

Considering safe resumption of work on stage

THE BEST PART OF WORKING backstage is that every day brings new situations and often new locations to the workday—or night. Almost every day, I had the opportunity to be hands-on and think on my feet. But, every one of these new experiences and encounters complicates the path to new standards for theatre employees, whether they are performers, designers, technicians, or managers. Now, more than ever, guidelines seem to be in discussion at every turn. We have more questions than answers, but which questions should drive the conversation?

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Best practice standards must address the different situations, timings, durations, traffic patterns, and types of contact backstage. Should an in-house crew be treated differently than an incoming road crew? How, for example, might followspot operators be screened differently than the wig and makeup crew? What about the factory tech coming in to check the warning light on the stage lift? Who should be responsible for implementing and monitoring these activities? Who will be responsible for preventing a potentially unhealthy person from entering a work area and spreading a communicable disease?

We must empower a team to examine these questions. While responding to the current crisis, we need to be able to “dial back” when appropriate; otherwise, the standards will become practically unenforceable. Instead, we should create a set of standards that can respond nimbly to the next crisis. The many extant and forthcoming guidelines must be unified into standards applicable to our many specialties and situations. We must get to as specific a level of instruction and practical means of implementation for each craft and performing art as possible.

When it comes to today’s new standards, there are generally five factors you can assume will be present:

1. Public authorities will issue mandates, but they will apply only indirectly and very generally to backstage and onstage work activity and interactions.
2. Best practices, when developed, must be scalable, protecting everyone against current hazards, the essential elements of practice, space design, and use; Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be practical enough to prevail in use permanently, yet be able to be ramped up again when needed.
3. The elements of a new standard must recognize the different hazards and exposures presented to different trades as well as in the various areas backstage.
4. Employers (e.g., producers and venues) and employees (e.g., technicians, performers, and managers) are all

obligated to protect themselves, each other, their venues, and their productions.

5. Technology and science are in overdrive; new devices, vaccines, and treatments will come online in the near future. These will impact these practices.

“... as a community, we need to have a clear vision of what we want the experience of working backstage to become.”

Finally, as a community, we need to have a clear vision of what we want the experience of working backstage to become. Should we be striving to return to as close to prior practices as possible? What should we change in terms of safety, efficiency, and craft while we have the opportunity and mindset to change? ■



Ted Ohl is the Principal in the New York office of Schuler Shook. For the 34 years previous to joining Schuler Shook, Ted was one of the owners of stage equipment manufacturer and contractor Pook Diemont & Ohl, Inc. (PDO).

Prior to that he served as technical director and production manager at several venues including the Santa Fe Opera, the Spoleto Festival, and the Juilliard School. Ted can be reached at tohl@schulershook.com.

Raising your AQ BY ANDREW FULTON

We all know IQ stands for Intelligence Quotient, and EQ stands for Emotional Quotient. But have you heard of AQ? It stands for Adversity Quotient, and it was coined by Paul Stoltz, PhD, in his 2007 groundbreaking book, *The Adversity Advantage*. Considering the circumstances we're enduring with COVID-19, this might be a good time to peruse Dr. Stoltz's book: He argues that adverse circumstances can be beneficial when used to our advantage.

Could any other phenomenon help raise our AQ like a pandemic? Earlier this year, novel coronavirus was just that: novel. It was little more than a sound byte about a disease a world away. But now, COVID-19 is knocking on our own doors, wreaking havoc on our communities, and changing the very way we interact with the world.

In February, the load-in of the 2020 CONEXPO-CON/AGG at the Las Vegas Convention Center was going as expected. Even though we'd heard that several industrial shows were closing—a big deal in a town like Las Vegas—we kept our heads down and our hopes up, keeping in mind that these were business decisions. But, it wasn't long before show after show followed suit. Adversity was hitting our industry in a big way.

AQ is what motivates us to rally and pushes us to triumph. The sales staffs at every convention center, expo hall, hotel, arena, and stadium are striving more than ever to book events; because of their efforts, jobs are being planned for later in the year and 2021. In the midst of all the turmoil in February, GES demonstrated remarkable AQ, managing the expo expertly. There's also the exceptional AQ of the show riggers, who safely and efficiently dealt with a massive amount of rigging on a remarkably tight deadline. An increase in AQ is even evident when it comes to continuing professional education: Online course attendance is soaring.

“We have the opportunity to benefit from this adversity.”

When this pandemic passes—and it will pass—we will understand that we have been given a gift: Time. Not only can we focus on ourselves, our mental and physical health, and our families, but we can focus on becoming better, smarter, and safer riggers—and watch our AQ grow.

The higher your AQ, the better you are at your job. Taking this unexpected, and perhaps even unwanted, gift of time and using it to educate yourself increases the safety of the venue and the happiness

of your clients. It's a best practice and a fact: Better training in risk mitigation inspires a deeper level of trust in your abilities.

We have the opportunity to benefit from this adversity. Going forward, let's use this unintended benefit—time—to love each other more, get to know our families better, improve our health, and take advantage of training and education to better serve our clients when the rally commences once again. Our thoughts and prayers go out to anyone who's had a family member, friend, coworker, or employee infected with COVID-19. Our prayers and praise are being sent to healthcare workers who are sacrificing their own well-being to heal those in need.



Andrew Fulton is a 23-year member of IATSE Local 720 and is currently the Lead Production Rigger at UNLV's Thomas & Mack Center. Andrew manages projects for the Las Vegas PRG office and is also part owner of Rigging International Group, a rope access training and services company established in 2015.

Bringing ETCP into the 21st century

ETCP has been working hard to convert all forms that deal with candidates, ETCP Certified Technicians, and those who participate in our ETCP Recognized Programs easier access to the ETCP team.

The ETCP portal now includes all of the forms and applications you need in one place.

ETCP Candidates:

Rigging Application Form
Entertainment Electrician/PPDT Form
Candidate Retake Form
Appeals Form (missed deadlines)

ETCP Certificants:

Certified Technician Info Update Form
ETCP Recertification Form
Renewal Credit Submission (self-reporting courses and credits)
Appeals Form (missed renewals)

ETCP Trainers, Training Programs and Providers:

ETCP Recognized Trainer Application
ETCP Recognized Training Program/Provider Application
ETCP Renewal Credit Submission Form (non-recognized trainers can also submit credits here)

ETCP Recognized Employers, Labor Providers, and Contractors:

ETCP Best Practices Agreement (once recognition is granted, this must be updated annually)

Online testing is now available!

ETCP Council has approved the implementation of remote testing with an online proctor. This new delivery option provides test-takers flexibility and convenience at a time when public health is of the utmost importance. ETCP has worked with PSI to be able to offer innovative test-taking procedures to ensure continuity in its highly regarded certification program.

You now have the choice of testing the following ways:

- Computer-based testing centers: You may take your test at a PSI Testing Center.
- Online live remote testing: You may now take your examination from your home or office as long as you have a webcam/microphone installed on your computer.
- Paper and pencil examinations: You may take your test with a group in a pre-arranged testing setting.

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etcp.esta.org
etcp@esta.org

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