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# Equipment Selection at the Newmarket Theatre

There is an axiom in the men's formal wear industry: "If you have to rent it more than twice, you should buy it." While that doesn't exactly carry over into the theatre, it is part of the guidelines used at the Newmarket Theatre when it comes to planning new equipment purchases.

The Newmarket Theatre is a 400-seat venue in Newmarket, Ontario, just north of Toronto. The facility is owned by the York District School Board and is operated under a joint agreement by the Town of Newmarket. The school board pays for the caretaking services, heat, and electric. The town owns the equipment and supplies the staff and budget to manage and program the facility. The facility is host to more than 200 event-days per year.

The staff consists of a theatre manager, a box-office manager, a technician, three part-time box-office staff, and more than 150 volunteers from the community to handle front-of-house activities. The single technician is really the de-facto technical director for the theatre, and is responsible for the operation and maintenance of all of the equipment, as well as new equipment purchases.

In many situations, the technician is called upon to run both sound and lighting for a production. This has led to several improvements and adaptations that allow for easier single-handed operation. We have added a MIDI network that allows our lighting console to trigger sound cues on a sound effects computer while also triggering the MIDI scenes on our sound console. For sound effects, we use a PC, running the professional version of Mike Daniell's Sound Cue System (<http://www.soundcuesystem.com>) software. In cases where we need lots of hands-on interaction with both sound and lighting, we are able to move the entire lighting control system so that it is adjacent to the sound console.

The single-technician scenario has led to a larger selection of moving lights and other DMX-controlled accessories. The five-minutes-before-curtain syndrome ("Oh by the way, we need a special over there") is alive and well at the Newmarket. The addition of several Rosco I-Cue mirrors has been a big help. It is much simpler and less time-consuming to make some DMX level adjustments to move a beam on the stage than to and rig a new instrument. In a pinch, a couple of I-Cues can also do a pretty good job as followspots.

Five-and-a-half years ago, the theatre was in its third year of operation and had a fairly good base of equipment, but many users were looking for equipment that it did not have. Dance groups wanted fancy moving-light effects, music groups wanted a better selection of microphones and more processing options,



theatre groups wanted a more useful rigging system, and the technician wanted a second set of hands.

In a facility such as this, there is a vastly differing range of skill and knowledge levels regarding equipment. Clients run the gamut from touring professional companies with skilled crew to local dance schools where the father of one of the dancers runs the audio. Because of the difference in user groups, equipment choices can't be based on budget alone, so there are several factors that must be addressed.

One of the most important factors for us is ease of use. In many situations there is a limited amount of time available to instruct users in the operation of equipment. This required simplicity has ruled out certain equipment that might have otherwise been a first choice--digital sound consoles or processing, for example. While DSP gives lots of bang for the buck in a small package, the learning curve is just too steep for most of our users. Being able to grab a knob or fader quickly trumps the task of paging through screens to get to a feature or control. When selecting equipment items where simplicity of use is a factor, however, care must be taken not to trade off features, product quality, or rider "friendliness" in the process.

In the case of the theatre's lighting control system, the learning curve was a key factor. We already had an ETC Express 48/96 at the theatre. Because of improvements and additions in our equipment inventory, we wanted to expand our DMX channel

## TECHNICAL FOCUS : THE GEAR LIST



Top to bottom: Author Charles Kaiser, the theatre's Emphasis lighting console, and the Soundcraft Series Two sound console. Photos: Courtesy of Newmarket Theatre.

capacity above the 192 channels imposed by the Express' current software version. Rather than trade out a console that our users were comfortable with, we upgraded the Express to ETC's new Emphasis system. That way, we could add 300 or so channels, with room to grow, while adding the built-in Emphasis features. The option also allows us to easily switch back to the regular Express version 3.1 software when needed. We now have a face panel that is familiar, plus a very powerful lighting control and design package.

Another important factor is equipment size. For example, our new sound console absolutely had to fit into a space that was 5' wide by 2.5' deep. There was no wiggle room, which ruled out several different console choices. We did know, however, that we couldn't just slap any console that fit into the space, so we worked with our vendors to find a good combination of size, performance, and features. Our choice was the Soundcraft Series Two console. We're also facing other size issues now, as our installed equipment racks are quickly filling up. Sometimes, the choice might have to boil down to whether the gear is going to take up two rack spaces or three.

Getting back to the "rent-it-more-than-twice" axiom, we also base many of our equipment purchases on what we are seeing in upcoming riders. Because we have been mandated to provide more professional-level entertainment, rider friendliness is becoming a big issue. Because we plan our season more than a year in advance, we are able to look closely at upcoming equipment requirements and plan accordingly. This strategy has allowed us to do some serious upgrades in the sound department. As our current arrangement has the sound console trapped in the control booth, the next phase is to provide a simple means of moving the console into the auditorium for shows that require it.

While budget alone never drives the choices, we all know that it is almost

always the fuel that makes things run. Currently budgeting for equipment is done as a five-year projection. We break the budget down into lighting and sound categories, with a section in each for needs, requests, maintenance, and labor as well as a contingency fund. Equipment requests are for things that it would be nice, but not essential, for the facility to have. Needs are based on client requests, rider demands, or on the life expectancy of a given piece of equipment. The maintenance budget includes projected amounts for repairs as well as a budget figure for consumables such as lamps, gel, and tape. Unused money in our maintenance and equipment budgets is carried over into the next year. The contingency fund is based on a percentage (10%) of the total requested budget for the year, and is not carried over. Our labor budget is quite small, and is only needed for some of the professional grade shows. In many cases we are lucky enough to get some keen student volunteers who are willing to work for a small honorarium plus being able to watch the show from the balcony.

All of our budget figures are subject to approval by the Newmarket Town Council. Any equipment purchases over \$1,000 must be submitted for a tendering process. In many cases, our budget for improvements to our equipment comes from our capitol investment fund. The money in this fund comes from a small per-seat charge that is applied to any event that takes place in the theatre. We are currently investigating sponsorship opportunities whereby local businesses can provide funds for the production of events in the theatre or for the purchase of equipment used in the facility.

While the Newmarket Theatre is only a 400-seat venue located in a town of 71,000, we are proud of our facility and the quality of the productions that take place in it. Currently, I think that our equipment inventory and the quality of our operation compare favorably with many larger venues. We also have plans

to keep growing. While we can't expand the current seating numbers in the main auditorium, we plan to add a large multi-purpose room that will serve as a rehearsal hall, black-box performance space, or a holding area for performers. This space will

also have full kitchen facilities to facilitate dinner theatre or banquet needs. In addition to the multi-purpose room, we will be adding storage rooms and office space as well as meeting rooms and support services.

The Newmarket Theatre extends an open invitation to *Lighting&Sound America* readers to drop in and see our venue if they happen to be in the Greater Toronto Area. Please call Charles R. Kaiser at (905) 953-5327 to make arrangements. ☎

## Newmarket Theatre Gear :

### Sound Equipment

- (1) Soundcraft Series Two console
- (1) Crown IQ System SMX-6
- (1) Crown CTS 600 amp
- (1) Crown Com-Tech 800 amp
- (1) QSC PLX 3002 sub
- (1) QSC USA 900 amp
- (1) dbx Pro 234XL crossover
- (2) EAW FR 250z dual 15" sub
- (2) EAW KF300i speaker
- (2) Yorkville elite EX2000 speaker
- (1) BSS FCS-960 dual-channel, dual mode, 30-band, graphic EQ
- (1) Rane PEG 55 parametric EQ
- (1) Sabine FBX 1802 dual feedback exterminator
- (2) Yamaha SPX2000 effects
- (1) Digitech Studio DS100 effects
- (2) dbx Pro 106A compressor/limiter/gate
- (1) dbx Pro 1074 quad noise gate
- (1) Drawmer D6201 two-channel gate
- (5) Behringer Shark DSP110 gater/compressor/delay/feedback destroyer
- (2) EAW MS 20 booth monitor
- (1) QSC USA 370 booth amplifier
- (2) Behringer Shark DSP 110 booth monitor delay
- (2) Crown Com-Tech 400 monitor amplifier
- (2) QSC USA 900 monitor amplifier
- (6) Yamaha SM12IV passive wedge
- (3) dbx Pro 2231 Equalizer
- (15) Shure SM Beta 58A mic
- (4) Shure SM Beta 57A mic
- (4) Shure SM56A mic with A56D mount
- (2) Shure SM58 mic
- (2) Shure BG 1.1 mic
- (2) Shure mX412SE mic
- (3) Shure EZ0 overhead mic
- (1) Shure Beta 52 mic
- (4) Sennheiser MD 421 MK II mic
- (4) AKG 391B mic
- (5) Crown PCC 160 mic
- (4) Shure SC2 Beta 58A wireless mic
- (4) Shure SC1 B body pack with W184 lavalier mic
- (4) Shure SC4 receiver
- (4) Sennheiser Evolution 300 Series SK 300 body pack with ME2 mic
- (4) Sennheiser CI 1 instrument cable
- (4) Sennheiser Evolution 100 Series SKP 100 transmitter

- (4) Sennheiser Evolution 300 Series EM 300 receiver
- (1) BSS AR116 DI box
- (1) Behringer Ultra-DI dual DI/splitter
- (4) Countryman Type 85 DI box
- (1) Tascam CD-401 MKII CD player
- (1) Gemini CD-9500 Pro II dual CD player
- (1) Tascam 122 MKII cassette deck
- (1) Tascam 302 dual cassette deck.
- (1) PC with Creative Audigy 2 platinum soundcard and sound cue system 8.1
- (1) Clear-Com two-channel intercom system

### Lighting Equipment

- (20) ETC Source Four 50°
- (20) ETC Source Four 36°
- (24) ETC Source Four 26°
- (4) ETC Source Four 19°
- (16) Strand 8" Fresnelite
- (6) Strand Coda
- (2) Martin Professional Mac 250
- (2) Martin Professional Roboscan Pro 518
- (2) Martin Professional RoboColor Pro 400
- (2) Altman Comet followspot
- (4) Rosco I-Cue Mirror
- (6) Wybron 4" Forerunner color scroller
- (6) Wybron 7" Forerunner color scroller
- (1) Wybron Forerunner power supply
- (2) Spectrum Q3 scroller
- (2) ChromaQ Broadway scroller
- (1) Spectrum ColorQ eight-way power supply
- (2) Spectrum PSU 02 24V power supply
- (1) Martin Professional Switch Pack
- (1) Martin Professional RS-485 DMX splitter
- (1) Rosco 1600 smoke machine
- (1) Rosco Hazemaker
- (1) ETC Emphasis with Express 48/96 facepanel
- (1) Martin Professional Lightjockey DMX

### Multi-Media

- (1) Telex P600 media projector
- (1) Kodak Ektagaphic III projector
- (1) Daylite FastFold screen
- (1) Sony SLV-79HF VHS player/recorder
- (1) Panasonic DVD-CV52 DVD player
- (1) Compaq laptop with PowerPoint
- (1) Videoequip passive switcher