



Contracts, Riders, and the Ladies Who Lunch...

Could you and should you rent your theatre spaces to the general community?

by Tracy Alexander, Director of Performance and Volunteer Services, Midland (Texas) Community Theatre

If your theatre group is fortunate enough to have its own building, you probably know how expensive it is to operate a facility. These days theatres (everybody!) are looking for ways to make ends meet, so perhaps you have considered renting your facility between shows. How do you decide if renting is a good, or rather, profitable, idea?

Step One – The Production Calendar.

Before you can open your doors to outside events you need to understand IF your spaces are truly available. YOUR needs should always be FIRST or Staff and volunteers will not support efforts to raise funds through renting available spaces. Inconveniencing your company to placate “bridezillas” is not the easiest way to make a buck.

Once you start penciling in all of your rehearsals, meetings, builds, and performances you may find that your stages or rehearsal halls are not as accessible as you think. Color code each available space and get input from Stage Managers and Directors about what is possible during the run of a show.

Will Grandma Jones really want to celebrate her 50th wedding Anniversary in front of the set for “Dracula”? Then I wouldn’t rent her the Thursday evening you aren’t playing because her next question will be “Can you take down the gargoyles?” However, I have had wonderful fundraising events with luncheons on stage surrounded by scenic units!

Step Two – Pricing

How much does it cost to open your doors and turn on the lights? ALL of the lights?

Working with your bookkeeper – establish an hourly rate including ALL of the costs, from light bulbs and heating/air conditioning to toilet paper and cleaning products.

February 2010						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Feb. 1 DRESS	2 DRESS	3 DRESS	4 DRESS	5 “Wizard of Oz” OPENS	6 WOZ
7 SUPER BOWL	8 SPFAC Registration begins BO to GenPub (WOZ)	9	10	11 Planned Parenthood at the Yucca	12 WOZ	13 WOZ Campfire USA
14 Reachout-WOZ	15 DSC Load In	16 PB/DSC	17 Cue Card Mailed (DSC) FIN COM	18 CoPro	19 WOZ	20 WOZ TOMCAT Hoist School at the Yucca
21 Comoco WOZ	22	23 Prompter Deadline (DSC)	24	25 BOG MR-T/DSC WOZ	26 WOZ	27 “Winnie the Pooh” Auditions (TS) WOZ
28 Auds for “RIPS”	TRINITY SCHOOL Upperclass Musical AT THE YUCCA All dates, times, and events are subject to change!					
As of 5/25/10						

A page from Midland Community Theatre’s production calendar. All the documents referred to in this article are available (full size) on the AACT website, www.aact2.org.

This basic hourly rate is your guide to developing a pricing structure. Other things to consider are the pay scale for the Facilities Manager, Security, and Technicians needed for events, as well as other items like tables, chairs, music stands, dressing rooms, etc.

Let’s assume that your equations have concluded with a Basic Rate of \$20 per hour.

Obviously an outside event will need to be “monitored” by a Facility Manager and they are paid \$10 an hour to babysit – the Basic Rate is now \$30 an hour.

All of your lights are controlled from the Booth – now a

Technician is mandatory to touch the incredibly expensive equipment at \$15 an hour – Basic Rate = \$45.

Following the event, the lobby, restrooms, and auditorium must be cleaned – a Custodian is \$25 an hour; your Basic Rate is at \$70.

AND you want to make some money on the deal! Let's try the Basic Rate X 2 for \$140 an hour. Not bad.

Note to selves: You may not have Managers, Staff, or Custodians to care for your spaces – I know it is all on YOU – but always plan on these areas (and costs). *Improvements to your spaces, purchasing of additional tables, chairs, or equipment, or the actual hiring of a Facility Manager may depend on your documentation.* Then compare the rate against local hotels and convention centers. You want to be competitive, but fair. Don't sell your spaces short! You are providing a unique experience and that has as much value as crystal chandeliers and potted palms.

At Midland Community Theatre (MCT) we have many Rental Rates depending on which space you are using and what you are using it for – a meeting or a performance. We also have different rates for nonprofit and for-profit organizations and individuals.

What is included in the Rental Fee? We have already noted that the Facility Manager, one Technician, and Housekeeping are part of the deal, but what about

Concessions? Use of Dressing Rooms? Use of Green Room? AND what is NOT included: extra Dressing Rooms? Use of Orchestra Pit or Balcony? Use of stage equipment – microphones, monitors, fly system? If it isn't part of the Basic Rate then how much is each item when added for an event?

Step Three – Personnel

Let's break the tasks down to different positions:

Rental Manager – this person is the contact for making the reservations, keeping the calendar, filling out the contracts, billing, and finding personnel.

Facility Manager – this person *baby-sits* each event; opening doors, checking the condition of the spaces, providing access to items, and representing the interests of YOUR company.

Technician – this person operates all of the theatrical equipment – lights, sound, backstage – needed for the event.

Custodian – prepares the spaces before (as indicated by the Contract) and cleans up following each event.
Security – protects your venue and your patrons for public events.

The Rental Manager, Facility Manager and the Custodian (often one in the same) need to know your spaces inside and out. Where the supplies are kept, which bank of switches turns on which bank of lights, and where the mops are located. Technicians will be asked to re-focus instruments, re-patch sound equipment, and operate followspots. They should know how to turn on the equipment correctly and not blow things up.

A word or two of caution . . . when renting to another producing company beware that the General Public will not separate their work

You want to be competitive, but fair. Don't sell your spaces short! You are providing a unique experience and that has as much value as crystal chandeliers and potted palms.

2008 RENTAL RATES

COLE THEATRE COMPLEX
2000 W. Wadley

Davis Stage I
Seating Capacity 481
Meeting Rate \$135.00/\$115.00*
Performance \$210.00/\$185.00*

Mabee Stage II
Seating Capacity 142
Meeting Rate \$90.00/\$80.00*
Performance \$135.00/\$115.00*

Main Lobby (2nd Floor)
Hourly Rate \$95.00/\$80.00*

Moody Room
Capacity = 25-75
Hourly Rate = \$75.00

Courtyard
Hourly Rate = \$50.00

Ruffern/Talbman/North/Italiansore
Hourly Rate = \$50.00
Classrooms & meeting spaces located in the basement.

YUCCA THEATRE
Downtown Midland
208 N. Colorado Ave.

Meeting Rate: \$100.00/\$135.00*
Performance: \$185.00/\$150.00*
Lobby/Bar: \$ 95.00/\$ 80.00*
Capacity = Lobby (B/C) 110
Seating: Pit = 110
Floor = 272
Balcony = 308
Gallery = 66
TOTAL = 556

MCT Rental Rates are set by our Board of Governors.

"Performance" may include: theatrical events; dance recitals; concerts - Utilizing theatrical lighting, the sound system, dressing rooms, etc.

"Meeting" may include: lectures; conferences; seminars; etc. - Utilizing auditorium seating, lecture lights, podium, dais, chairs, or microphone.

"Non-Profit Rates: To qualify, an organization must be a 501(c)(3) institution.

Availability: Spaces are available for day-time and evening events. We make reservations to "pencil in" dates as much as one year in advance.

Security Costs: \$25 per hour, 3-hour minimum—Security is required for all events (any space) with 100 or more people where alcohol is served.

Contracts: Contracts are prepared one to two months out from rental dates.

Deposits: To hold your date, a Deposit of one-half the estimated rental is required. The deposit is non-refundable.

MIDLAND COMMUNITY THEATRE
MCT

One side of MCT's facility rental brochure.

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from yours and that is not always to your advantage. Whether it is the quality of the production or racy subject matter your company will be affected by the shows presented on your stage – even if you are just renting the spaces out.

It has taken a lot of blood, sweat, and tears for all of us to acquire and maintain our spaces. The next step on the journey to “sharing” those spaces is the Rental Contract. The Contract should include all of the do’s and don’ts necessary to protect your equipment, your reputation, and your sanity.

MIDLAND COMMUNITY THEATRE
MCT
 Civic Theatre 2000 West Wadley, Midland, TX 79705 (432) 682-2444—Business Office secretary@mctmidland.org

Rental Agreement/Contract

Inquiry Date: _____ Contact: _____
 Inquiry Fee* \$100 Due by: _____ Phone #: _____

Lessee/Company/Organization: _____
 Representative: _____
 Billing Address: _____
 Daytime Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Event Title: _____
 Type of Event: _____ Facility: _____
 Day/Date(s)*: _____ Est. Attendance: _____
*Multiple dates require an attached and approved schedule with day, date, and times listed

Rental Fees: Fee includes Facility Manager and Clean-up.
 Note: There is a three hour minimum for all facility rentals.
 *Fees double if you exceed your seating capacity—please be aware.

ACTIVITY	RATE	HOURS	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
_____ @ _____	_____ for _____	_____	= \$ _____	/ _____
_____ @ _____	_____ for _____	_____	= \$ _____	/ _____
_____ @ _____	_____ for _____	_____	= \$ _____	/ _____
_____ @ _____	_____ for _____	_____	= \$ _____	/ _____

Technicians* _____ @ \$15.00 per hour for _____ hours = \$ _____
*Only MCT Technicians may operate our theatre equipment

Security _____ @ \$25.00 per hour for _____ hours = \$ _____
Three hour minimum, security is required for all events with more than 100 people where alcohol is served.

CALCULATIONS:
 Inquiry Fee (refundable/applicable) \$ _____
 Concessions Fee (\$50 per 200 guest/patrons) \$ _____
 Other Rental Charges (Page Two) \$ _____
 ESTIMATE = \$ _____ ACTUAL = \$ _____

Deposit—Non-refundable \$ _____ DUE ____/____/____

NOTE: No rental is finalized until the theatre has received a signed contract, certificate of insurance, a Technical Rider (if required), and the non-refundable deposit. Balances will be billed by Midland Community Theatre after the rental has been completed and additional fees applied.

The first page of MCT's rental contract

Step Four – Contracts

I am not a lawyer. Nor do I have a degree in Business Administration. What I do know is that if it isn't written down or addressed in your literature someone will find a way to annoy you and/or endanger your theatre. Ok – so they don't really mean to endanger your spaces, but live flame is OUT. The Unity Candle will have to be electric – sorry. And YES, they will annoy you, but it's because they are trying to put on a very special event and they've never done it before!

ALWAYS complete a Rental Contract for ALL levels of events – from a volunteer borrowing space to have a Rehearsal Dinner to a Board Member using your theatre on a Tuesday night to screen a film for their business to the local chapter of the American Cancer Society hosting a fashion show in your lobby. Even if you are waiving fees in support of the group or individual, you should acknowledge this donation by recording the actual fees on the Contract form and noting that fees are waived.

A Contract should include:

- Your company logo and contact information
- Basic contact information for renting group
- Space to calculate fees
- Space to note technical and facility requirements
- The event timeline
- Basic “agreement” language – including “what” the Basic Fee covers, limitations/restrictions, and CYA (Cover Your Assets) addendums
- Language regarding liability and insurance coverage
- Amounts of Deposits
- Deadlines and penalties
- Signature lines

Try to keep the language simple and straightforward. Keep “theatrese” to a minimum – use “Event Starts at _____” as opposed to “Curtain” or Showtime. When filling out a contract ask the group to describe their event to you. If they envision a space transformed into a nightclub or a garden - your job is to break down the vision into practical parts. Our second stage is a black box with fixed seating – no way, no how will it become a ‘cabaret’ – but a few well placed Par lamps, cityscape gobos on the walls, and a small raised dais and the client was happy. I also charged them for each and every “extra” – still a great deal.

Weddings, parties, workshops, and meetings aside – those who produce a “show” are lovingly termed . . .The Ladies Who Lunch.

The Ladies know all the right terminology. They have contracted with a touring show and booked a theatre venue. That's about where it falls apart. Because they have booked a grand Opera in a 400 seat-house without a fly system or orchestra pit. The Ladies mean well and put on a great show, but they have no earthly idea how it all really happens. When the big rig shows up with the scenery The Ladies will not be found at the Loading Dock . . . my dream is to one day educate all of The Ladies and have generations of event planners who can book any event on the Arts & Education roster – but until then . . . Riders are your friend!

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MCT requires all touring companies or performing groups to provide a Technical Rider before we will sign the Rental Contract. Riders should include, but are not limited to: the number of performers in the company, how many dressing rooms, the minimum requirements of the “playing space,” the specs on the lighting and sound equipment, and when the Sound Check will be completed. Take the time to read over the Rider with your renter and highlight any and all “hospitality clauses” or personnel issues. These costs are assumed by The Ladies as well as the rental of any equipment listed on the Rider that you do not own.

platforms stored onstage? Chairs stacked along the walls? Costumes hanging in the Dressing Rooms? *Would you want to rent a space that looked like that?*

If you cannot provide neat, clutter-free, safe theatre environments then you best not rent to outsiders. Spaces should be free of theatre debris or tools, clean of cobwebs, excess paint, and dust bunnies. When representing your spaces make certain that you are clear about their condition. Theatre spaces are not pristine – they are not elegant – they are not ordinary.

At MCT – we are fortunate to own a 556-seat proscenium stage built during the age of Vaudeville. The Yucca Theatre

is a jewel of the desert, but not all of it has aged gracefully. When faced with a distressed bride – just certain that the grimy panels would ruin her wedding – I simply turned off the work lights, and the beautiful patina of the gilded décor glowed under pink gels. . . I smiled at her and said “What grime?”

That is the beauty of our particular kind of spaces – they are unique, intriguing, flexible, and . . . magical.

So, will you share those magical facilities with outside renters? Unless your mission is to provide facilities, take that step only if you can cover your facility expenses, have the manpower, and can make some money to produce YOUR magic. ♦

More Information

Rental Rates—Include the following:
 * a Facility Manager
 * Clean Up
 * Concessions/Bar

Performance Rate includes:
 *the use of the auditorium
 *two dressing rooms
 *lobby area

Additional seating of Cole Conroy included

Theatre spaces (performance or meeting) require a 3 hour minimum rental.

Technicians are \$15.00 per hour extra (3 hr minimum)

Additional Dressing Rooms are: \$50.00 each (flat rate)

MCT does not guarantee unlimited parking for your event. We operate a full production calendar and may often have a show in performance or rehearsal during your rental. Every effort is made to share the available parking space.

We will provide a full-service Bar upon request (cash or billed to your rental). **DO NOT bring alcohol onto the premises—this is in violation of TABC regulations.**

MCT does not control the parking lot adjacent to the Yucca Theatre. We cannot guarantee access when other events are happening in the Downtown area and we do not patrol the lot.

For theatrical events, concerts, and recitals we recommend a Box Office/ticket process that ensures you will not violate capacity of the buildings/spaces. Please be aware of these limitations.

For more information, to tour available spaces, or to meet with an MCT Representative regarding your needs . . .

Call the MCT Business Office at (432) 682-2544

or

Fax an Inquiry to (432) 682-6136

OR email us at tracy@mctmidland.org or angelica@mctmidland.org

NEED SPACE?

Rental Rates for MCT Spaces

The outside of MCT's rental brochure

“Hospitality” refers to providing refreshments or feeding the Tech Crew. “Personnel issues” often requires someone to find the Tech Crew. If that person ends up being you – your local union can help you set a rate for hiring volunteers to take a day off and help off-load a semi.

THE FINAL STEP – preparing your spaces and your company for renters.

What is “neutral” and who gets you there? What do your unoccupied, unused theatre spaces look like? Are there

Check out the Midland Community Theatre's website for more property rental insights: www.mctmidland.org/MCTRental.shtml

Full-size versions of MCT's rental agreements, brochures and other documents mentioned in this article are available on the aact website: www.aact2.org

Tracy Alexander is the Region VI Representative on the AACT Board.