

# District of Columbia Arts Center Theater Manual

## ➤ A Note From the Executive Director, B. Stanley

Welcome to the District of Columbia Arts Center. This manual has been designed to help make your time here enjoyable for yourself, and for the staff of DCAC. It is our intention to lay out our needs explicitly so that we may further serve your needs as production time draws nearer for you. To that end, it is important that you understand what DCAC is all about.

DCAC is dedicated to:

- 1) providing a showcase for emerging and under-recognized artists in the Washington metropolitan area
- 2) encouraging cross-cultural exchange and participation
- 3) promoting communication and respect among artists and the community
- 4) inspiring fresh approaches in artistic development
- 5) assisting artists in the business of production.

Throughout the week, a lot of people use both our theater and gallery space. It's very important that we always respect those who use this space and their needs, and try to make them aware of our own.

You are encouraged to dialogue with any other artist(s) or groups who share time and space with you in any manner. It is our experience that the better the communication between individuals and groups, the easier it is for everyone to work together. While this manual contains a lot of information about how we expect you to behave at the Center, it does not include our trust that you will exercise basic common sense.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. Once again, welcome to DCAC and I hope your experience here is all that you expect. We wish you every success with your event.

## ➤ Theater Information:

### Stage information

Type: Black Box

Floor: Flat

Size: 23' x 23' (acting space approx. 13' x 17')

Ceiling height: approximately 16'

Total seating capacity: 50 (46 fixed seats with an overflow)

### Loading Area:

Location: Outside, in the alley behind the stage area

Truck Parking: in the alley behind the stage area for loading and unloading only.

Door Size: Double door, height: 6'8", width: 68"

The backstage area is used as both dressing room and Green room. These can be found backstage:

- Small wardrobe rack
- One bathroom with toilet, hot and cold running water and full length mirror

### Front of house booth

Light controls

Sound controls

### House management

DCAC provides a Manager to sell and take tickets and will offer concessions. We provide the refreshments before the performance and during intermission. Reservations are handled by DCAC staff via phone (202-462-7833) and email (info@dcartscenter.org). DCAC does not offer prepaid tickets. Reservations are held at the box office until 15 minutes before show time only. If you wish to offer tickets online, or sell them yourself, DCAC will not take reservations on your behalf.

### Sound

- Gemini DJ mixer
- 2 CD players
- Amplifier

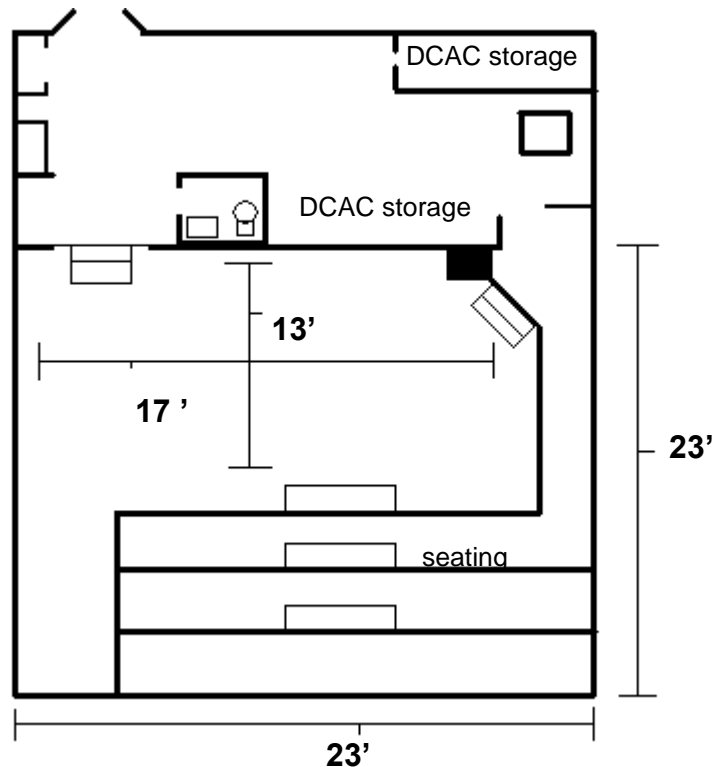
### Lights

- 9 Axial 6 x 9 Lekos
- 4 Nomad 4 x 6 Lekos
- 1 Altman Zoomer
- 5 6" Fresnels
- 1 Par 64
- 1 NSI Controller 16/32
- 4 NSI Dimmer Packs

### Miscellaneous

- Wall mounted 6' projection screen
- 10' fiberglass A-frame ladder
- 20' aluminum extension ladder
- 12' aluminum A-frame ladder

### ➤ Theater Floor Plan:



## ➤ Theater rental rates and procedures

Here are the steps to renting the theatre:

1. Carefully review the theatre manual
2. Decide on precise dates for your performance with your production team
3. Call DCAC to see if those dates are possible then request a performance proposal
4. Send back your performance proposal with your dates as well as alternative dates and rehearsal dates if any
5. If a problem occurs we will give you a call if not we will send you a contract
6. Send back the contract signed with your first deposit within 2 weeks. *After signing this contract, you are responsible for payment of the full amount agreed upon, regardless of cancellation.*
7. Your show is now scheduled!
8. Submit your press information so that we can publicize your show
9. A technical walk-through is required with a DCAC staff person.

## DCAC offers several performance slots:

- Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 7:30 PM (usage time 6:00 pm – 9:30 pm)
- Friday, Saturday at 10:00 PM (usage time 9:30 pm – 12:00 am)
- Sunday at 7:30 PM (usage time 6:00 pm – 9:30 pm)
- Sunday at 3:00 PM (usage time 2:00 pm – 5:30 pm)
- Saturday at 3:00 PM (usage time 2:00 pm – 5:30 pm)
- Wednesday at 7:30 PM (usage time 6:00 pm – 9:30 pm)

### **Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 7:30 PM, Friday and Saturday at 10:00 PM:**

- \$195 per night flat fee, artist keeps 100% of the box office or,
- \$125 plus 30% of the box office to DCAC, 70% of box office to artist

### **Wednesday at 7:30 PM, Saturday at 3:00 PM, Sunday at 3:00 PM or 7:30 PM:**

- \$125 flat fee, artist keeps 100% of the box office, or
- \$100 fee plus 30% of the box office to DCAC

**Rehearsal rate is \$20 per hour for groups performing at DCAC and DCAC Members. \$30 per hour for others**

## ➤ Using the Theater

DCAC is a multi-purpose arts organization. Diverse groups of artists and arts enthusiasts cross our doorways daily; each should be treated with the respect and compassion he/she deserves.

***The policies outlined in this manual are not suggestions and constitute a part of your contract. It is imperative that your organization pay close attention to this information. Serious problems will result in your loss of the theater space, both immediately and in the future.***

The contract to use the theater *does not* include the gallery space. Should the gallery space be needed for part of the performance, pre- or post- show discussions or receptions, special arrangements must be made.

Prior to load-in, a walk-through of the space is required. The walk-through will be conducted by a DCAC staff person and someone from your organization; all questions and concerns about the space will be addressed. You may obtain the key for the back door key at this time. Cash deposit is held against the key and will be given back to you once the key has been returned. It is understood that this deposit is for the key security only, and not to be applied to any other debts incurred by the artist to DCAC.

Any changes to the space require *prior* approval, including, but not limited to painting, chair arrangement, and changes in the placement of the lighting instruments and sound equipment.

Due to limited space at DCAC we have no scene shop to build a set. *Set pieces need to be pre-built and brought to DCAC to be assembled.* When disassembling your set at the end of a performance run, *remove all set pieces from DCAC premises.* This includes the dumpster and alley outside of DCAC. We are not responsible for disposing of your set.

As stated in your contract, it is understood that DCAC will not provide storage and assumes no responsibility for any items left unsecured by the artist in DCAC space. During load-out, the artist is required to remove all personal belongings from the premises unless prior arrangements have been made between the artist and the DCAC representative who signed the contract.

**It is important that you select a member of your organization to sever as a liaison between you and DC Arts Center.** Your stage manager, or any other manager or organizer, would be ideal to fill this role. This liaison will be responsible for maintaining open communication between your organization and DCAC concerning theater use, rehearsals, ticket reservations, etc. This liaison must have nightly contact with the box office or DCAC personnel regarding opening the house, starting the show, and late seating. This line of communication will ensure that both groups are aware of what the other is doing, and will help guarantee that you are pleased with your time spent at DCAC.

Concerning theater usage policies, there are three separate time slots to consider:

### **7:30 PM show time . . .**

- A DCAC staff person or volunteer will be on hand to take care of opening and closing the theater and house management.
- Earliest backstage call for performer is 6:00 PM. Don't plan to come early, hang out, eat etc.

*After the show . . .*

- All props and costumes should be put away
- The backstage area should be left in a clean and tidy way.
- Nothing may block backstage exits. All of your equipment should be stored out of the way. We also suggest that you cover your equipment to protect it from damage or theft.

### **3:00 PM and 10:00 PM show times . . .**

- A DCAC staff member or volunteer will take care of opening and closing the theater space.
- Backstage maintenance: props, costumes, general cleanliness, etc., is *your* responsibility.
- Lights may not be moved or re-focused, and light gels may not be changed.
- Stage is to be used as is. You must work around the set left on the stage by the 7:30 show.
- *We strongly urge you to get in contact with the theater company using the 7:30 time slot.* They can provide you with a light floor plan, etc., which will help you plan your performance. DCAC would be happy to provide you with contact information.

### **Rehearsals . . .**

- You may be rehearsing at times when no staff members are present at DCAC. You will have a key to get into the theater. Subsequently, *it is your responsibility to open and close the theater properly.*
  - The lightboard needs to be turned off.
  - The sound equipment needs to be turned off.
  - The backstage area should be left in a clean and tidy way.
- All props and costumes should be put away.
- The thermostat should be turned to the overnight position:
    - Summer: turn off
    - Winter: turn down to 45 degrees
  - All the lights inside the theater should be turned off.
  - The back door should be locked and if you are the last to leave, the top lock on the door to the atrium should also be locked.

*There will be a \$25 fee charged for each day the lights, thermostat and/or sound equipment are left on overnight.*

### **Financial planning guide**

As you probably know, producing a show can be a costly venture. We at DCAC want you to be as successful and profitable as possible. If this is your first time producing a show, we are providing you with a draft budget to help you plan for your potential expenses. Please take the time to use this form:

<b>Production costs:</b>	<b>Table 1: expenditure</b>	
	<b>budget</b>	<b>actual</b>
DCAC Theater Rental	_____	_____
Set and Props	_____	_____
Costumes	_____	_____
Performers	_____	_____
Technicians/designers	_____	_____
Royalties	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
<b>Publicity:</b>		
Postage	_____	_____
Design/production of artwork	_____	_____
Cost of advertising space	_____	_____
Printing of posters/ handbills	_____	_____
Press packs/photos	_____	_____
<b>Insurance:</b>		
Props/instruments/etc.	_____	_____

**TOTAL EXPENITURE** \_\_\_\_\_

**Table 2: income**

Grants	_____	_____
Sponsorship	_____	_____
Advertising revenue	_____	_____
Fundraising	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
<b>Total income:</b>	_____	_____

**Income Minus Expenditure=** \_\_\_\_\_ **shortfall**

The shortfall must be made up by box office sales.

Work out the total number of seats available in your shows run.  
Venue capacity (50) x number of performances \_\_\_\_\_ (total capacity)

You should budget on selling around 20% of your available seats.  
20% of total capacity = \_\_\_\_\_

It may be tempting to set a very high-ticket price in order to balance the budget, but this could be a mistake – particularly if it's your first production in the area and if you are an "unknown."

➤ **Publicizing Your Show at the DC Arts Center**

We want your show to be a success and the have the widest possible audience; publicity is key to achieving this.

The following describes the types of publicity that DCAC can do for you, and explain what we expect and need from you. We have also listed additional publicity practices that we follow and strongly recommend you follow as well.

**What DCAC does. . .**



- \* WHAT Theater performance, music, etc.
- \* WHERE D.C. Arts Center, 2438 18th St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20009, (202)-462-7833  
www.dcartscenter.org
- \* WHEN Date and time
- \* PRICE General Cost/ DCAC member cost
- \*DESCRIPTION

At DCAC we send out a two-part press release for all events -- actually, it's two different one-page press releases. The first page gives all six points above, including the narrative description. The second is only the summary -- the Who, What, When, Where, and Price and Description.

Put the press release on your own letterhead or make up your own version of press release stationary. You will not be able to use DCAC letterhead for your press releases.

### ***Flyers and Postcards***

These are to hand out, give out and put up in public. Make them interesting. Make them represent you. Make them look great.

For flyers, make them simple and eye-catching.

Professional-looking postcards can be printed on heavy stock at a local print shop, or any number of discount printers, such as [www.modernpostcard.com](http://www.modernpostcard.com).

### ***Personal Contact***

Call people to tell them about your event. Carry your postcards or flyers with you at all times and hand them out to your friends and acquaintances when you see them. Mail to your mailing list. Call people after you've mailed postcards to them -- word of mouth publicity can do wonders for your event. You'll be surprised how much this increases turnout.

### ***Media***

Newspapers-- reporters

Reporters usually cover specific areas, such as music, theater, art, etc. To get coverage, first find out which reporters are responsible for your specific area(s). Get copies of the newspapers you want to appear in and look for the names of the people writing the music reviews, or theater reviews, and so on. Address your press releases directly to their attention.

Allow for plenty of lead-time -- two weeks is a rule of thumb for newspapers. Don't neglect neighborhood and/or specialized papers, including Spanish language weeklies, African-American newspapers, gay and lesbian papers, Asian-American newsletters, etc., since they may pertain to your work. Also look for local publications concentrating on film and video, music, poetry, theater, etc.

DCAC will be happy to provide you with media lists but don't use lists blindly. Find out who would be interested in your work and who might actually cover it.

As you develop your own publicity strategy over time, make an effort to get to know the reporters. Track their coverage; find out what their views and interests are. When you see a story that interests you, write or call the reporter and let him/her know that you enjoyed the article. Develop a cordial relationship. You needn't stand aloof or be reluctant to make personal contact with

reporters. They need you for the news, just as you need them for coverage. However, realize that reporters operate in a hectic environment, so don't badger them. If you make their work easier by providing timely, interesting, and complete information about your events, it will serve both their interests and your own. Again, amiable persistence will pay off over time.

### ***Newspapers-- calendar coverage***

In addition to informing reporters of your events, make sure you send press releases to the "Calendar" section of newspapers. In general, your press releases should be on the Calendar desk two weeks before your event.

### ***Coverage in the Community-- Using flyers***

Putting out flyers can be time-intensive, but can also yield good results. Consider the following strategies:

- Putting flyers up in Universities (Art Department, Music Department, Theater Department etc.)
- Put stacks of flyers in likely nightclubs and in carry-outs.
- **DO NOT ATTACH ANY FLYER TO GOVERNMENT PROPERTY.** This includes, but is not limited to, lampposts, trees, parking signs, parking meters etc. The District of Columbia government will ticket and fine DCAC \$25 per poster affixed to municipal property. It is understood that if the artist does not comply with this rule, resulting in a fine, he or she indemnifies DCAC from all responsibility.

### ***Your mailing list***

Don't ignore the development and cultivation of your mailing list. In addition to friends, family, contacts and the people who come to your shows regularly don't forget to include special groups: embassies, businesses, galleries, and special interest groups. Brainstorm and be creative.

**Revised December 2010**