

# Transitioning to the Provincial Festival Stage

Congratulations on having your play selected to represent your zone in Red Deer!

The following information is designed to assist you in transferring your production from your venue to the Festival stage. It is to be used in concert with the Festival registration package to address common questions and concerns a school may have.

## Festival Format

The Festival comprises 5 performance sessions spread over 3 days. Each session may contain up to four productions showcasing work from around the province. The Festival is held in the Red Deer Polytechnic Arts Centre. Parking is available in the lot immediately north of the Arts Centre (see maps on last page). Enter using the west doors of the Arts Centre in order to access the pay machine.

There is an afternoon and evening performance session Thursday and Friday, and an afternoon session Saturday, followed by a banquet, dance, and awards ceremony.

Afternoon performance sessions start at 12:00 PM and the evening performance session starts at 7:00 PM. Sessions are listed with an estimated total run time, based on individual run times submitted upon registration. As actual run times may vary, you will not find a start time publicly listed for specific performance. Please encourage any supporters who may be coming from your performance to arrive in time to **enjoy** the full performance session. They will not be let into the theatre during a performance.

**Best Practice: Plan meal arrangements to ensure that you will have adequate time to return for the full performance sessions and only share the session start times with any parents/fans wishing to see your school on the Festival stage. The best in high school drama is being showcased - support all the students and enjoy their exceptional work.**

Each performance session is preceded by technical rehearsals for all productions in that session and is followed by adjudications. The first production to tech will be the last to perform in the session, and will be the first to be adjudicated following the session. The last production to tech will open each session, and will be the last production adjudicated.

Outside of performances, the Festival also offers workshops for students Friday and Saturday morning. Activities may take place elsewhere on campus but the Red Deer Polytechnic Arts Centre (RDP AC) lobby will be the meeting place for all events.

## Safety and the Role of the Venue Technicians

Safety is paramount in the Festival. The RDP venue technicians will have final say over anything taking place on stage and will not allow anything that puts at risk the audience, cast, crew, building or equipment. Examples of this could include use of live fire effects or broken glass on stage as well as aerial performance work such as silks or performer flying, which our venue is not appropriately configured for.

**Best Practice: Have a plan and the appropriate tools to manage messes and/or dangerous things.**

**The use of weapons is prohibited without advanced notice and should be noted on your registration. Any approved weapons CANNOT have the ability to launch a projectile or cut someone. Bladed weapons must not be sharp. Firearms must be obviously fake. Additional weapons requirements will be communicated by the venue technicians as necessary in advance of the festival.**

**The decision of the venue technicians is final should they deny a request and they are not satisfied that it can be safely and appropriately managed.**

The venue technicians provide expert knowledge in the operation of the venue and its equipment and guide directors through the possibilities presented by the RDP space. They work with student technicians to program lighting looks, understand the operation of the audio and lighting consoles, and manage the technical requirements of their production. They provide students with exposure to industry professionals and the operation of a theatre that students may not have the opportunity to experience elsewhere.

Students and actors should ensure that they arrive on stage wearing appropriate attire for the technical rehearsal including closed-toed shoes and have any necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) necessary to do their jobs.

### Technical Rehearsal

Each production is allocated 30/40/50 minutes, as requested by the registering teacher. These times are a reflection of the technical needs of your production with the aim of providing equitable time to all productions. Shows with few lighting looks and minimal set will require less time to establish looks and check sound levels than a more complex production.

The technical rehearsal is a time in which to familiarise technicians and actors with the space, set lighting looks and focus lights, check audio levels, place and spike set, verify voice projection, run critical blocking including fight scenes, transitions, and confirm the overall look of the production. **The technical time is not intended as an opportunity to rehearse the full script**. Schools are free to manage their time to its greatest benefit as they see fit. Venue technicians will encourage areas of focus should it appear that crew are not making the best use of time.

Each technical rehearsal begins with an introduction of venue technicians, technical adjudicator, and key student positions for each production, an explanation of evacuation procedures and other safety information, and identification of key student crew members prior to breaking off to work with the individual technicians. You will also be asked if there are any elements in your production that are notable such as liquids, fire, and anything that could pose a safety risk to the staff, theatre, or audience.

Following the introductions, student technicians will proceed with the venue technicians to their respective stations to build and set lighting cues, check audio levels, and place and spike the set. Students operating from the booth will be escorted there by a venue technician for the technical rehearsal.

Key positions (stage manager, assistant stage manager, lighting technician, audio technician and others as needed) will be provided with a headset to use for communicating between positions. This radio is monitored by the venue technicians in order to assist productions as needed.

Directors have use of the adjudication table, set up in the house and equipped with an intercom and headset for communicating.

**BEST PRACTICE: Come in with a list of priorities for each department and any special requests.**

**Example: Lighting, identify key looks you wish to achieve and check out images from past Festivals to see some of the possibilities that have been used in the past and pay attention to other productions to see how use the lighting Audio: Identify cues that you can use to establish and check your levels. SM: Have a plan for how you want to use the time and ensure your departments have tasks to do concurrently so as best use the time.**

**Having actors in costume may be useful for setting lighting looks.**

Technical rehearsals start at 8:00 AM for the morning session, and 3:00 PM (or as soon as possible following the conclusion of afternoon sessions). Morning technical rehearsals may conflict with the workshops being offered.

**Prior to your technical rehearsal, please meet at the USL door (near Studio A) with your set and anything else you wish to use. Be ready to start at the assigned time.**

You will receive your tech time when the schedule is published the week of the Festival.

## **Performance**

Each performance session will start with an introduction by a member of the AHSDFA executive. New this year, there will also be a short video introducing the plays for that session highlighting the importance of the piece as well as any content advisories the audience should be aware of. The first production performing will then be announced. All this takes place under the control of the venue technicians. Following the introduction, your stage manager will be given control to call your performance and your lighting and audio operators will assume control over their respective boards.

**Prior to your performance, please be in or near your assigned dressing room. You will be given a standby near the expected end of the performance immediately before yours, as well as a go when you are able to move to the stage when the previous crew has cleared the stage.** Technicians can proceed to the booth and actors and stage technicians can then proceed to the stage to place the set. Once you are given your call to proceed to the stage you will have 10 minutes to place your set.

You can play house music prior to your production starting.

Following your curtain call, the venue technicians will resume control of the consoles and your running crew will strike your set and remove all of your spike marks.

You have 5 minutes to strike your set. It does not need to go to Studio A, and can sit in your designated area SL.

## **Set and Set Storage**

Schools are responsible for obtaining and bringing all set pieces required for their production. **RDP cannot supply anything, to include boxes, platforms, doors, furniture, etc.**

Upon arrival at the festival, schools may load their set and supporting materials into Studio A, located immediately adjacent to the RDP Arts Centre loading dock. As this space is shared between all productions, it is important to keep your set contained in a compact area. Please contact the Backstage Festival Co-Manager prior to unloading your set.

For sets that require some assembly prior to the technical rehearsal, there will be space available in Studio A, but final assembly of the complete set will take place on the stage. All set pieces will need to be moved down a service corridor to the stage for the technical rehearsal.

Following the technical rehearsal, sets, props, and other materials will need to be stored in a taped off area of the deck SL. Each area is lettered and will correspond with the assigned dressing room.

Spike marks can be used to mark your set placement on stage. This would take place during the technical rehearsal. Each production will use a unique colour of spike tape. You may bring your own but it will also be available from the venue technicians.

**Best Practice: Spike tape works best when used sparingly. Spikes should be small and strategically placed (ie. marking the upstage legs of a chair, a critical blocking cue, etc.).**

Sets may not be placed on stage in a position to interfere with the operation of the fire curtain. The fire curtain line will be identified during your technical rehearsal. For reference, it is a line crossing the opening of the proscenium immediately upstage of the proscenium wall.

Following the performance session, sets must be removed to Studio A immediately.

**All sets must be removed from Studio A by 5:00 PM Saturday evening.**

Subject to safety regulations, we are often able to hang set elements, as long as they arrive with all appropriate hanging hardware. All rigging will be done by RDP venue technicians and it should be noted that this can consume a significant amount of the tech time.

## **Dressing Rooms**

A dressing room will be assigned to your production and is open for your use at the start of your sessions technical rehearsal block. Each dressing room is lettered and this letter will correspond with your assigned set storage space on stage.

Access to the dressing rooms is via the backstage entrance off of the main corridor of the RDP AC near security. There are three access points to the stage from the dressing room area located DSL, DSR, and USR. Out of respect for other productions, accessing the dressing rooms during performances and technical rehearsals is only via the USR stairwell accessed from the door near the RDP AC security desk.

The audio from the theatre is played over PA in the dressing rooms.

Dressing rooms are equipped with makeup mirrors, shower, toilet, costume rack, sink counter space, and lockers. **Only water is permitted in the space.**

Dressing rooms must be clean and vacant following your performance session (or immediately following the adjudication for the last production in a session).

## **Technical Considerations**

**The RDP venue technicians have final say over anything taking place on stage and will not allow anything that puts at risk the audience, cast, crew, building or equipment.** Examples of this could include use of live fire effects or broken glass on stage as well as aerial performance work such as silks or performer flying, which our venue is not appropriately configured for.

A diagram is provided at the end to help illustrate the stage space, including general dimensions and curtain placement to help with your planning.

The main curtain operates as a guillotine (flying in and out) and is operated by the venue technicians. It cannot be reconfigured as a traveller (split down the middle and moving to the sides) due to time constraints.

There is a cyc upstage, as well as a full-width black drape that can be flown in.

Midstage, there is a full-width black drape available.

There are black scrims available approximately midstage and just behind the main curtain.

There is a midstage centre projection screen that can be used. In the past schools have supplied their own projector. Those wanting to use RDP's should be advised that they must bring their own computer as well as any adapters they need to output VGA or HDMI and content, and that it is aimed and focussed on the midstage screen in a rear projection format and cannot be moved. If they bring their own projector they are welcome to project on either midstage screen or cyc at their discretion.

Subject to safety regulations, it is often possible to hang set elements, as long as they arrive with all appropriate hanging hardware. All rigging will be done by RDP technicians and it should be noted that this eats up a significant amount of tech time.

The orchestra pit is operable and can be raised to extend the apron, lowered to be level with the auditorium floor or set in any position in between. For safety reasons the stage lift cannot travel lower than the auditorium floor while there is an audience in the house.

Lighting: A robust generalised plot is provided for the festival. It includes warm, cool, and neutral washes, foliage breakups gelled warm and cool, and limited side lighting behind the first leg. Moving lights are hung house left and right.

**A magic sheet will be provided prior to the Festival for planning purposes.**

**Best Practice: Pay attention to lighting during other performances to note things you liked. You can identify these lights or looks during your technical rehearsal to assist the venue technicians understand your vision.**

Audio: Audio playback is typically located in the booth and run from a laptop via an aux cord. Schools are responsible to bring their own device for playback. Productions can choose from a variety of methods to playback audio, a popular option is Qlab though it is only available for Mac.

**Best Practice: Ensure all notifications and other sounds are disabled on the playback device.**

## **Student Roles**

The Festival aims to showcase student work in all aspects of a production. With this in mind, it is understood that not all schools have the students, staff, space, or schedule to include some of these roles and that roles may be combined to meet the constraints each school is working under.

The following roles are commonly seen at the festival. A brief description is included of their place in the production at Festival. All roles are supported by the venue technicians during technical rehearsal and the venue technicians are on hand nearby during performance runs should their assistance be required.

**DIRECTOR:** Individual responsible for overall production and the integration of the various pieces (acting, soundscape/audio, lighting, set, costuming etc.) and it is their vision the audience sees manifest on stage. During the technical rehearsal they may provide direction on the technical elements to the stage manager in order to best support the production on the festival stage.

**STAGE MANAGER (SM):** The individual charged with executing the technical aspects of the director's vision and management of the personnel operating the sound and light consoles as well as backstage. They lead the technical rehearsal and will work the venue stage manager to address the needs of their performance. They manage the time of the technical rehearsal and guide the different positions in ensuring their priority tasks are accomplished. They may collaborate with the director to ensure their vision is maintained in the new space.

During the actual performance, they will communicate with all the other technicians by “calling the show” via a communication headset (audibly providing standby and go cues to the different departments) ensuring the technical aspects proceed as the director envisioned. They also troubleshoot any issues that may arise to minimise their impact.

They are most often located in the booth above the audience but occasionally may be found in the wings backstage.

**ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER (ASM):** The individual located backstage charged with overseeing the backstage technicians. Responsibilities may include ensuring set and prop placement, directing actors to their places, cueing technicians backstage, and the strike (removal) of the set following the performance. They will work with the venue stage manager to address any requirements they have backstage.

They are in communication with the SM via a communications headset and can advise them of technical issues on the stage deck.

**LIGHTING OPERATOR:** The individual responsible for running all lighting cues during a performance. They are located in the booth and are directed to execute their cues by the SM. They use a communication headset to provide audible feedback to the SM for their cues. During technical rehearsal they will work directly with the venue lighting technician to set all of their lighting looks and program the venue console to run their cues during the performance.

**SOUND OPERATOR:** The individual responsible for running all audio cues during a performance. They are most often located in the booth and are directed to execute their cues by the SM. They may also be located at an audio console in the house, especially if live musicians or audio mixing are part of a production. They use a communication headset to provide audible feedback to the SM for their cues. During technical rehearsal they will work directly with the venue sound technician to integrate their audio playback device in the the venue system in preparation for performance.

**RUNNING CREW:** The individual(s) responsible for the placement and removal of the set on stage. They are located in the wings backstage and may have additional responsibilities such as scene changes and props management, They receive cues and directions from the ASM and are not typically on a communication headset.

**OTHER ROLES:** Productions may have additional student roles such as follow spot operator, hair and makeup technicians, accompanist, musicians etc.

**Best Practice: All individuals whose position uses cues should have a list of these cues during the technical rehearsal. This includes the Stage Manager (who should have a full script with all the different cues they will be calling), the Assistant Stage Manager, Lighting Operator, and Sound Operators.**

**Cues should be organised sequentially in a way that makes sense for the technicians executing the cues.**

## Calling a Show

The Stage Manager is responsible for calling the show. The call includes the delivery of standby cues which serve as a warning to operators for a forthcoming cue, and execution cues on which the operator makes the cued action happen.

**Best Practice: Operators may be extremely familiar with their cues but it is ultimately the responsibility of the Stage Manager to ensure the proper execution of the cues in a performance when calling the show.**



Standby cues should be given with enough time for operators to acknowledge them prior to the SM calling for their execution.

If multiple cues are happening in close succession, the SM may stack cues. Careful attention should be paid to maintain a consistent order of delivery (eg. all of the stacked lighting cues delivered together before the delivery of all the sound cues).

**Best Practice: Use consistent, clear formatting and delivery for your cues to minimise confusion (LX or Lights, SX or Sound etc.).**

**Operators should acknowledge their standby cues audibly (eg. SM: Standby lights 1. OP: lights standing by) in the communication headset in the order they were called.**

**The execution of a cue on the GO is the acknowledgement of the direction.**

**Cues should be executed with the SM says GO (eg. sound 17 - GO; the button to run the cue is pressed on the word GO).**

Stage Managers should have all cues written in their prompt book and be following along through the performance.

The general sequence of the call is as follows:

- If not already started, the SM may direct the ASM to proceed with the set placement (this may go uncalled under the direction of the venue SM once the previous production has cleared the stage).
- SM confirms set placement.
- SM confirms technicians and actors are in place and ready. All on comms should confirm or state the reason for any delay.

The venue technicians will turn over operations of the theatre to the students.

- SM directs places for actors.
- ASM confirms actors are in places.
- SM calls first standby cue(s) #.
- OP's respond "*position* standing by"
- SM calls first cue(s) # - GO
- OP's execute the cue on GO.
- The call continues for the remainder of the performance.

Following the last cue and curtain call, the students will turn control of the theatre back over to the venue technicians and may gather their belongings and leave the booth.



## **Run Time**

Run time limits are set by the Festival executive and published in the registration package. Run times are calculated from the first lighting cue and conclude with the final blackout.

**If your production commences or ends in a different manner (eg. actors speaking in the dark at the start or no final blackout, this must be identified to the venue SM and Backstage Festival Co-Director during your technical rehearsal).**

Both the venue SM and the Backstage Festival Co-Director time the production.

Additionally, a video recording is made of the production for the sole purpose of having an additional source to validate the run time, should it be necessary.

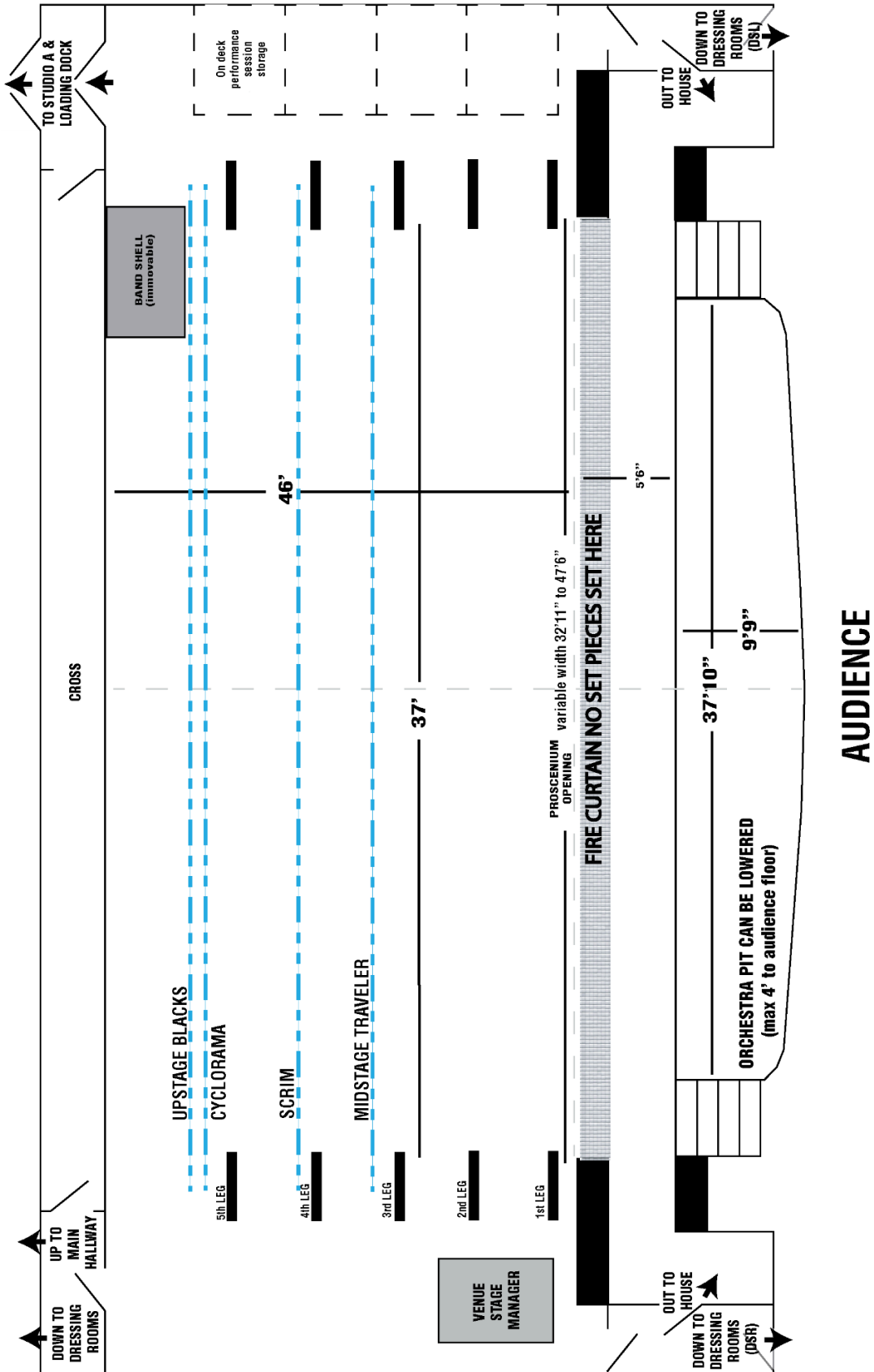
## **Adjudications**

Each performance session will be followed by a brief public adjudication for the benefit of the audience, and a separate private adjudication with the artistic and technical adjudicators.

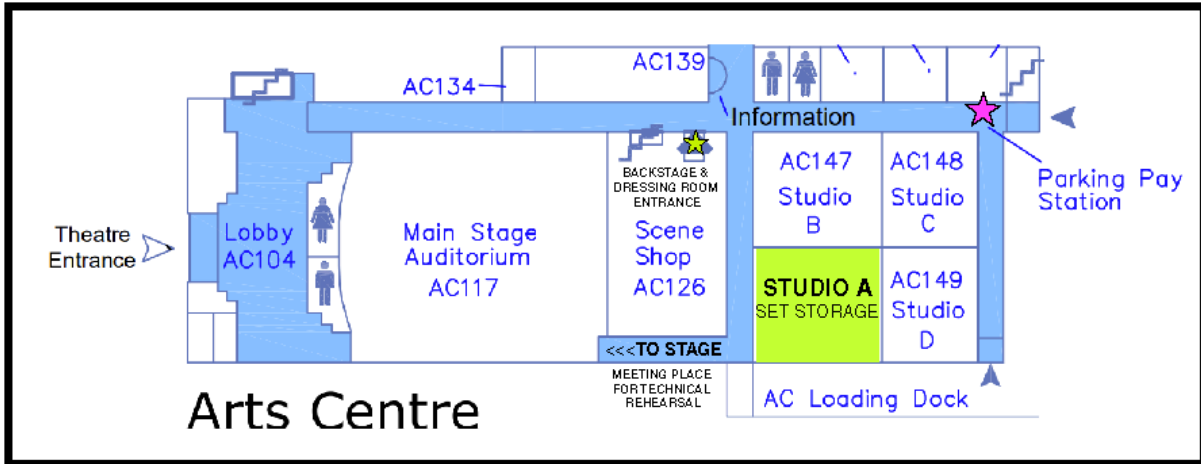
Productions are adjudicated in reverse order of performance, and will be assigned a studio for the adjudication in the closing remarks for the performance session. Productions awaiting adjudication may use the time to clean their dressing rooms and organise sets, if time permits.

**Have other questions? Ask the Backstage Festival Co-director. The AHSDFA Provincial Festival and RDP look forward to help you showcase your production!**

# STAGE REFERENCE



# ARTS CENTRE



Arts Centre

# PARKING

