

Technical Department

Shuswap Theatre 2018-2019
Technical Director: Elizabeth Ann Skelhorne

Overview

I began my role as STS House Technical Director (TD) mid-season in February of 2019. With a focus on improving how the department works, I have looked at safety, training, procedures, function, versatility, and communication. In the past few months the booth has been cleaned, purged, and organized; making it easier to work in, find, and keep track of equipment. I have taken an inventory of our current sound and lighting equipment and reviewed the technical information on our website for accuracy. Equipment repairs and replacement are in progress and ongoing as needed within reason. Cables and other portables are currently being restocked and labelled uniquely to prevent leakage. I strongly recommend changing the booth code more frequently. An equipment sign out procedure is now in place for active STS members only. Please note a deposit is now required to remove equipment from the booth for external use.

Safety & Security

Safety is always our main priority. It is important that all volunteers receive adequate safety training for the stage before joining a crew either on stage or behind the scenes. Yes, even actors. The Actsafe website has many informative resources, including proper ladder safety and how to hang lighting instruments. I encourage everyone to visit their *Performing Arts Safety Primer*. It is important to know the standards for a community theatre and I encourage all departments to review their safety needs and education standards. I would like to see an Actsafe workshop hosted here at Shuswap Theatre in the near future. I also strongly encourage as many ST members as possible to keep their first-aid training up to date. I believe it is important that someone with proper training be on hand for all public events. My personal basic First-aid/CPR is current. In review of the minutes, it is my understanding that the board was looking into the possibility of an AED, either access to one nearby or one on site. Once this is determined, it would

be great to see an updated emergency procedures and first aid kit(s) available. Please keep me updated directly. Fire safety plans are available throughout the theatre. I have requested that the building manager include me in our next annual fire safety walk through with the local inspector.

It is very important that anyone operating equipment in the technical department be properly trained. Often we see new operators or well meaning members come in to the booth with zero training or understanding. This is simply not fair to them or the production and is not safe. Long before a technician learns how to design, they need to know the basics and log hundreds of hours working on deck. Anyone entering the booth to perform a job MUST receive an orientation. Technicians

have the option of logging hours worked towards writing the Live Performance Electrical Certificate (LPEC). See the Actsafe website for more information. It is also important that anyone repairing electrical equipment in the theatre be properly trained to do so.

Security is an ongoing topic. Proper lock up strategies are employed diligently as needed. Equipment on loan is monitored. Access to equipment needs to remain discrete and reserved for necessary operations only. The most senior technician on duty can and should control traffic in this space. It is the tech's responsibility to make sure any and all equipment used is done so properly and returned to the booth or storage area safely and in a timely and well organized manner.

Rentals

As mandated by the board last year, and I agree, it is important that all rentals requesting the booth have a properly trained and appropriate technician(s) on hand for safety, liability and security. Technicians for each rental are assigned by the TD to best support the renters' needs. In light of this it is very important that proper and accessible logging of building rentals occurs and is communicated to the TD quickly and accurately.

Previously this position has been paid a small honorarium by the renter directly, separate from the building rental fee. This technician fee is out of date and does not match the time and skill asked of a trained technician during a rental. I recommend that effective immediately, technicians will be paid a minimum of \$100-\$150 per rental/day depending on how complicated and/or how long the call is.

Shifts

exceeding eight hours and extending past midnight could and should require an increase. This fee should be updated on the website and could possibly be paid by Shuswap Theatre if included in an increase in theatre rental fees.

iMac

In Feb 2019 it was moved by the board to sell our previous lighting board. It was then moved by the board that the profits from that sale be used to purchase a new iMac for the booth. This purchase allows us to stay current and flexible with the ever changing demands of technical theatre and helps us continue to be able to host events like TOTE and Ozone. The new iMac was purchased and installed over the summer and all relevant files and programs were transferred and updated successfully. We were also recently able to purchase the newest version of Qlab at a great discount. A huge thank you to Kim MacMillan for this.

With the purchase of the new iMac, there has been some discussion about creating a production office in the space outside the booth, including a second computer work station. Other than a current lack of space (possibly a change in the costume shop?) this suggestion makes a lot of sense as it would eliminate

needless traffic entering the secured booth and reduce other production teams attempting to work on top of a booth crew running a show. This overlap has been an ongoing negotiation and is not preferred. I do not recommend creating this station without the proper space and security needed which is not yet in place. Having this second computer also gives us the potential for a second stage or venue.

Blacks

I have been in conversation with Cilla regarding the state of the blacks. As the board is aware, she recommends sending some of them for cleaning and a then necessary re-application of flame retardant. Due to their weight it is very expensive to ship them, however we do have a driver willing to take them to Vancouver in early October to save on shipping fees. I highly recommend this happens as a necessity to theatre safety and function. I consider it part of the technical department's purview and a basic technical theatre equipment need. Board meeting minutes reflect that this is a priority. Cilla has also mentioned the possibility of purchasing new blacks and is waiting on a quote for a slightly lighter fabric. In anticipation of this expense, the board moved in Feb 2019 to begin a savings fund for the cost of new blacks, beginning with an undesignated donation of \$500 from the Community Foundation. I would recommend keeping this fund as an ongoing item until such time as we can make this purchase. The board may also want to also consider finding funds for other fabrics such as scrims, cycs or even prosceniums.

It is also of great concern that some production crews have been placing lure (glow tape) on the blacks which is destructive to the fabric. We have a rule in the theatre not to do this and would like to remind all stage crew NOT to do this.

Side note, Lure on floor must also be easily removable as we do not plan to paint over tape on the new floor after each production. It will ruin it!

Lights

- Cyc Lights - LED - In recent years we have been approximating the effect of a cyclorama at the back of our stage. Given our current lighting instrument inventory this can use up a large amount of our available lights very quickly and with minimal flexibility. I was asked to look into purchasing some proper dedicated cyc lights or reasonable substitution. This quickly led down the rabbit hole of LED lighting and the suggestion of purchasing some higher end 4" rgbww fresnels. This is a very expensive option and though we would like to move in that direction, and have the technical capacity to, the actual cost would be too much at this time. I am now looking at some second hand, traditional incandescent Cyc fixtures that would be more affordable and integrate well with the equipment we already have. I also recommend we continue to investigate affordable and creative

options to begin using LEDs in the near future.

- Annual Lamp Cleaning & Maintenance - Scheduled for October pre Wiz hang
- Fix existing instruments pulled aside - (4" fresnels x 3? & Strobe) - October
- Wiring clean up - Excess and unused wiring around the theatre performance space and booth will be removed in anticipation of Wizard of Oz and its set painting needs - October
- Lamp inventory - ongoing - restocked as necessary - notation needed as used
- Side booms - wanting to make
- Sand bags - for purchase

Sound

Ongoing Booth/audio changes:

- Repair behringer speaker
- Add speaker/eq management*
- Shrink sound desk
- Add rolling rack*
- Condense equipment manuals to usb drive
- Repair qsc amplifier
- Update Cable Inventory
- Replace existing FOH speakers which have been noted as a safety hazard in the past during previous board meetings.* Speakers with cabinets designed to be "flown" must be purchased since this opens STS up to liability through negligence.
- Replace rear speakers
- Rewire Rack equipment with balanced cabling to reduce system noise
- Add surge suppression to lighting board, mac, and sound

equipment Proposed:

- Relocate mains amplifiers to stage area or replace existing cabling to FOH Speakers
- Source/Purchase UPS (Uninterrupted Power Supply) for Booth Mac for Surge Suppression and Data Loss Prevention*

*Whenever possible, quality Used Equipment will be purchased in order to maximize board-authorized spending and **all** purchases must be approved by STS Technical Director.

Other Projects

- Program Camera - Removed defective camera from ceiling, switched to infrared cam feed for all monitors.
- Overhead Stage mics x 3 - replaced and functioning well. Previous mics in booth storage.
- Clear Com - replaced an unreliable com in dressing room. New headset not yet needed.

- Cillascope - current one not working, replacing with larger one for Wizard of Oz, possibly permanent or seeking mid sized model later in year.
Reviewing wiring.
- New 15 amp/120 power cables - currently being custom built for us.
Total numbers and lengths as yet unknown but built to suit our needs.

Personnel

Ann Skelthorne - *House Technical Director/LX*

Jim Clayton - *House Technical Service Technician/LX*

Marcus Smith - Senior Sound Tech

Ethan van Iderstine - Junior Sound Tech Hayden Clayton - Junior LX Tech

Kim MacMillan - Sound and Mac proficiency

Laurie Page - New Sound trainee

Kellen McEachern-Corley - LX Board Op

Stacey MacFarlane - LX Board Op

In an effort to increase the number of names on this list, I would like to recruit for "Tech Club" at the Open House and follow up quickly with a simple safety and orientation day to learn the basics of technical theatre. All volunteers operating technical equipment need to be familiar with the proper procedure, etiquette and communications involved in running a show. Not manning the booth with a proper and experienced SM is an oversight in most cases. After basic training, I would like to see season Technical Producers, planning with their department heads, to work in a way that is inclusive; making use of new trainees without overwhelming them and creating a learning environment within the season's three main stage productions. This is what Tech days can be used for. I am looking to the board to help implement this as regular production procedure.