

Stratford Summer Music | Volunteer Usher Guidelines

Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer with Stratford Summer Music's Volunteer Usher Team. We hope that you find ushering a fun and rewarding experience.

Whether you've been ushering for years or this is your first time, we want to make sure you have the information you need to feel comfortable in fulfilling this important responsibility. Please contact us if you have any questions. We welcome your input.

General Information

Important Background: Volunteers are the face of Stratford Summer Music and welcoming our visitors to events held in the City of Stratford. It is important that you can speak knowledgeably about what our town has to offer. Patrons will ask you for recommendations on dining, shopping, parking and directions and to the other Summer Music venues as well as the Stratford Festival Theatre. Please arrive prepared to be a strong ambassador of Stratford.

Training: Optional first aid course supplemented by Stratford Summer Music will be made available. (date TBA)

Code of Conduct: Each volunteer must sign a code of conduct document before the start of the season.

Accessibility Training: Mandatory Ontario Accessibility Standard for customer service training online to be completed and reported before the start of the season. If you need access to a computer, you are welcome to use the Stratford Summer Music office.

Scheduling: The Volunteer Usher Team Leaders will schedule all ushering events. Please submit your request form to the office. You will be contacted by the Team Leaders with your assigned performances. If your availability changes, please give the Team Leaders at least 48 hours notice of your cancelled shift. This is to ensure we have appropriate time to fill your vacancy.

Dress Code: White dress shirts or blouses with sleeves and black pants / skirts. Comfortable and appropriate shoes (no flip flops). The Volunteer Usher Team Leaders will distribute lanyards to wear, please return them after each event.

Mobility: There are no "sitting down" jobs for volunteers, so you must be prepared to navigate stairs and at times, stand for 45 minutes to an hour. Please let us know if your mobility is restricted. (e.g. if you can't stand for 45 min.) This will limit your assignments.

When to arrive: Volunteer ushers are asked to arrive 1 hour before the performance. Please check in with the Team Leaders upon arrival. We require our volunteers to be on time, dressed appropriately and ready to go.

Personal belongings: Please leave your valuables at home, as there will not be a secure area to store them while ushering. Stratford Summer Music is not responsible for loss of personal property.

Responsibilities

The primary duties of volunteer ushers are to greet patrons, distribute programs, scan and/or take tickets and answer patron questions, or refer them to the Volunteer Team Leaders or staff member. Volunteers will also be required to aid elderly patrons with special needs, climb stairs or stand for extended periods of time.

Upon arrival:

- Check in with the Team Leaders or SSM Staff member.
- Familiarize yourself with each venue, including location of restrooms, exits and first aid kits.
- The Team Leader will review venue evacuation routes. You will need to be available and ready to assist patrons during an evacuation or other emergency situation. Please notify the Volunteer Team Leader or staff member before the performance if you are not comfortable or have any concerns with assisting during an emergency situation.
- Turn off your cell phone. Cell phones must remain off until after the performance finishes and your duties are completed.

Before the production:

- Assist with preparing the programs, setting up a table for merchandise sales, and any other duties assigned by the Team Leader.
- Welcome patrons and direct them to their seat.
- Distribute programmes and seat cushions. (for balcony at the Avondale)
- Assist in patron crowd control before entering venue.
- Check that the tickets have the correct date, time and performance.

- Tear off and keep the tickets stubs, submitting them when all tickets have been collected to the Team Leaders.

During the performance:

- There may be assigned seating for volunteers at each venue (based on availability.)
- Stay at your post, as movement distracts the audience.
- Set the example for the audience by remaining silent during the performance and, with appropriate applause, show enthusiasm at the conclusion of the work. Please no talking!
- Remember that for classical compositions there should be no applause between sections of the work. Hold applause to the end.
- Restrict late comers seating till the end of selections, when the audience is applauding.

After the performance:

- Assist in selling any artist merchandise.
- Thank patrons for attending and assist with exiting the venue.
- Remove programmes left on seats, recycling inserts and programme covers for re-use.
- Before leaving, please check out with the Volunteer Team Leader, remembering to turn in your lanyard and tickets stubs and collect seat cushions.

Other notes:

- Wherever possible, SSM will save seats for volunteer ushers. This is not guaranteed. Based on availability.
- Please direct any patron conflicts / problems directly to the Volunteer Team Leaders.
- Timing of the opening of the doors to the venue is the responsibility of the production manager.
- You will not be required to sell tickets. A box office representative will be available at each performance.
- All patrons must have a ticket.
- School aged children are welcome at Stratford Summer Music events. In the event that a child is disturbing other spectators, the ushering staff will ask the accompanying adult and child to leave the venue without reimbursement or any other form of compensation. This policy is extended to facilitate children's access to Stratford Summer Music events, while ensuring that they, their parents, and the public in general can attend performances under the best possible conditions.
- No photography or filming is permitted (unless it is a staff person recording for archival / promotional purposes)
- Only bottled water is allowed in most performance spaces.

Remember, your primary responsibility is to be helpful, courteous, tactful and professional while ensuring our patrons enjoy the performance. Thank you for making Stratford Summer Music a success!

Contact Information:

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