most from rehearsals. Before getting started, hold a production meeting with your AD and create a rehearsal schedule. Schedule enough time to cover all scenes several times, culminating with full runs well before get-in date. Once rehearsals are underway the original schedule will usually evolve and change when the show is in rehearsals and it becomes apparent which scenes take more or less time spent on them. So it is good to have flexibility.

It is usually possible to manage all necessary rehearsals within the rehearsal slots that have been scheduled. A production may sometimes need an extra rehearsal, a particular space or to amend it's rehearsal slot. With notice we will always attempt to accommodate any necessary changes, please speak with either your Theatre Rep or a member of the Theatre Committee.

If you want to find out if an additional space is available at the theatre, or need to cancel or amend a booked space, please email the building manager as soon as you can. We like to make the best use of the space we can, and knowing when rooms are no longer required allows us to re-allocate them.

There may be an occasion when a rehearsal space isn't available. This may be due to the current production requiring additional space as dressing rooms or building work may be scheduled that takes rehearsal rooms out of use. We always try to avoid this, and give you plenty of notice, but in these circumstances you will need to find an alternative rehearsal space outside if the Old Firestation, SLT have good relationships with several friendly local businesses who often kindly offer a room for free and Theatre Committee can provide their contact details.

Before 7.30pm Monday to Friday some rooms may be in use by private groups that have hired the space. If you wish to start early, please book this into the diary in advance with the building manager. It is good practice to also check the diary on the day as bookings may be made at short notice.

Additional information about rehearsals:

- The Fly Loft and Kit Room both usually contain 15-20 blue chairs, and at least one small table.
- Other miscellaneous furniture such as benches and extra tables should be stored in the Props Stores or Theatre space (please speak with the Props Team or General Stage Manager before moving/leaving items.)
- At the end of your rehearsal chairs should be stacked neatly to the sides (please see the notices in each room for specific layouts.) Litter should be placed in the bins, and glasses returned to the bar

- Please look after any props you are using for rehearsals. Do not leave them in the rehearsal spaces. You can speak to the props team about secure storage in the props stores.
- If you require any additional equipment or furniture for rehearsals please email the building manager to discuss.
- There are various open access Guest WiFi networks available throughout the building, or passwords are in the red folder in the foyer.

Rehearsing when a show is on

Everyone using spaces in the building have a duty to be respectful during the performance week of another show . When rehearsing during a performance week there is some guidance to follow.

The **Fly Loft** is fairly well insulated for sound, but the general volume must be kept down and anything actions that will disturb the performance must be avoided:

- No shouting, singing, amplified music or keyboards, jumping or stamping.
- Keep volume at a conversational level, with no more than two or three people talking at once
- Do not use the fly loft exit towards the new stairs and the first floor toilets are out of use - always use the old stairs and go down to the bar for toilets

Unfortunately sound carries to the theatre space quite badly from the **Kit Room**. If possible an alternative space should be used during a performance. If unavoidable the kit room should only be used for read throughs or rehearsing quiet scenes.

- No loud voices at all
- No heavy footsteps or movement
- Do not use the first floor toilets - always use the old stairs and go down to the bar for toilets

If you are concerned that you will need to be louder, then you will have to find an off site rehearsal space. If you do decide to rehearse elsewhere, please let the building manager know so the room may be reallocated.

Please double check room allocations when shows are on. That is the most likely time that we may have to move rehearsals.

THE FINAL STAGE

“Theatre is a series of insurmountable obstacles on the road to imminent disaster.”

– Tom Stoppard

Get-in

In advance of the get-in, hold a production meeting with everyone involved to share completed set designs, seating layout and plans for sound and lighting. Establish a plan of action for the get-in day so you can be sure that all production aspects are covered. Use this as a basis for a list of necessary tasks for your production and delegate appropriate responsibilities and tasks and the order in which they need to be completed.

SLT hold a lot of existing scenery which are sufficient to create most sets - do have your Stage Manager or Set Designer check with the General Stage Manager to check. Additional scenery or specialist pieces can usually be constructed with sufficient notice. make sure that any additional materials or items have been ordered and will be delivered in good time for your get-in.

On get-in day the theatre space will be available from mid-day.

Good organisation and communication are key to getting the most from the day. The Director, Set Designer or Stage Manager should take the lead. A team of people are always needed on get-in days to set build, paint, rig lights and set up sound and tech. This team will include all cast, and often other willing helpers if you have a small cast or large production. The more people the quicker the larger tasks can be achieved, in particular the reorganising of the theatre seating if it needs to be moved.

The more tasks you can get completed from your list on the day, the earlier the cast will be able to rehearse on set during run-up week. It is very unlikely that the cast will be able to rehearse in the space until the set, lights and tech is in place. It is usual to reach a point where the cast cannot assist in the technical work that needs to be done, so they can be handed to your Assistant Director to run rehearsals or line run elsewhere

The main tasks that will need to be completed are:

- Set construction and painting.
- Delivery of any large set pieces.
- Rigging and focussing lights

- Setting up sound (microphones, if needed)
- Plotting the sound and light cues
- Arranging the backstage area and props tables
- Preparing the dressing room.

Run up week

This is when everything comes together. When the cast gets to find their feet on the set, the stage crew get to grips and practice their cues and tech, and any final problems are ironed out. You will need to:

- Finish anything not done on get-in day.
- Have a technical rehearsal - A run through concentrating on the technical aspects of the whole show. This is often done as a “cue-to-cue” - looking at just the technical cues and skipping through parts of the production where nothing technical happens.
- Rehearse any scene changes, wherever the set needs to change.
- Run the show with the actors integrating all tech aspects.
- Dress rehearsal (with a photographer).

Communication with the cast is an important part of the final week. As the production's technical aspects become the focus make sure the cast are aware of the plans, what is going on, what they need to be doing themselves, when they will be needed, and when they will be able to rehearse on set.

Remember - everyone needs a break. Run up week can be very intense. It is important to all involved including the Director to schedule some time off. It can be all too easy to have an exhausted cast and crew by opening night if not careful.

Each show needs a pre-announcement to the audience. This is usually pre-recorded, and can be tailored to the style and content of the show. However some important details need to be included:

- Turning off mobiles and other electronic devices.
- No filming or photography.
- A reminder that the bar will be open during the interval and after the show.

Dressing Rooms

Each production has a single dressing room allocated to it from midday on the get-in day to midday on the get-out day: This is usually the **Green Room** on the first floor. The room can be locked, if you want to leave props and costumes in there - please speak to the building manager.

Additional room can be allocated, but as doing so prevents other productions from having rehearsal space in the building, it is only done so for specific circumstances, eg large casts or safeguarding requirements as if there are children in a production, they are required to have separate changing facilities.

Your rep or member of the theatre committee will speak to you about the space you'll need for dressing rooms, so it can be arranged with the building manager.

Finishing touches

After completing the show's get-in Box Office and Front of House will need to know the exact final seating capacity now that the seating layout is in place, the running time and approximate interval time (if the show has an interval); and if/when latecomers may be admitted. Latecomer policy will be dependent on the layout of the space, it is usual to choose a point about 10-15 minutes into the performance when patrons may be admitted with minimal disturbance.

The final week is when the show's promotion needs to be stepped up. SLT will increase it's publicity of the show but you, your cast and crew will need to do the same. If you haven't already, get it out there on your various social media accounts. Tell friends, family and colleagues. The more you and your team can do, the bigger your audiences will be.

One final note on tickets. As SLT is a charity, ticket sales are of vital importance so we are unable to offer complimentary tickets to anyone (including Directors, cast or actor's agents) for our shows. The one exception is the rights agent, as this is part of our contract with them to perform the show. If you think you may need to offer comps to anyone, you must speak to the Box Office Manager first.

Performances

After your final dress rehearsal, the publicity director will need to be sent the production photographs as soon as possible. The show is now considered as 'frozen' as no more physical changes will be made. Responsibility of running the show passes over to the Stage Manager. Many directors at this stage allow their Stage Manager and the team to get on with it so they can sit back and enjoy. Every performance night will be different and if something goes wrong, the cast and crew will already be the first ones to know. The performance week can be very draining for a cast and crew and the power of encouragement and positivity from the Director should never be underestimated. If you do wish to give any notes to the cast during the run please discuss them first with your Stage Manager, and agree on the best way to deliver them.

End of show party

It is a tradition for all involved to have a celebration after the final performance. Everyone worked really hard to make the show a success and it is a great final opportunity to foster our sociable SLT community and celebrate the end of a thrilling experience. Celebrations often (but not exclusively) happen in the bar, which can stay open until 2am (with prior arrangement). It is your responsibility to request this with the Bar Committee in advance and make sure you have trained bar staff signed up to run the bar for the full time you plan on having it open.

Get-out

The morning after! - Access can be gained to the theatre space from 10am on Sunday morning. The next show will begin their get-in from 12pm, so it is very important to have the whole cast and crew on board for your get-out. The Theatre space and dressing rooms must be cleared and left clean and tidy. Sometimes the cast and crew of the next show will arrive early to help, and often the departing productions cast and crew will assist with the start of the next get in, which is greatly appreciated especially if the seating needs to be reconfigured. Please be sure that all props and costumes are returned to their respective stores, and all personal items are cleared by midday.

Remember to have your expenses approved by the Theatre Committee, We really hope you enjoy your experience directing at SLT. And come back and do it again!

Thank you for reading the Directors Handbook, If you have been selected to direct in an upcoming season please email theatrecommittee@southlondontheatre.co.uk to confirm you have read this guide.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

You MUST read this

A lot of responsibility comes with directing a show at SLT. Please make sure you read this section to understand what this means for you.

Code of Conduct

We have a Code of Conduct that sets out how we expect our members, visitors and staff to behave. It's really about being respectful of everyone and making SLT a great and safe place to be. As a director, you need to be aware of what is expected of you and your team. Please read it and make sure you know how to deal with any issues if they come up. You can find the Code of Conduct [here](#).

Working with children

We are very lucky to have a fantastic youth theatre at SLT, which is great if your show has children in the cast. We always have lots of volunteers who want to audition for shows, and the Youth Group leaders will be happy to help you arrange auditions.

Theatre Committee will have discussed with you at your submission interview if you want to cast children. There is a strict safeguarding policy for any work that involves children or vulnerable adults, you will need to familiarise yourself with the policy and contact our safeguarding officer as soon as possible for detailed guidance for your show. You can find our safeguarding policy [here](#).

Visitors book

Always sign in and out of the visitors book on the front desk in the foyer, and make sure all cast or crew you are working with do the same. This is essential in the event of a fire, as it will be used by the fire marshals to make sure the building is empty.

Access to the Old Fire Station

To request a Fob please email the building manager. Fobs cost £5 and will give you access to the front door and various internal doors. However, they also come with the responsibility of being the Building Guardian if you are first-in or last-out. If you do get a fob please make sure you are familiar with the Building Guardian duties in the Building Guardian and Lead Fire Marshall guide. You can get an idea of what's involved below. You'll also need to ask the building manager for the intruder alarm code and tutorial, and for any training needed for evacuation roles or locking up.

*****There must be a minimum of two people in the building at all times, for your personal safety.*****

Building Guardian duties

The Building Guardian is responsible for the security and safety of the building, for leading an evacuation, and for locking up at the end of the evening. It is essential to make sure that nobody is left in the building (especially unauthorised public that may have gained access)

On **non-show nights** whoever is running the bar is the Building Guardian. However, if there is no Bar Volunteer on-site, then the first fob holder to arrive (i.e. the one who deactivates the intruder alarm) is the Building Guardian until they officially hand over to a Bar Volunteer or other trained fob holder. As a director, this could be you if you arrive early or when the bar isn't open, or if you stay on after the bar closes.

On **show nights** the Building Guardian and Lead Fire Marshall will be one of the Front of House team or the Bar Volunteer, depending on how late it is. The Bar Volunteer will usually be responsible for locking up, unless a trained Fob Holder is staying later. If you stay later than the bar is open, the responsibility for locking up will pass to you.

Please see the instructions and checklist on how to lock up the building, including the guidance on what to do if the alarm does not set the first time. This is all in the Building Guardian and Lead Fire Marshall guide.

Fire Evacuation

If an alarm sounds at any time evacuate immediately and proceed to the assembly point (St Luke's Church Gardens). The only exception to this rule is if you are (a) in the Theatre and (b) a public performance is in progress. In this case the Lead Fire Marshall or Stage Manager will announce the need to evacuate. Please follow their lead.

On non-show nights you (the Director) are responsible for ensuring that your cast and crew know the evacuation routes, and for leading them out in an evacuation (whether or not you are also acting as the Building Guardian).

Fire Evacuation Assembly Point - ST LUKE'S CHURCH GARDENS

- On exiting the Fire Station, turn LEFT
- Do not cross the road
- Assemble in the Gardens