

SOUND

Quick Reference Guide

BLACK
BOX
OPERATIONS

Quick Reference is a one-sheet report on subjects impacting theatre users at 12th Ave Arts. Topics are related to building improvements, policies, communication, and equipment. They do not include issues specific to current work or of a time-sensitive nature, which will be handled more directly. Please feel free to distribute this Quick Reference sheet to your company members. They are living documents that will be updated and archived at blackboxoperations.org for reference.

SOUND

1. **Shared space...** All producers at Black Box Operations (BBO) are required to support the success of other performances occurring on site. The quality of simultaneous events in the Mainstage and the Studio is the shared responsibility of each producing company.
2. **Amplified Sound...** Performance related sound that is heard in the opposite venue is unacceptable. This conflict can be eliminated cooperatively but is *ultimately the responsibility of the producer creating the disturbance*. The most effective ways to prevent amplified sound bleed:
 - a. Double or triple-drape the backstage doors to both venues. Stage drapes are effective acoustic barriers when they are fully closed.
 - b. Close the booth widows and the booth hatches. An acoustic barrier at the backstage door does nothing if sound is traveling through an open-air connection from the hallway to the stage.
 - c. Raise the subwoofer and all speakers off the ground. The most common way for low end sound to be transmitted is through the concrete slab that connects the two venues. BBO has a custom-made base for one subwoofer that floats the unit on four points of rubber and a carpet square. This is required practice for a subwoofer placed on the stage deck (which is common in the Studio). The Mainstage subwoofer should be placed in the catwalk. Vibration from other speakers or amplifiers can be mitigated with lumber bases, carpets, and foam.
 - d. Do not start loud amplified sound until the lobby doors are closed. On some occasions sound bleed happens through the lobby. Since it is not safe or legal to create the same preventative barriers at the public entry as it backstage, sound levels in the theatres must be modest until all doors are shut. The tall birch doors work as good barriers and have acoustic seals—but they must all be closed to be effective.

Sound designers must *proactively check* the success of their sound dampening by playing amplified sound while the opposite venue is empty. If the designer can hear their stage sound in the other venue after making all the efforts above, the level must be reduced on the board.

3. **Noise...** Events in both theatres can be impacted by artist noise from backstage as well as from the other performance. Mitigating these noises is possible with communication and conscientious behavior:
 - a. Keep the backstage door closed as much as possible (design for costume changes inside the venue).
 - b. Check that backstage monitors are off, and Green Room and dressing room monitors are at low volume.
 - c. Close both Green Room doors (make sure they are unlocked); consider dimming the Green Room lights—it sometimes has the effect of slowing people's energy.
 - d. Use your Box Office Manager as a monitor for lobby and restroom noise; remind users that there is a show in progress. Dimming the lobby lights can also impact volume.
 - e. Get to know the other venue's artists and communicate your schedule pro-actively. Remind Stage Management on the opposite side when your show is starting and ask that artists use the backstage door quietly or not at all. *Make these appeals in person*; signage will not convey this message effectively.