

Minutes: Facility Managers Meeting

September 11, 2019

Held at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, St. Catharines

Hosted by Ontario Presents as part of the Ontario Contact 2019 Pre-conference day

Sponsored by ArtsBuildOntario and Sellery Health and Safety

Facilitated by Alex Glass, Interim Executive Director, ArtsBuildOntario

Overview of ArtsBuildOntario Programs:

- Slides available [here](#)

Building Safety and Security:

Controversial Renters:

- How to handle renters with more controversial subject matter? How do presenters balance free speech vs. a concern for the safety of staff/audience/building
- Several presenters had an example of an anti-abortion documentary that caused a lot of controversy and questions around free speech in venues
- Some venues will not present controversial subject matter because they don't have the infrastructure to deal with protests, but generally presenters cannot reject something unless it is illegal
- How do presenters make very clear that, if there is a controversial renter, it is not part of *their* presenting season
 - Some make very clear in emails what is and is not part of their season, adding a banner stating clearly that their venue is not associated with rental shows
 - Spaces can consider if the content of the renter falls within in their mandate
- Some municipalities have adjusted their bylaws to address controversial situations → easier for municipal venues to fall back on by-laws.
 - Venues can reference by-laws prior to a rental and/or consult their legal departments
- How to balance rental policies and staffing needs with staff's personal conscience?
 - In some cases presenters were able to accommodate staff who did not want to work a show, but it would have been very difficult if certain key people did not want to work. Also difficult because those who do refuse still lose money by not working that shift
 - Others have used the option of having the staff person support the show, but not be in the building during the actual show (not have to meet the artist, hear the content, etc.)
- Some venues bring in extra security, but make clear in the rental contract that the renter is responsible for these costs
 - For example: "The staffing of the Licensee's event (ie. box office, ushers, security, stagehands, custodial) shall be determined at the discretion of the

Licensor.” (please note: this is just an example. We encourage all venues to review contracts with their legal departments/advisors)

- Venues can undertake a risk assessment for hosting renters with controversial subject matter.
- Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act- venues do have to take steps to identify risks and take steps to protect their employees
- One venue tried to do a mandatory coat and bag check for a more controversial act and it did not go well at all, people were very upset despite the venue’s best efforts to communicate the change in advance
 - Easier if outside security is doing the bag check, people are more cooperative
 - One venue used a pop-up in the ticketing process to *ensure* that people were aware of the mandatory bag check → this worked much better

Innovative Use of Space:

- Lots of venues have used an on-stage set-up (with artist and audience on stage for a smaller venue feel)
 - Either with curtains surrounding for a smaller feel, or with the auditorium as the background
 - Works really well and allows large halls to program “smaller” artists
 - However, costs can be prohibitive (especially with IATSE costs)
 - Also have to make sure that the staff is licenced (liabilities with guests coming on stage)
 - Also difficult to free up dates – the stage needs to be available
 - One venue also uses the stage for board meetings – keeps everyone engaged and reminds them what they’re working for
- Using the audience space for other uses
 - One venue is creating platforms in the balcony with safety rails so that the orchestra can use the balcony space (which for certain productions is rarely full of audience members) → Solves the problem of limited backstage space
 - Another venue is pulling out the first few rows of chairs so that they can put in tables for a cabaret-style show
- Opportunities for radio and podcast space
- Programming in lobby and garden areas
 - Animates the space/shows the community its an active space
 - Works well, especially for short, free events such as lunchtime music
 - It can be cost effective
- Creativity and Tech
 - One town is creating an Innovation Village, using underutilized buildings (including the theatre) for things like maker spaces
 - Some interest in using theatre for live gaming
 - One venue has partnered with Canadian Mental Health Association to host a free event for tech people who don’t really socialize/get out there → there are lots of unique pockets like this that need a space

- Issue of “partnerships” that are really just looking for a free space – but can evolve into a rental

Space Rentals:

- Renter audiences
 - Venues have experienced a lot of gaming events, including hackathons.
- Booking Software
 - Some venues have been forced to use city recreation facility booking systems, which just don’t work for the performing arts
 - Many use Active Net, but it is not ideal for theatre spaces
 - [Midas](#) was mentioned as one recommendation
- Tech costs must be clearly stated as estimate only
- TV and Film
 - Can be very lucrative but also difficult logistically (e.g. short notice, long days, crews that want to keep working and don’t understand the IATSE limitations)
 - A lot more logistics than a regular rental, potential need for a separate contract
 - Some venues have a separate appendix that they attach to their standard theatre contract specifically for film/tv shots (e.g. includes things like fake funs, explosions, content, damage deposits)