

1972

UA37/39 Guidelines for Audition & Tour Application

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SOMETHING ABOUT "USO SHOWS"

USO SHOWS exist for the purpose of carrying live entertainment and a touch of home to young servicemen and women overseas. USO SHOWS performers represent their country, themselves, and a long tradition of service and concern carried overseas since 1941 by thousands of volunteer entertainers and celebrities.

Just as important as the onstage performance is the interaction between group members and enlisted personnel, which is strongly encouraged both before and after each show. The opportunity to talk, ask questions about what's happening in the states, and just relate, is as important to the young military member as the performance.

Drawing from the wealth of talent that is available in the United States, USO carefully selects the "very best" entertainment units to offer the Department of Defense (DoD) for its primary audience—young, single enlisted men stationed at remote installations around the world. College musical variety productions have been a valuable source of entertainment units for USO SHOWS since 1962. The USO Campus Music Committee (CMC) has been organized to assist in locating, screening and auditioning these productions. Competition is heavy, with professional units and campus productions each applying for the limited number of touring opportunities available each year.

Only ten college productions, including both musical variety and theatrical units, are scheduled in any twelve-month period. Universities interested in touring with a theatrical production (musical or comedy), should apply through the USO/ATA Overseas Touring Committee. A copy of the USO/ATA Guidelines may be obtained from USO SHOWS in New York. The DoD supports these programs through the Armed Forces Professional Entertainment Office (AFPEO) in Washington, D.C., which is the military coordinator between USO SHOWS and the U.S. military overseas. Each primary overseas area or circuit has a DoD coordinator who is responsible for establishing itineraries and scheduling performances in accordance with AFPEO policy and guidance. Because of the cost and availability of transportation to isolated sites, and due to the generally small performance areas, *USO/CMC units cannot exceed eight (8) individuals including the manager.*

COMPOSITION OF UNITS

Each unit must be headed by a responsible adult, usually a faculty member, staff member or graduate assistant, who is designated by the university as the unit manager. *The manager must be actively involved in some aspect of the production.* His/her responsibilities include acting as spokesperson and liaison for the unit, seeing that all travel and performance schedules are met, submitting written reports, and maintaining reasonable control over the conduct of unit members.

Each unit member must be at least 18 years of age and a U.S. citizen. Since the potential audience is largely made up of young, male military personnel, it is desirable for a unit to contain a preponderance of young women.

TOURING CIRCUITS & LENGTHS

Tours average 4 to 6 weeks in length and cover the following commands: Pacific—6 weeks, Alaska—4 weeks, Europe—6 weeks, Caribbean—4 weeks, Mediterranean—6 weeks. Based on commercial travel costs within the continental U.S., units from Western colleges are restricted to the Pacific and Alaska; Eastern colleges to Europe, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean.

PROGRAM

USO/CMC units are required to present a 75-minute, self-contained variety show. All production expenses and show equipment must be provided by the university.

In preparing a production for review, it should be kept in mind that the objective is not to change the cultural levels of the audience, but rather to provide live entertainment that will appeal to the contemporary yet diversified tastes of enlisted personnel, 18 to 24 years old. Generally, the show should strive for fast pacing, audience involvement, color, visual appeal, humor, and yet be in keeping with the overall purposes of USO. Restrictions on show content include:

1. An acknowledged deity will not be referred to in a manner that would offend a follower of any faith.
2. Profanity, vulgarity or connotations of sexual depravity and perversion will not be used.
3. Military, racial, religious or national groups will not be defamed, and individual deformities will not be ridiculed.
4. Hypnotists or any type of act which results in participants temporarily losing control of any part of their mental faculties will not be used.

Onstage performance and off-stage behavior are expected to reflect the high standards long associated with USO SHOWS.

PRODUCTION SUGGESTIONS:

The following suggestions are given to assist in preparing a "professional" show which will be received enthusiastically by a young military audience.

1. Selection of Material — Variety is the key, with emphasis on "today's sound." Young servicemen and women overseas are definitely aware of the latest hit songs, be they *country, disco, soul, pop, rock, or latin*. Hearing these familiar tunes performed by American entertainers signifies home, or "the world," to most young enlisted personnel. In selecting show material, a variety of these current hit songs should be included and arranged within the performers' capability. Many times, students themselves are the best source for suggestions on current and appropriate selections from the latest record charts.

Good variety may also include songs from musical comedies, non-music comedy sketches, nostalgia medleys (i.e. 50's, gay 90's, etc.), novelty features, all-dance numbers and instrumental features. Carefully planned introductions are also important. All comedy material and introductions should be well-rehearsed and audience-tested to insure success in performance.

2. Show Format — Nothing holds audience interest better than a well-planned, fast-moving show. This includes "good pacing," which is the careful placement of numbers within the show format, to insure variety and contrast. To achieve this variety, numbers should be placed according to their contrast in:

- a) musical style (Rock, Country, Disco, Latin, etc.)
- b) tempo
- c) humorous content
- d) featured performers (solos, duets, full cast, female, male, etc.)
- f) non-music features

Opening and closing numbers should be especially powerful and include the full cast. Generally, all numbers except medleys should run no more than three minutes. Soft, slow ballads should be short and used sparingly—perhaps within a medley. Good pacing also includes moving quickly from one number to the next introduction or song with no "dead air."

3. Costuming — Bright, colorful, coordinated costuming is best, using polyester or other "easy-care" fabrics. Appropriate costume changes within a show may add to the visual effect but must be well-planned, as dressing rooms are seldom available. The power of a show should not suffer by scheduling a "filler" number to allow for a costume change.

4. Choreography/Staging — Many groups may not be capable of fully staged dance routines, although when used, they have proven very effective. Comfortable, planned, uniform movement is expected, without becoming repetitious or tiresome.

Staging can be varied by changing the placement of microphones, or by grouping background singers in different ways during solos. The placement of the performers on stage should never remain static.

5. Audience Involvement — Making an audience feel "a part" of the fun and excitement of the show is extremely important. This can be done in several ways.

a) **Clap along sequences** — Although overworked at times, this is quite effective when used during appropriate "up" tunes, once or twice within a show—and then for only a specified number of bars. One performer should "cue" the audience verbally or visually as to when to begin and end the clap along sequence.

b) **Female vocalists into audience** — On the second or third verse of an appropriate song, the featured female performer(s) could step off stage to sing "in" the audience, and mingle with them briefly before returning to the stage for the final phrase and bows.

c) **Audience on stage** — Servicemen enjoy seeing their "buddies" on stage. However, when this is done, specific actions should be planned and instructions given to avoid the uncomfortable, "what do I do now" feeling.

d) **Introduction of group members** — Servicemen want to know more than just a name. Hometowns, travel, or special talents of each performer could be included. Different, effective and perhaps humorous ways of introducing group members should be explored, planned, and tested.

6. Showmanship — Each vocalist, dancer and musician is an integral part of the show. As such, each should be worked into any possible choreography, back-up vocals, stage-patter, or special feature. Instrumentalists should not be present merely to supply music for the "front" performers, but should be a part of the total "visual" impact.

Good vocalists should also be good actors. Smiles are fine, but are generally not enough. "Projection" or "stage presence" can be achieved partially by singing "to" the audience, or to a person in the audience, using appropriate facial expressions and hand movements.

Instrumentalists featured on solos or "breaks" should step forward, when possible, and other performers should focus their attention on them. As one instrumentalist advises, "Don't make that guitar, drum, or horn solo look so easy. Act a little bit!"

SHOW PROPERTIES

Units must be completely self-contained and travel with minimum essential equipment *not to exceed 750 lbs.* This includes costumes, props, lighting equipment, electronic keyboard, microphones, PA systems, drums, and amplifiers. These items are not available at most remote installations and therefore, if used, must be provided by the unit. A complete PA system and instruments needed for musical accompaniment are considered essential for a self-contained show. All equipment and instruments must be protected in hard cases to avoid damage from baggage handling.

Costumes should be of wash and wear nature. The performance schedule may not allow time for cleaning at dry cleaning facilities, which are limited. Coin laundries are usually available on base.

Every attempt should be made to keep the size and weight of each individual piece of show property within current CAB (Civil Aeronautics Board) regulations for air travel within the U.S. These regulations state that a single piece cannot exceed 70 lbs. and the combined measurement of length, width and height cannot exceed 70 inches. Waivers for over-size pieces such as electric pianos, PA speakers, etc., can be arranged through local airline authorities. Sixty-six lbs. of personal luggage each is authorized. However, performers are encouraged to take only what they can personally carry—usually 40 lbs. Experience has shown this to be more than adequate.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Often units perform two shows per day, each in a different location. A day off is scheduled weekly. Unit members are responsible for setting up, striking, loading and unloading of all show equipment at each performance. Performance areas range from a small mess hall or day room, to an occasional theatre. Therefore, units must be flexible and capable of performing in extremely limited area.

HEALTH

It is important that performers selected be in good health in order to withstand the rigors of touring overseas. Schedules are often strenuous, and maintaining a balanced diet is difficult. Obtaining sufficient rest and eating balanced meals when possible are recommended to avoid illness when on tour.

Medical care and treatment is provided by the military during the touring period.

INSURANCE

USO covers each unit member with a \$10,000 life and accident policy free of charge. Personal property and show equipment are not insured by USO. However, claims for loss or damage can be processed through military legal (judge advocate) channels.

TRANSPORTATION, FOOD, AND HOUSING

All transportation is provided by DoD. Each USO/CMC performer receives a daily living allowance of \$20.00 from DoD to cover the cost of food and housing. This is paid in cash at the end of each week while on tour except for the last week, which is paid approximately 4 weeks after the unit returns. Each unit member should take a minimum \$150 to cover expenses for the first week. Additional money is needed if a delay en route or special purchases are planned (i.e. cameras, stereos, clothing, souvenirs, etc.).

Normally, units are housed in Visiting Officers' Quarters for which there is a billeting fee. When military quarters are not available, special rates are sought in nearby commercial hotels. Unit members are authorized to eat on base at military clubs, snack bars and mess halls.

DELAY EN ROUTE

A unit may be authorized up to fourteen days off, usually at the end of its tour, for personal travel and sightseeing while on the Pacific, European and Mediterranean circuits. No living allowance or military support is provided during this period. Delays must be requested 6 weeks prior to departure and when authorized the entire unit must participate.

AUDITION GUIDELINES

Due to the increasing number of colleges and universities applying for the limited number of touring opportunities, USO SHOWS must plan well in advance. Therefore, auditions must be completed four to six months prior to desired departure date.

Determining a show's quality and appropriateness can only be done by reviewing it in a live audition, just as it would be presented overseas—with the exact equipment, properties, costuming and group members who would tour if the unit were selected.

HOW TO PROCEED

1. **Prepare the show** with the target audience in mind as previously outlined.
2. **Determine availability** for tour by setting desired departure date and latest possible return date. (Minimum span—6 to 8 weeks) A wider span may increase chances for selection. Alternate dates should also be determined.
3. **Set target audition date** at least four months prior to desired departure.
4. **Complete and submit written application** to USO SHOWS at least two months prior to target audition date.
5. **Await acknowledgement** of receipt of application from USO SHOWS who will also confirm or adjust the audition date and time.
6. **Coordinate and assist** in arranging overnight accommodations and travel schedule for the USO/CMC representative(s) coming to conduct the audition. All expenses for these visits will be covered by USO SHOWS.
7. **Arrange for a private audition.** The audition performance should not be open to the general student body or public. A large room or small auditorium typifying a small overseas performance area should be arranged with friends and other interested parties invited for audience response.
8. **Prepare for the group to meet** briefly and informally with the USO/CMC representative(s) following the audition.

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NOTIFICATION OF SELECTION

Based on the written critique and recommendations submitted by the USO/CMC representative(s), USO SHOWS in New York will notify the director by letter approximately three weeks following the audition as to whether or not the production is selected for tour. A copy of the written critique will also be sent to the director.

If selected, an official invitation to tour will be sent to the President of the University by the Chairman of the USO Campus Music Committee.

It should be noted that although a production may be excellent, USO can select only those considered most appropriate from the universities competing at the time for the limited number of tours.

Once selected, public announcement is immediately authorized and should reflect USO and DoD sponsorship. The unit manager will receive processing material with instructions for each unit member which must be completed immediately upon receipt. These include "no-fee" passport applications where needed, security clearance forms, authorizations for required shots, life insurance and emergency data forms, and additional detailed tour information.

University productions selected for tour are encouraged to schedule as many performances as possible for local audiences and community groups during the months prior to departure. This will assist in keeping the production fresh and give USO additional visibility in the community.

DoD BRIEFING

Approximately four weeks prior to departure, a representative from the Department of Defense will visit the campus to present a detailed briefing (approximately two hours) on what to expect on tour and what is expected of each unit member. At this time an additional performance for the DoD representative may be scheduled if desired.

RETURN REPORT

A full report of the tour including a general overview and evaluation must be submitted to USO SHOWS within three weeks after return. Specific recommendations for improvement of the program and information which would be helpful to future USO SHOWS should also be included. Details regarding this report will be sent upon selection for tour.

USO/CMC OVERSEAS TOUR APPLICATION OUTLINE

The following information is to be submitted to USO SHOWS in New York in application for an overseas tour at least two months prior to desired audition date.

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UNIVERSITY:

Name and full address of University

PRESIDENT:

Name, address and phone of university president

DEPARTMENT:

Department under which the production operates, name of department head, office address and phone

SHOW DIRECTOR:

Name, title, office address and phone, home address and phone

UNIT MANAGER: (if other than director)

Name, title, office address and phone, home address and phone

UNIT TITLE:

Name of group (avoid titles using Chorus, Glee Club, Singers, Chorale, etc.)

SHOW DESCRIPTION: (75 min.)

Brief outline of proposed format with song titles, medleys, and types of comedy, skits or features to be presented.

SIZE OF GROUP: (not to exceed 8 including manager)

Total _____; No. of males _____; females _____

SUPPORTING MATERIAL:

List the items submitted with this application which may include copies of programs, photos, commendations and reviews of shows presented within the past two years (limit to 8 pieces).

PREVIOUS USO TOURS:

List dates and circuits previously toured by your university, if any.

AVAILABILITY FOR TOUR:

Indicate desired departure date and latest possible return date. *NOTE:* Competition is heavy for spring and summer months.

ALTERNATE DATES:

Indicate alternate dates of availability.

TARGET AUDITION DATE:

Specify a week during which the show may be auditioned at least 4 months prior to desired departure.

UNIVERSITY CONTACT:

Name, mailing address, office and home phone of contact for further information and confirmation of audition date.

Send the above information to:

NATIONAL DIRECTOR
USO SHOWS
237 East 52nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10022

USO will send a copy of the application to the Chairman of the USO Campus Music Committee

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MATERIAL NEEDED AT TIME OF AUDITION

The following information is to be prepared and presented to the USO/CMC representative(s) at the time of audition.

LISTING OF UNIT MEMBERS:

- a) full legal name (unit manager first)
- b) preferred name
- c) age, sex, social security number
- d) function in show (e.g., singer, keyboards, drummer, guitarist)

SHOW OUTLINE:

List each selection in order of performance including title, featured performer(s) and type or style of number (e.g., *Title*—Steve and Ellen—comedy duet; or *Title*—full cast—Top 40 medley with full choreography)

SHOW PROPERTIES:

Full listing of scenery, prop cases, instruments, amps, drums, PA systems, etc., showing the weight of each piece and the total weight. Indicate which piece(s) exceed the 70 inch limit, if any.

PICTURES:

Six (8"x10") Black and White Glossy Photos of full cast in costumes (same pose). A clear, sharp, action close-up with plain background is preferred.

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(Cover photo from Mediterranean tour of "The Fantastics", Northern Michigan University)

United Service Organizations, Inc.
National Headquarters

237 East 52nd Street, New York, New York 10022

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USO SHOWS

Campus Music Committee

GUIDELINES FOR AUDITION

and

TOUR APPLICATION

for

College and University Musical Variety Productions



United Service Organizations, Inc.
National Headquarters

237 East 52nd Street, New York, New York 10022

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