

The Prompt Book is the master copy of the script or score, containing all the actor moves and technical cues, and is used by the deputy stage manager to run rehearsals and later, control the performance. It's sometimes known as the 'book', Prompt Copy or Prompt Script. The member of stage management (often the DSM) cueing the show is said to be 'On the Book'. (e.g. 'Clare's on the book for the next show').

As well as the script and/or score of the show, the prompt book also contains contact lists for all concerned with the production, information about the venue(s), show reports, local amenities, emergency procedures and any other information that may be needed during the run of the show. It's rightly known as the production 'bible'.

The book is usually laid out so that the script is on one side of a folder, and the cues are on the opposite side, with a line between the cue word / line, and the cue itself. Left-handed DSMs may prefer the cue page to be on the left of the folder. Most prefer it to be on the right, as below.

Example of cue layout for a play (other information that would be on this page omitted for clarity)

<p>SC. I] KING LEAR 99</p> <p>And from some knowledge and assurance offer This office to you.</p> <p><i>Gent.</i> I will talk further with you.</p> <p><i>Kent.</i> No, do not. For confirmation that I am much more Than my out-wall, open this purse, and take 45 What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia,— As fear not but you shall—show her this ring, And she will tell you who that fellow is That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm! I will go seek the King. 50</p> <p><i>Gent.</i> Give me your hand. Have you no more to say? <i>Kent.</i> Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet; That, when we have found the King, in which your pain That way, I'll this, he that first lights on him Holla the other. [<i>Exeunt severally.</i> 55</p>	<p>Standby Sound Q3</p> <p>Sound Q3 GO [Thunder]</p> <p>Standby LX Qs 10-14 and Sound Qs 4-6</p> <p>LX Q 10 GO [Dim scene change]</p>
<p>SCENE II.—[<i>Another part of the Heath.</i>] Storm still. <i>Enter LEAR and Fool.</i></p> <p><i>Lear.</i> Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow! You cataracts and hurricanes, spout Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks! You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires, Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts, 5 Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder, Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world! Crack Nature's moulds, all germens spill at once That makes ingrateful man!</p> <p><i>Fool.</i> O Nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better 10 than this rain-water out o'door. Good Nuncle, in, ask thy daughters blessing; here's a night pities neither wise men nor Fools.</p> <p><i>Lear.</i> Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain! Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters: I tax you not, you elements, with unkindness; I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children, You owe me no subscription: then let fall Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave, A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man. 20 But yet I call you servile ministers, That will with two pernicious daughters join Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head So old and white as this. O, ho! 'tis foul.</p> <p><i>Fool.</i> He that has a house to put's head in has a good 25 head-piece. The cod-piece that will house Before the head has any, The head and he shall louse; So beggars marry many. 30</p>	<p>When the stage is clear LX Q 11 GO [Heath state - dim]</p> <p>LXQ 12 GO [Lightning flash]</p> <p>Follow on Sound Q4 GO [Thunder rumble]</p> <p>LXQ13 GO [Lightning flash]</p> <p>Follow on Sound Q5 GO [Thunder crack]</p> <p>LXQ14 GO [Lightning flash]</p> <p>Follow on Sound Q6 GO [Thunder rumble]</p>

If professional practice is followed, the Prompt Book is used throughout the production / rehearsal process for the DSM / SM to keep notes of everything relevant to the show.

Some SMs like to use a column-based layout with the script on the left, and (for the right-handed) columns breaking up the right hand page, for notes about blocking, lighting, sound, props, set and followspot. (The columns used depend on the complexity of the show).

This type of layout means it's easy to see which notes relate to which tech department, and which can be ignored if you're calling cues. The notes should be written in pencil so that they can be erased & replaced with more detail as the production progresses.

Cueing for a Musical

For a musical, the DSM has a personal choice to either use the lyrics / libretto, or to use the full musical score. The decision depends on how complex the music is, and whether the lighting designer has cues that are on specific beats (rather than on specific words). An opera or operetta with very little spoken dialogue really must be cued from the full score.

Depending on copyright restrictions on the score, you could scan parts of the score and insert them into the script where needed (for example, the beginning and end of a song, as long as there are no cues within the song).

Another option is to insert dance counts into the script, to give you the correct beat for a cue.

For example, from Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody:

"Beelzebub has a devil put aside for meeee, for meeee, for mee" - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - LXQ49 GO