

District of Columbia Arts Center Theater Manual

About the DCAC theater

Welcome to the District of Columbia Arts Center. This manual has been designed to help make our time here enjoyable for you 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:

- ☛ Providing a showcase for emerging and under-recognized artists in the Washington metropolitan area
- ☛ Encouraging cross-cultural exchange and participation
- ☛ Promoting communication and respect among artists and the community
- ☛ Inspiring fresh approaches in artistic development
- ☛ 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 DCAC, it does not include our trust that you will exercise basic common sense. We wish you every success with your event.

Steps to renting the theatre

1. Carefully review the theatre manual, if necessary, visit DCAC to see the space, or better yet, come see a performance and get a feel for how the whole evening unfolds.

2. Decide on precise dates for your performance with your production team. If you are interested in more than three consecutive weeks call DCAC and speak to the director about possible dates.

3. Send back your performance proposal with your dates as well as alternative dates and rehearsal dates if any.

4. You will receive a call from the director to review your application. If there are conflicts with dates or times they will be resolved at that time. Rehearsal time can also be booked at that time.

5. A contract will be sent to you along with a Box Office Reference Sheet. Send back one copy of the contract signed with your first payment and the completed Reference Sheet within 2 weeks. After signing this contract, you are responsible for payment of the full amount agreed upon, regardless of cancellation. You must also provide a deposit against loss or damage and as a guarantee of your compliance with the contract. Your show is now scheduled!

7. As soon as possible submit your press information and photos so that we can publicize your show on our website and in our listserv.

8. Call the director and schedule a technical walk-through. Everyone is required to do this, whether you have used the space before or not. If you have rehearsals scheduled that involve using the space when DCAC is not open, you will also receive a key to the back door at the tech walk through. Any questions regarding lights, set pieces, storage, load in, box office, etc, will be addressed at that time.

9. You are now ready to present your performance.

Theater time slots and rental rates

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:

\$175 per night flat fee, artist keeps 100% of the box office or, \$105 fee plus 30% of the box office to DCAC, 70% of box office to artist

Friday and Saturday night at 10:00 pm:

\$150 flat fee, artist keeps 100% of the box office, or \$90 fee plus 30% of the box office to DCAC

Wednesday at 7:30 PM, Sunday at 3:00 pm or 7:30 pm:

\$105 flat fee, artist keeps 100% of the box office, or \$80 fee plus 30% of the box office to DCAC

Rehearsal rate is \$15 per hour for groups performing at DCAC and DCAC members, \$25 per hour for others.

Using the Theater

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 your deposit and 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 desired for part of the performance, pre- or post- show discussions or receptions, special arrangements must be made before you make a contract with us.

You will be required to make a deposit against loss or damage to equipment and property of DCAC and to insure your compliance with your contract. After your run is completed, you have completely loaded out and returned your key (if applicable) a DCAC staff member will do a walk

through of the space. After seeing that everything is order your deposit will be returned in full. In the event that you cancel your show after it has been scheduled and a contract has been signed your deposit will not be returned. It is understood that this deposit is security only, and not to be applied to any other debts you may incur to DCAC.

While part the gallery is used for the box office and concessions, the only other activity that takes place there is the audience waiting for you to open the house. We don't have chairs in the gallery, so keep in mind that the longer you delay the house opening, the longer your audience will stand. While we do have a place for you to leave postcards about your event in the gallery, there is no place for you to display headshots of your actors or extensive material regarding your performance. If you need space for such things, special arrangements must be made in advance.

Prior to load-in, a walk-through of the space is required. Ideally the light and sound board operator, the stage manager, and your designers should be present. The director of DCAC usually handles these walk throughs personally, so any questions or concerns about the space and your performance can be addressed at that time.

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. **Please note that only performances in the 7:30 time slot on weekends may design and plot the lighting instruments.** All other shows must use the lights as they are hung and gelled. You may not redirect or re-gel an instrument for your show and plan to put it back after your performance. Redirecting or re-gelling lights will result in an immediate loss of use of the space, loss of deposit, and forfeit of eligibility to use the space in the future.

Set pieces need to be pre-built and brought to DCAC to be assembled. Pieces must also be pre-painted, do not plan to paint your set pieces backstage during your load in. When disassembling your set at the end of a performance run, you must remove all set pieces from DCAC premises. We are not responsible for disposing of your set. Nothing may be disposed of in our dumpster or left in the alley outside of DCAC. During load-out, you are required to remove all personal belongings from the premises unless special arrangements have been made in advance. Failure to remove set

pieces, costumes, props or any element of your production will result in the loss of your deposit.

There is a minimal amount of room backstage for your set and props which will be shown to you during the walk through. All of your materials must fit within that space and is left at your own risk. It is understood that DCAC does not provide storage and assumes no responsibility for any items left unsecured in the space.

It is important that you select a member of your organization to serve as liaison between you and DCAC. 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 DCAC box office 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.

Rehearsals

If you have scheduled rehearsals in the theater when DCAC is not open to the public you will need a key to the back door to gain entry. You may obtain the key for the back door key at the technical walk through. Your deposit is also insurance that we get the key back and will only be given back to you once the key has been returned. When rehearsing it is your responsibility to open and close the theater properly.

- ☛ The switches that control the light board and sound equipment need 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 backstage and work lights should be turned off.
- ☛ Both the door to the atrium and the back door 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, and will not be deducted from your deposit.

Auditions and other functions

DCAC can be booked for auditions and other events that don't involve audiences around other programming. If they can be held when we are normally open to the public and the space is available the rehearsal rate will apply. If they must be held during a performance time the regular performance rate will apply. For auditions it is important to understand that the gallery is not available for you or your auditionee's use. The box office area can be used for registration and information, and actors may wait in a limited portion of the gallery, but they must be seated in chairs provided by DCAC staff and are not allowed to warm up, work through scenes, stretch out on the floor, eat, or in any way affect the atmosphere of the gallery. It is recommended that you schedule your auditions so that no more than a few actors are waiting in the gallery at one time.

House management

DCAC staff will be present during all public performances and whenever we are open to the public. Our staff will take care of opening and closing the theater and house management. They will sell tickets, handle arriving reservations, sell concessions, and keep the audience in the gallery until you confirm that the house is ready to open. We provide the refreshments available before the performance and during intermission. They will also deal with late seating, however it is your decision whether or not to allow it. Make sure that our staff knows your policy on late seating to avoid unwanted disturbance in your performance. DCAC has no standard policy for late comers.

Reservations

Reservations can be handled by DCAC staff via phone (202-462-7833) and email (dcarts98@aol.com). We have a voice mailbox dedicated to reservations when the office is not open. Reservations left there are confirmed by call back from our staff on our next business day. (We are closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.) DCAC does not offer prepaid tickets.

Reservations are held at the box office until 15 minutes before show time only, after that time they will be made available to walk-up or waiting list customers.

You may offer tickets online, or sell them yourself; however you must take full control of reservations and provide our staff with a list each evening of your pre-paid reservations. We will sell the remainder to walk up patrons on a first come, first served basis. DCAC will not take reservations on your behalf; in this case, we will simply refer incoming calls to your website or phone number. Unfortunately, it is not possible for DCAC and you both to offer tickets or reservations.

Complimentary tickets can be secured either by a list before the show starts or through our reservation system. If your show is enjoying good attendance, we suggest that you reserve your comps early to avoid disappointing your patrons.

During the performance run

You are required to damp mop the performance (not the audience) area before each performance. If your show is particularly messy, then you must mop afterwards as well. This is to provide the best possible appearance for the audience, not for your actor's convenience. A mop and bucket are located backstage and will be pointed out to you during your walk through.

Backstage maintenance of props, costumes, general cleanliness, etc is your responsibility. We suggest that you cover your equipment to protect it from damage or theft. Paper products (paper towels and toilet paper) are provided for general use by your group. However, you must provide products for specific use such as make up removal, cleaning blood or other prop liquids, cleaning the performance area of nightly spills or debris, and other needs that may arise connected with your show.

There is no smoking anywhere on DCAC premises. Actors must smoke in the alley behind the theater, the audience on the sidewalk in front of DCAC.

There is no food allowed in the theater. We have an ongoing battle with rat infestation, so we ask that the audience bring no food and that actors who need to eat before performances do so somewhere besides in the theater.

Keep in mind for a 7:30 pm show time:

- Earliest backstage call for performer is 6:00 pm, don't plan to come early, hang out, eat etc.
- After the show all set pieces, 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.
- Be prepared for the possibility of another group ready to come in 9:30 for their 10:00 show on Fridays and Saturdays.

Keep in mind for 3:00 pm and 10:00 pm show times:

- Lights may not be moved or re-focused, and light gels may not be changed.
- Earliest backstage time is 2:00 pm for 3:00 shows, 9:30 pm for 10:00 pm shows.
- Do not come to the back door to enter for your performance, there may be another performance or rehearsal running late. Check at the box office first.
- We strongly urge you to get in contact with the theater company using the 7:30 time slot.

Theater Information:

Stage information

Type: Black Box

Floor: Flat

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

Ceiling height: approximately 14'

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

Sound

Gemini DJ mixer

2 CD players

Amplifier

Lights

6 Axial 6 x 9 Lekos

3 Nomad 4 x 6 Lekos

9 6" Fresnels

1 Par 64

1 NSI Controller 16/32, 1000 watts per channel

4 NSI Dimmer Packs

Miscellaneous

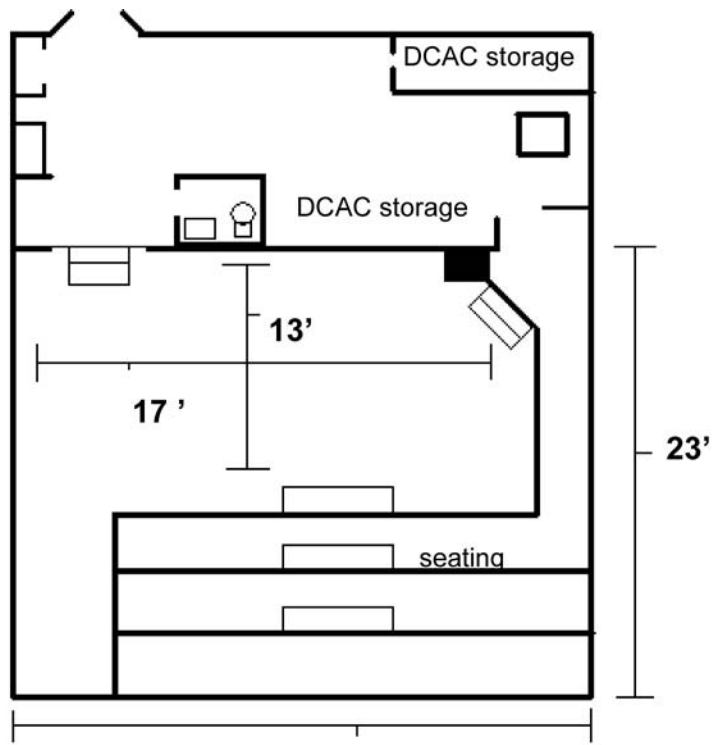
Wall mounted 6' projection screen

10' fiberglass A-frame ladder

20' aluminum extension ladder

12' aluminum A-frame ladder

Theater Floor Plan:



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:

Table 1: expenditure

- Production costs: budget actual
- DCAC Theater Rental _____
- Set and Props _____
- Costumes _____
- Performers _____
- Technicians/designers _____
- Royalties _____

Other _____
 Publicity:
 Postage _____
 Design/production of artwork _____
 Cost of advertising space _____
 Printing of posters/ postcards _____
 Press packs/photos _____
 Insurance: _____
 Props/instruments/etc. _____
 TOTAL EXPENITURE _____

Table 2: income

Grants _____
 Sponsorship _____
 Advertising revenue _____
 Fundraising _____
 Other _____
 Total income: _____
 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 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

We will publicize your program by:

- Listing and describing your program in the bi-monthly calendar. The calendar is mailed every other month to current DCAC members. Copies are also available to all patrons in the DCAC gallery, and at all theater events.
- Including you in the weekly general press release. This 1-2 page chronological summary of all the DCAC events is emailed each week to newspaper reporters, calendar editors, and radio and TV PSA desks. A one-sentence description of your event is included in this general release.
- Including you in our weekly listserv. This goes out each Thursday to about 3000 recipients. We like to use images, so if you have a good one we may use it. We will include you in this email during your run and up to three weeks before you open.
- Including you on our website. We keep our website updated and full of images of the events taking place. We are happy to link to your site and give a lengthy description of your performance, don't be afraid to send too much info, we can edit.

What we need from you:

To help us perform our job accurately, you must provide us with timely information about your event, however you are also expected to do your own publicity. We need you to do the following two things (at a minimum):

- Send us a paragraph describing your event as soon as possible. The deadline is 2 months before the opening. We need this in writing, not over the telephone, and by the deadline. Photographs are also useful, usually 300 dpi jpegs work great.
- Send a press release to the major desks of the major papers. This will amount to about 15 press releases. A master list has been included for your use—pick the desks and reporters that report in your area (e.g. theater, gallery, music, etc.)

If you would like to send more press releases—great! Our media list is extensive and as current as we can make it. If you give us ink jet labels we'll print them out for you, too.

Important information to remember. . .

- ☛ Proof our copy. It is your responsibility to make sure we have accurately described your show.
- ☛ Run your PR past us before sending it out. All too often, publicity has been released with incorrect times, dates, ticket prices, telephone numbers, DCAC address, among other mistakes. Email or fax a copy of your publicity to the office at (202) 328-7099 at least one day in advance of its mail date.

Publicity-- A Guide

Public relations do two things for you. It helps to create a buzz for your work in the collective mind of the community, and it generates audiences for your show. Effective PR is simply a matter of following a few basic guidelines consistently over time. None of us can ever be reminded enough that amiable persistence will pay off. The following are a few tips on how you can use your show at the D.C. Arts Center to generate media coverage, a buzz, and audiences.

First, get your publicity tools in order, and then address them to the appropriate media.

Publicity tools . . .

Press Releases

These are, as the name suggests, for the press. They should be clear, easy to understand, and interesting.

The press releases should be no more than one page. Give them:

- * WHO Name of event, name of you/your group
- * 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.

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.

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, or www.jaxprints.com.

Personal Contact

Call and email 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 postcards 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.

Your mailing/email list

Don't ignore the development and cultivation of your email/ 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.

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 theatres, bars, 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, which means YOU will pay those fines, NOT DCAC.

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