

Guidelines for a Successful Event at the Minnie Evans Arts Center

The staff here at the Minnie Evans Arts Center (MEAC), would like to see your event be a success and hope to help you have an experience that is free from worry and stress. Let's face it, live events aren't for the weak of heart; there are just so many things that can go wrong. Happily, there are even more things that can go right with just a little preparation before you head into the theatre. The following list of guidelines is meant to help you prepare for all those pesky little trouble gremlins, and keep them at bay. It is by no means a complete list of do's and don'ts, but it should help you set off on the right path. As always, if you have any questions or concerns you should feel free to contact me. I'm here to help you. *These guidelines are directed at the community use client, but the sections on crew choices may also apply to school usage clients if the production is of a larger scale than can be effectively handled by a single person. (i.e. full length plays, dance shows, talent shows, and the like)*

Step 1: Getting your event scheduled

MEAC schedules about a year in advance. Generally, the schedule is opened for requests from the schools around Spring Break, via a Google Form. Once all of the schools have sent in their requests and the schedule has been set, it is then opened to the public for Community Events. That means that generally the calendar is open to the community by mid-May. If you have an event that recurs every year at the same time, let me know so I can make a note to try to keep your dates for you. Unfortunately, if a school requests the same date you may be bumped despite your early request. Also most unfortunately, the school's ML Calendar System is unable to book dates and generate a contract more than 6 months out, so you will need to be patient waiting on that window of opportunity.

All community requests for reservations are done through Caress Clegg. However, prior to making your formal request, which generates contracts and

taps me for approval of space usage, it's a good idea to check the calendar and look around a bit. If you know you'll need a projection screen or a dance floor you'll want to be sure that the shell isn't in when you want your event, as neither of these things can be used with the shell in place. If it looks clear for the type of event you have in mind, then please reach out to the venue and discuss your plans for the event. The General Manager will be able to tell you if there is anything going on behind the scenes that may interfere with your plans, and can help you with the details for your reservation request. The goal of the GM is to help you make your reservations for exactly what you need, reducing the chances of not requesting enough time, or worse, requesting too much of it. Also making sure that all of the equipment needed for your event is available and ready to go upon your arrival to the venue. And most importantly, so that you may have a discussion of how the event is to be run, if there are technicians needed, and where these technicians will come from if needed.

Step 2: What do you need?

Once you have your date and it appears clear, the staff at MEAC are going to need to know what kind of equipment or personnel you are going to need. There are places to request rooms and equipment on the reservation request form you will soon fill out, but also think about the unasked questions. Do you know anything about the technology you will need to be using, such as a PowerPoint presentation, projectors, or a microphone? You are welcome to contact me if you just want to talk out the event and let me tell you what you need based on our conversation. Your production may have variables you didn't think of, or it may require less than you think. Let's figure it out before you get scheduled.

Step 3: You get it scheduled.

After you know all of your needs, and you have verified the timetables, you schedule your event with Caress Clegg via the reservation request system. It's a monster of a system and can be very intimidating, but no worries here because

you've done your prep work. You know your dates, times, rooms, equipment, and security requirements. You're good to go. Once your request is in, it flags me and asks for approval. Once I give it, the contract process begins and you're on your way. The one caveat, this system only allows for the scheduling of events a maximum of 6 months in advance. You may have your event on your calendar a year out. Not to worry. If you have done your prep, I already have you on the MEAC calendar holding your date, and the rest of this is formality for those outside of the venue to initiate and complete your contract with the school system. If you see your event on the MEAC calendar, it does not necessarily mean that your reservation request was completed. You **MUST** receive a confirmation and a contract from Caress Clegg, or it doesn't exist. ***If you get a message saying the date is not available, email me immediately. All paperwork and payments must be completed at least 2 weeks PRIOR to your scheduled event. They will not make any exceptions on this point.***

Step 4: You know what you need. Have you tested it?

One of the biggest fail points in live production is when the client brings technology they either do not know how to use, have not used in a long time, have not tested, or are missing variable pieces of. Examples are things like wanting to run a PowerPoint to a projector but only bringing the jump drive, or bringing CDs that you have not tested to be sure they read properly by a CD player. These situations require that the technician to come up with solutions they were not expecting to facilitate. Which given enough time will usually result in a positive solution, but we may not be able to guarantee that the result will be one that works the way you had originally envisioned, or that it works at all.

In productions past there have been many mishaps that could have been avoided if the client had simply taken the time to discuss with the venue what they had, and what they needed. Some clients make the mistake of assuming that the venue has all the equipment the client may need for their event. If you are doing a projection, do you have a laptop that you know is compatible with a projector? Have you made arrangements for a projector? Does your equipment have a VGA connector or a HDMI? Do you have adapters to make the transition

from your equipment to what the venue equipment requires? If you don't have a laptop, have you requested the venue provide one for you? Does your PowerPoint have music or spoken word embedded? Does it work properly? Do you have a playlist? Is it on CD? Does the CD read on a standard player or have you only tested it on a computer? Did you format your movie on a MAC? If so, it probably won't work on the venue Dell computer so you will definitely want to bring your MAC with you. There are many more examples, but in the interest of time I'll leave it to these for now.

All of these bumps in the road take time to fix and to find work arounds for. Time can be your enemy here.

Step 5: On the subject of time.

Make sure your schedule takes into consideration time for set up, break down, and breaks. It is preferred that the client arrive on time for their set up. The more time the technician has to troubleshoot any potential problems, the less stress will be generated during the event. That being said, there is no need to arrive early if you've done your homework, tested your media, and either brought your technology or provided for the venue to have their equipment ready for your event. If your event has any media beyond a microphone, please arrive at least one hour prior to the time you would like the house to be opened to your audience. Any less time than that always proves to be a mistake. Always.

While we are on the subject of time. Be mindful of how you use your time in MEAC. While I appreciate that time is valuable, in that it is costing you money, it is greatly appreciated when the technicians have been given the opportunity to do things like use the restroom and eat. It may seem unlikely, but this is often overlooked by clients. In fact, it is the most overlooked detail in a production and it can be problematic, especially when your event is more than 4 hours long. Too often the technicians are completely forgotten about or sacrificed for the sake of the show. ***Remember, they are tethered to their stations for the duration of your event. Even though you may have had the opportunity to snag a snack or relieve yourself, they more often than not, have not been given time for those luxuries. Please try not to forget about them. They're only human after all.***

Step 6: Speaking of technicians: Do you need to hire some?

Probably. Or at the very least, you may need to enlist some volunteers for the technical tasks. **The MEAC does not provide technicians.** This cannot be stressed enough. The General Manager Will Not act as your technicians for the show. You may hire them from an approved list of technicians that the venue can provide for you, or you may use volunteers that will be given basic training upon their arrival to the venue (*at least one hour prior to the time you wish to open the house to your audience*). This is not a new condition, although it is admittedly a newly enforced one. It has ALWAYS been a part of the Community Use Guidelines.

For your event, here is a list of who you might need and why:

House Manager – this one is actually the MEAC General Manager (me). I am part of the cost of doing business so, don't panic. What's my purpose? Opening doors, turning on lights, checking all equipment, the setting up of event equipment and event personnel (personnel includes clients, security officers, technicians, ushers, room monitors, and any other volunteers), the training of volunteers, maintaining communication with security personnel, the supervision of all who enter the venue to assure compliance with all the rules, to maintain the safety and comfort of everyone on site, to act as a first responder in case of emergency or crisis. These things cannot be accomplished from a control booth. In fact, if you have decided to forgo the use of technicians in hopes that I will just do the jobs for you, the price may be your show. Because should a crisis arise that requires my attention, it takes precedence over your show and I will stop the show, bring up all the lights, and kill the sound until the crisis has been remedied and cleared from the building. Because it is my primary responsibility to do so.

Ushers –these people take tickets and pass out any programs you may have. They hold doors open and enforce the no food, no gum, no drink policy in the venue. They assist people with mobility issues in finding a seat and securing things like walkers and strollers out of the aisles maintaining compliance with NC Fire Code. And they help to clean the venue of debris at the end of your event.

They also communicate any problems, potential or real, to the General Manager for resolution.

Room Monitors –these people are responsible for the safety and behavior of the occupants of the dressing rooms, classrooms being used as dressing rooms, holding rooms, practice rooms, or rooms used for breakout sessions. You need a minimum of one room monitor for each outside room you are using. It is the responsibility of the room monitors to make sure the rooms are restored to the conditions in which they were found before checking out from your event. They ensure that no food or drinks (with the exception of water) are consumed in these rooms. They also communicate any problems, potential or real, to the General Manager for resolution.

Lighting Technician –this person will bring your lights up and down over the audience and the stage lighting. If the lights are simply set it and forget it, the lighting tech may also be the sound tech. However, if you would like lights up and down between scenes or numbers, if there is any special lighting choices or effects that you require, then you will need to bring in a lighting technician to do that job only. The more complicated your wish list, the more experienced lighting technician you will need.

Follow Spot Operator(s) –this person(s) operates a light manually from the catwalk position. They require training to operate this light and they must not be afraid of heights. If you are using follow spots, generally you are also using a lighting technician who is speaking to the operator(s) and providing directions as to the usage of the lights in tandem with the light cues written by and executed by the lighting technician.

Sound Technician –this person is responsible for all the sounds that are amplified through the venue. This includes playlists, music that accompanies your PowerPoint Presentation, and amplification to instruments or voices. The more sound elements you have in your event, the greater the need for a trained sound technician. If you are bringing in a band, you will require a trained and skilled sound technician for your event. If you have a playlist that has the need for manual pauses between tracks, you will require a sound technician with a more basic skill set.

Security Officer –this person is hired by you through the Sherriff's office or another local agency. Caress Clegg can give you recommendations of who to contact. Their purpose is self-explanatory. But I include them as crew, because we all need to work together for the success of your event.

Now that you have the basics down of what to expect, here's what we need to do on the day of your arrival.

1. Introduce everyone to the General Manager.
 - a. I want to know who your technicians are and what their experience level is like
 - i. I want to take the time to train anyone who needs it and make them comfortable in the job they have volunteered to do for you.
 - b. I want to meet all of your room monitors and make sure we all communicate the expectations of their positions
 - c. I want to know who your Security Officer is

Lastly, a word about food.

You may wish to sell concessions at your event. According to the Community Use Guidelines, this practice is not allowed. Unfortunately, prior to my arrival there had been little attempt to enforce this rule. And as a result many of the long standing Community events use these food sales as part of their fund raising so I have been asked to allow the practice to continue. And I am willing to do so, so long as the privilege is not abused. However, with the exception of only water, there is absolutely no food or drinks allowed in the venue or the ancillary rooms surrounding the venue. All food and beverages must be consumed or disposed of in the lobby before entry into the venue. You will have many patrons that balk at this rule. Please assure them that the rules apply to them.

On the following page you will find a check list that hopefully boils down all of these explanations into something a bit easier to follow at a glance.

Check List

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Date of your Event and confirmation of reservation received? | Yes | No |
| 2. Conversation with General Manager had about the elements of your event? | Yes | No |
| 3. Technical needs determined? | Yes | No |
| 4. Do you need technicians? | Yes | No |

Lighting	Yes	No
----------	-----	----

Sound	Yes	No
-------	-----	----

Ushers	Yes	No
--------	-----	----

Room Monitors	Yes	No
---------------	-----	----

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 5. Have you hired or secured volunteers for the technical positions you need? | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|

If no, please reach out to the GM for a list of people you can contact for hire.

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 6. If you are bringing volunteers, do they require training? | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|

If so, please be sure you have made arrangements with the GM for that training.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 7. If you are hiring technicians, have you made arrangements for their payment? | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|

Please note that MEAC can provide you with a list of technicians but that you are responsible for the terms of their employment in total. MEAC cannot "add it to your bill". You must pay them directly at time of service for the contracted amount determined by your discussion with the technicians you hire for the event.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 8. Do you have all your media for the event ready and tested? | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 9. Do you have all of your equipment you are bringing for the event tested? | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|

You may want to be sure all your equipment has been updated. I've noticed that most equipment will wait until mid-show to decide that it needs to do an immediate shut down for some random software update. Best advice, do a search for program updates a few days in advance to be sure your equipment is up to date before arrival.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----------|
| 10. Get some Sleep. You've got this! | YES | Seriously |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----------|