

## **Quannapowitt Players Set Designer / Set Tech Guide**

Last Updated July 7, 2002

This guide assumes that you, as a Set Designer and/or Set Tech, know the basics of designing/building sets and instead focuses on QP-specific aspects of building sets in our theater. If you have any questions about any of this do not hesitate to reach out to your Production Manager, the Technical Director, or any of QP's Board of Directors.

See the diagram at the end of this guide for rough measurements of the theater, etc.

### **Contacts**

Make sure you have contact information for the House Manager and Technical Director. These people are familiar with aspects of set design/construction as it relates to fire safety, actor safety, etc. as well as questions that might arise regarding handicap access, removal of theater seats, and any other unusual use of the theater space.

The Production Manager for your show should have this contact information, as would any member of the QP Board of Directors. If you have any trouble reaching people, the entire Board of Directors can be reached via email at [bod@qptheater.com](mailto:bod@qptheater.com).

### **Theater Access**

There is a lock box mounted to the front door of the theater that contains a key to the door inside it. The combination for the lock box can be provided by any of the contacts mentioned above. Any time the door is unlocked or locked the key should be returned immediately to the lock box so that it is not lost.

To open the lock box punch the buttons that correspond to the code then push the rectangular black lever in the middle of the two rows of buttons down. While holding the lever down pull the entire front of the box away from the door. Once the lever is released you will need to re-enter the code and depress the lever again in order to replace it back onto the door.

There is a light switch immediately to the right side of the outside theater door so you can turn the porch light on and off from outside when it is dark.

### **Production Timeline**

In general, your production is considered to have the first right to use the space immediately following strike of the previous production and until the last performance and strike of your production. There may be exceptions, including previously scheduled

general meetings, etc. but in general any other requests for use of the space should require approval of your Director, your Production Manager, etc.

QP typically strikes a production immediately following the final performance. You and/or your Director should decide ahead of time if any components of the set from the production prior to yours can be reused for your production. If you want to reuse any of the previous set then you should make sure to communicate this to your Production Manager well ahead of time so that arrangements can be made to ensure the desired components are not struck. It is also highly advisable that you and/or your Director attend the strike of the previous show to ensure the components you wish saved are not dismantled.

Most set construction typically occurs on Saturday mornings, however you should feel free to work with your Production Manager to adjust construction times as needed if this will not work for you. Your Production Manager will communicate your construction schedule to the cast and other QP volunteers who are often willing to assist with set construction, painting, etc.

### **Theater Tools and Construction Materials**

The theater has a collection of tools that include:

- Cordless drills (screw guns) located on the shelves in the front lobby
- A chop saw is stored in one of the furnace rooms in the basement
- A jigsaw, sawzall, circular saw, and hand tools are located in the store room in the basement

The theater has built a number of 4 foot by 8 foot platforms that can be used to help build your set. These may already be incorporated into the set of the current/previous production, or they may be screwed onto a back wall or elsewhere for storage. Feel free to remove them from the wall, add legs to them, etc. but please do not disassemble them.

Construction materials left over from prior productions can be found in a number of locations throughout the theater:

- 2x4's, strapping, molding, etc. can be found under the "big side" seats. When standing on the stage and looking at the big side seats, there is a trap door 2/3 of the way up the left hand stairs to the seats. Lift up the trap door and lower yourself down under the seats. There is a light switch near the trap door opening that turns on lights under the seats. See the diagram at the end of this document for the approximate location of the trap door.
- Plywood etc. might be stacked against the wall in the back lobby
- Plywood etc. might be stored in the walkway under the booth, including screwed into the walls.

- Molding and other building materials might be found in a shed behind the theater. Go into the back lobby and down the stairs to the landing. Go straight through the small closet off the landing and open the emergency exit door. The shed is immediately on your left.
- Some doors are stored in the closet off the back stairwell landing.
- More door frames and other pieces of construction material can be found in the basement room near the front lobby stairs where props are stored.

The theater also has a collection of 2” iron pipe and a collection of pipe flanges, elbows, and other fittings that can be used as part of your set if desired. Please reach out to the Technical Director for more information if you are interested in using any of this.

### **Purchasing Building Materials**

Please make sure to go through all the existing inventory of construction materials before purchasing anything. Any existing materials should be re-used before any new materials are purchased.

QP has tax exempt numbers for use at Home Depot and Lowes. Please ask your Production Manager for the tax exempt numbers and be sure to use them when purchasing supplies at Home Depot or Lowes. Simply provide the tax exempt number to the cashier when you pay.

Pay attention to your production budget, as it must cover costs of props, costumes, etc. as well as set materials. Donations of building materials etc. are acceptable as long as there are no conditions associated with the donation.

Your Production Manager will let you know how to submit receipts to the QP treasurer for reimbursement.

### **General Construction Guidelines**

- Remember that sets are temporary. There is no need to over-engineer sets unless you expect a lot of wear and tear.
- Please avoid using nails, staples, etc. unless absolutely necessary and use drywall screws wherever you can. This makes strike easier and safer for everybody involved, and also encourages the re-use of construction materials.
- Please avoid applying plaster, paint, etc. directly over screws as it makes it very difficult to remove screws during strike. If necessary place tape over the screw head then plaster/paint over the tape.
- Drywall screws can be used to attach set pieces to walls and the stage floor.
- Note that the stage floor is NOT uniformly level. Pay careful attention to this if you intend your set to roll, rotate, etc. on the floor.

- Multi-level sets, staircases, etc. are allowed, just be sure to discuss your design with your Lighting Designer and potentially the Technical Director given the relatively low height of the theater ceiling.
- The “doorway to nowhere” in the upstage corner that leads out from the booth can be used as an entrance to upper platforms, stairs, etc.
- The “balcony” near the stairs to the booth has been used in the past as a part of a set, and an extended balcony has even been built out from it.
- Any scrap lumber and other building materials should be discarded in the waste barrel that is labeled for it. No other trash (drink cups, food, etc.) should be thrown into this barrel. QP has different procedures for discarding “regular” trash vs. construction waste, so the two must be kept separate.
- The theater seats should be covered with white tarps during the majority of the set construction phase. This is to keep sawdust and other building materials off the seats. Please try to keep the seats covered as much as possible.
- If you plan on blocking either of the doorways under the booth please make sure to discuss it with the Technical Director and your Lighting Designer first. Many lighting supplies and other equipment are stored in the space under the booth, and walling off access to it may create a hardship for them.
- There is a large “beehive” LED light that is typically hung from the lighting grid as a work light that illuminates most of the stage. The switch to turn it on is located above your head at the bottom step of the stairway up to the booth. If this is not set up then please ask your Lighting Designer or the Technical Director to set it up for you.

### **Painting**

- Painting supplies can be found along the right-hand isle in the storeroom. There is a slop sink at the end of the isle. Please thoroughly clean all brushes etc. after use.
- The theater walls are painted black and are NOT to be directly painted any other colors. If your set calls for the theater walls to be painted a different color then you must attach luan or plywood to the wall first and paint that. Some of the theater walls are porous and it can take multiple coats of black paint to return the walls to fully black if they are painted other colors. The theater walls are also painted with a special fire retardant paint.
- The stage floor may be painted as desired. Please do not paint over the ventilation grates located in the stage floor near the back lobby doors. The large ventilation duct near the back lobby doors can be removed from the floor very easily to avoid painting it if necessary.

### **Fire/Safety Guidelines**

Massachusetts fire safety regulations are spelled out in section 527 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (527 CMR) which can be found on the mass.gov website or by simply searching for “527 CMR 1.00”. Many of the fire safety regulations are further based on state and federal

building codes. These regulations are numerous and very detailed, and spell out the regulations that QP must adhere to in order to allow the public into the building. The Reading Fire Department inspects the theater on a quarterly basis and lets us know if we are in violation of these regulations and what is needed to come into compliance. The following information is based on their safety requirements:

- Neither of the two exits from the theater marked by lit exit signs to the front lobby may be blocked by the set, set pieces, etc.
- One of the two exits to the back lobby MAY be blocked/hidden or incorporated into the set as long as the one of the following are followed:
  1. If hidden by the set then the door must be completely hidden from audience view and the Exit sign should be masked from audience view as well (gaff tape should suffice if the set itself doesn't block the sign).
  2. If incorporated into the set it can only be covered by black curtains or a swinging door or "saloon" style double swinging doors. A standard door with a doorknob or other latching mechanism is not acceptable. In this case the Exit sign must remain visible to the audience as it is still considered an emergency exit.
- Aside from the above exception, no other exit signs may be masked, obscured, or modified in any way.
- Both the front and back lobbies must be kept clear of props, set pieces, etc. so as to provide a clear path from the theater to TWO different exits. In the back lobby this means a path to the stairwell landing and out the exit to the back of the theater must be kept clear as well as the door to the front parking lot.
- The exit pathways must be wide enough such that a wheelchair can reach the exit without being impeded and without any objects needing to be moved in any way.
- The fire alarm horns and strobes located on the walls of the theater cannot be blocked, hidden, or tampered with.
- The emergency lights similarly cannot be blocked or hidden.
- The isles around all the seats may not be reduced in size or blocked in any way.
- Curtains (blacks, etc.) may also be hung in the exit doorways.
- Curtains may further be used to block the audiences view into the back lobby, but under no circumstances can rigid flats be mounted in the back lobby.
- The pathway from the office up to the booth cannot be blocked in any way as it is the primary evacuation route from the booth in an emergency.
- There is a trap door from the booth to the hallway under the booth located at the extreme upstage corner. This is considered by the Reading Fire Department to be a secondary emergency exit from the booth, so it must remain clear along with a pathway out from that corner of the stage.
- In the event that a set uses the "doorway to nowhere" from the booth as an entrance with stairs down to the main stage then it qualifies as a secondary emergency exit from the booth so a clear path for the trap door may not be needed.

Approximate Theater Dimensions – NOT TO SCALE

