



# District of Columbia Arts Center

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## The District of Columbia Arts Center Theater Manual

### Welcome to the District of Columbia Arts Center

This manual has been designed to help make your time here enjoyable for yourself, your fellow artists, and for the staff of DCAC. It is our intention to lay out our needs explicitly so that we may 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:**

- Provides a showcase for emerging and under-recognized artists in the DC metropolitan area
- Encourages cross-cultural exchange and participation
- Promotes communication and respect among artists and the community
- Inspires fresh approaches in artistic development
- Assists artists in the business of production

The items in this manual are not suggestions, but requirements that will become part of your contract with DCAC. In order to keep our space available to as many people as possible and ensure that we keep our rental prices as low as possible, it is important that everyone understands and follows this manual. 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.

**DCAC offers several performance slots:**

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 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)

Saturday, Sunday at 3:00 PM (usage time 2:00 pm – 5:30 pm)

**The rates for those slots are:**

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

\$225 (\$195 for DCAC members) per night flat fee, artist keeps 100% of the box office, **or**

\$155 (\$125 for DCAC members) 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:

\$175 (\$145 for DCAC members) flat fee, artist keeps 100% of the box office, **or**

\$130 (\$100 for DCAC members) fee plus 30% of the box office to DCAC

Rehearsal rate is \$20 per hour for groups performing at DCAC and DCAC Members. The rate is \$30 per hour for all others. Rehearsals are not usually booked during performance slots.

**Steps to renting the theatre:**

1. Carefully review the theatre manual, we are serious about everything it contains.
2. Decide on precise dates for your performance with your production team. It is advisable to also select alternative dates and plan for rehearsals if needed.
3. Download the PDF of the Performance Proposal form, complete it legibly, and email, fax or mail it to us.

4. You will receive a telephone call from the director who will confirm your dates if they are available or work with you to find alternate dates that suit you.
5. Once the dates are agreed upon we will send you a contract and a box office information sheet in the mail. Review the contract carefully.
6. Send back one copy of the contract signed with your first payment within 2 weeks. Keep the second copy for your records. ***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 (with photos, 300 dpi) as soon as possible so that we can publicize your show. This information must be submitted to [info@dcartscenter.org](mailto:info@dcartscenter.org) at **least 4 weeks before the first night of your performance.**
9. You must schedule a technical walk-through with your technical staff and the DCAC director. Access to the space will not be granted until this occurs. If necessary you will receive a key at that time and all technical or production questions will be answered.

## 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 the theater space, both immediately and in the future.

**The Gallery:** 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.

**Technical Walk Through:** Prior to using the theater a walk-through of the space is required. The walk-through will be conducted by the DCAC director and your stage manager and

technicians. It is up to you to schedule the walk through and failure to do so could result in your not having access to our lighting and sound equipment for your performance. All questions and concerns about the space will be addressed and if necessary you will obtain the key for the stage door key at this time. Your deposit is held against the key and damages and will be given back to you once the key has been returned and we have reviewed the condition of the space after your production. It is understood that this deposit is for security only, and not to be applied to any other debts incurred by you to DCAC. It is your responsibility to return the key and/or request the return of your deposit.

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.

**Set Building:** 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. Any items left in the theater, in the alley or in the dumpster will constitute a forfeit of your deposit and may incur further costs for disposal.

**Storage:** DCAC does not provide storage space 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.

**Contact Person:** It is important that you select a member of your organization to serve 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 person 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.

**Box Office:** DCAC provides a Box Office Manager for each performance. They will sell and take tickets, offer beverages that may be taken into the theater, and keep the audience in the Gallery until you indicate that you are ready to open the house. We provide refreshments before the performance and during intermission. At the conclusion of your performance they will present you with a box office report and settle any financial arrangements with you. While we will attend to reservations and sell tickets to walk-ups, we cannot check tickets at the door of the theater; you are responsible for making sure that everyone who comes in actually has a ticket.

**Reservations:** Reservations for your show can be handled either by you or by DCAC. Please note that this is an either/or situation. If you wish to offer tickets online, or sell them yourself, DCAC will not take reservations on your behalf. We will take reservations for you without additional cost; however we do not accept pre-payment and offer no online sales. Reservations are handled by DCAC staff via phone (202-462-7833) and email ([info@dcartscenter.org](mailto:info@dcartscenter.org)) and are held at the box office until 15 minutes before show time only. Many groups like to use online services such as Brown Paper Tickets and give the Box Office Manager a list of attendees each evening. In that case the list must to be printed prior to arrival, as you will not have access to our computers to do this.

**DCAC Members:** DCAC requires that you make special provisions for DCAC Members. Members always receive a discount on ticket prices (usually about 20%) and have priority seating at all shows. When you are ready to open the house, our Box Office Manager will

announce that DCAC Members may enter and once they have gone in the rest of you audience will be admitted. If you plan to sell your tickets online, also plan to send us a “discount code” that we can give our members upon their request. We will only give the code to current members.

**On Performance Days:** A DCAC staff person will take care of opening and closing the theater and house management. Backstage maintenance of props, costumes, and general cleanliness is your responsibility. Please note that **no food** is allowed in the theater at any time. If food of any type is to be used in the performance it must be cleared with the DCAC Director. You are required to sweep and mop the performing area of the theater *before* the house opens. If your performance sullies the performing area you are responsible for sweeping and mopping afterwards as well. The backstage area should be left in a clean and tidy way. All props and costumes should be put away and all of your equipment should be stored out of the way. We suggest that you cover your property to protect it from damage or theft. DCAC is not responsible for any items left in the theater.

**Nothing may block backstage exits at any time.**

**7:30 PM show time:** Earliest backstage call for performer is 6:00 pm. Do not plan to come early, hang out, eat, etc.

**3:00 PM and 10:00 PM show times:** Earliest backstage call for performers is 2:00 pm and 9:30 pm respectively.

**Lights must be used as set for the 7:30 performance, they may not be moved or re-focused, and light gels may not be changed.** We urge you to get in contact with the theater

company using the 7:30 time slot. They can provide you with their light plot which will help you plan your performance. DCAC can provide you with contact information.

**After the Performance:** All of the dimmers on the light board need to be turned to zero. All of the switches along the back wall of the booth and house lights need to be turned off. Do not turn off the sound equipment. The backstage area should be left in a clean and tidy way with all props and costumes put away. Keep in mind that you may not be the next person using the space.

**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. If there is no DCAC Staff closing for you the thermostat should be turned off in the summer and in the winter it should be left on at 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.**

**Food and Beverages:** There is **no food** allowed in the DCAC Theater or Gallery. Please inform performers that they are not to bring food to eat backstage prior to the performance. Our theater is small and the air circulates through the entire space; pizza backstage means pizza smell in the audience. Likewise, please do not bring in food during rehearsals. We are in a continuing battle with rats and when they smell food scraps they will find a way to get them, and once they get in the building they are difficult to get out. Help us ensure that your audience has only people in it, not rats. Beverages are fine, we insist that audiences don't bring in their own, but purchase them from DCAC. Cast and crew may bring in whatever they like.

# Theater Information:

Type: Black Box

Floor: Flat, entrances from backstage 24" from floor with movable steps

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

Ceiling height: approximately 14' (Grid Height: 12')

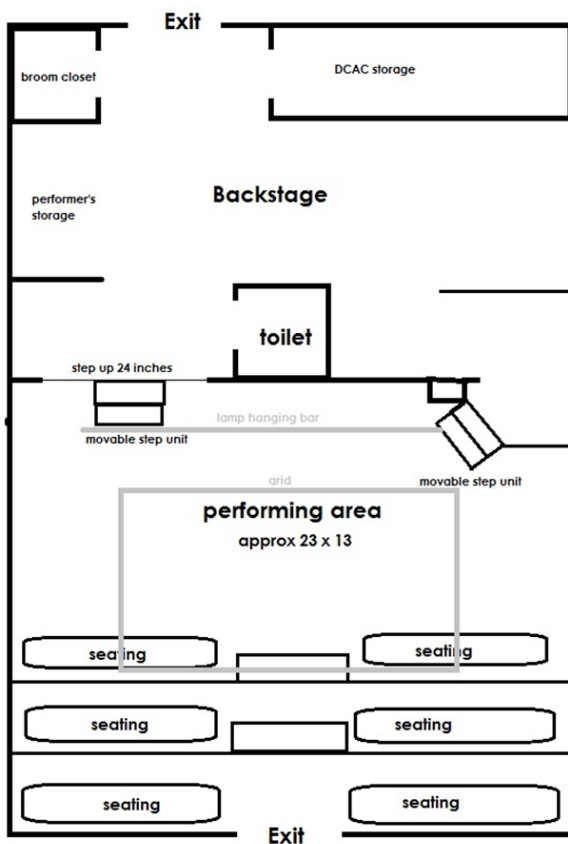
Total seating capacity: 50 (46 fixed seats with an overflow)

Loading Area: Outside, in the rear alley, there is no parking, loading and unloading only.

The backstage area is used as both dressing room and Green room. There is a small wardrobe rack and one bathroom with toilet, hot and cold running water and full length mirror.

There is very little storage space. The little that is available is used primarily by long-running shows. All sets and props must be struck from the stage after each performance.

## DCAC Theater Floor Plan:





**Equipment:**

Front of house booth has very basic light and sound controls. We have a NSI 16 channel dimmer board with two-scene preset. Our sound consists of a Gemini DJ sound mixer, two CD players and a 100 watt amplifier. We do not have microphones or microphone stands. Our equipment is not set up to handle microphones, so if you need them you need amplification as well. Our light grid is moderately stocked with an assortment of 6" fresnels, 6x9 lekos, and 4x6 lekos. Our collection of gels consists of what has been left over from other shows, so you should plan on bringing your own. We have a mounted 6'x6' projection screen but do not provide a projector. DCAC does, however, own a projector and if it is otherwise not in use it can be rented for \$25 per night.

**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 publicize your program by:

1. Listing and describing your program in the bi-monthly calendar. About 250 copies of the calendar are mailed every other month to current DCAC members. Copies are also available to all patrons in the DCAC gallery, and at all theater events.
2. Including you in the weekly general press release. This 1-2 page chronological summary of all the DCAC events is sent 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.

3. Listing you on our website. We will feature a blurb and a photo about your event and provide a link to your site, if you have one.

### **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):

1. Send us a paragraph describing your event as soon as possible. The deadline is *at least* 4 weeks before the opening. We need this in writing (email preferred), not over the telephone, and by the deadline. Send information to: [info@dcartscenter.org](mailto:info@dcartscenter.org).
2. Photographs (300 dpi) are tremendously helpful, we will use them whenever possible, but if we don't have any, we can't. The Washington Post and City Paper often call us first for images from shows. We can get them to them right away if we have them, and sometimes the deadline is "right now."

We suggest that you send a press release to the major desks of the major papers. This will amount to about 15 press releases. A list can be provided 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 a copy of your publicity to us at least one day in advance of its mail date.

## **A Publicity 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.

## **Press Releases**

These are, as the name suggests, for the press. They should be clear, easy to understand, and interesting. Remember to include “hooks” for your show and format it in such a way that the information is easily cut and pasted for the reporter. The easier it is to understand and use, the better the chance they will use it. 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, Info and reservations: (202)-462-7833 or info@dcartscenter.org, [www.dcartscenter.org](http://www.dcartscenter.org)

WHEN: Date and time

PRICE: General Cost/ DCAC member cost

DESCRIPTION: Be as clear and concise as possible

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 online discount printers.

### **Personal Contact**

Email people to tell them about your event. Create an event on Facebook. Carry your postcards or flyers with you at all times and hand them out to your friends and acquaintances when you see them. Don't ignore the development and cultivation of your mailing list, both electronic and traditional. 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.

### **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. Put flyers up in Universities (Art Department, Music Department, Theater Department etc.), and 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.

## Financial Planning Guide

As you probably know, producing a show can be a costly venture. We 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>Table 1: Expenditure</b>	<b>Table 2: Income</b>
<i>Production costs: actual budget</i>	Grants _____
DCAC Theater Rental _____	Sponsorship _____
Set and Props _____	Advertising revenue _____
Costumes _____	Fundraising _____
Performers _____	Other _____
Technicians/designers _____	Total income: _____
Royalties _____	<b>Income minus Expenditure =</b>
Other _____	_____ shortfall or profit
<i>Publicity:</i>	The shortfall must be made up by box office sales. Work out the total number of seats available in your show's run.
Postage _____	
Design/production of artwork _____	
Cost of advertising space _____	
Printing of posters/handbills _____	
Press packs/photos _____	
Insurance _____	
Props/instruments/etc. _____	
<b>Total Expenditure</b> _____	

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."

Please direct any questions you may have to [info@dcartscenter.org](mailto:info@dcartscenter.org).