

# Space Usage Plan - Sample

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## Background

[Name] is in the process of identifying appropriate long term space to allow the company greater stability, predictability of rehearsal scheduling and to establish a greater local identity. This space usage plan is intended to document the needs and aspirations of [NAME] and to provide a basis for communicating those requirements to third parties. This may be with potential partner organizations, future landlords or potential funders.

[NAME] has gone through a process of internal review and strategic planning to better determine the need and type of space that would best suit the organization. Establishing priorities around size, accessibility, potential partners and financial constraints has led the organization to the next phase of the process.

## Key Organizational Activities

[NAME] is primarily involved in creating and performing unique and original dance works for audiences in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. This process of development, research, design, rehearsal and performance requires specific types of space at various points of the process with unique needs around flooring, storage and access.

### I. Rehearsal/research

This stage in the design process generally involves 4 – 10 performers in an informal setting with sufficient unobstructed space to move and experiment with components of the performance as it emerges. Often smaller groups of 2 or 3 performers will come together to work through smaller sections of the performance as the creative and dance research process unfolds. As the time for performance approaches, space for the full cast of performers and a setting similar to, if not the actual performance venue, is required.

### II. Performance

The eventual performance of a dance work involves both performers and audience. Sight lines are important and different configurations of performance area versus audience seating are required. Often significant audience involvement forms an important component of the performance. Here the delineation between performer and audience becomes even less distinct. The completed set is also part of the performance aspect and the performance space needs to accommodate this as well.

### III. Set design & build

An important component of the performance is a well designed and built set which supports the creative objectives of the work. At times this is a very simple arrangement while for other works the set plays a more important role. The process of creating appropriate set involves both creative and carpentry design. The space for building a set is more akin to a wood working shop than a dance space.

### IV. Administrative activities

To support the ongoing running of the non-profit society, completing grant applications and to effectively manage logistics of development and performance routines, [NAME] has a base level of ongoing administrative type activities. This requires a space aside from rehearsal and performance space, potentially sound reduced, where computer and paper filing can be handled without risk of disruption, loss or intrusion.

## People Involvement

Space for [NAME] must support the range of activities and people involved in the various activities outlined above. Core staff of [NAME] currently consists of the two primary individuals in the company. Creative and design work is largely conducted by a Creative Director. This work generally takes place in an open dance area. The work is free flowing and is supported by significant movement and experimentation of dance space. The full extent of the rehearsal dance space is used.

Another important role is the Administrative Director to attend to many of the office related activities, scheduling and running of the business and computer based activities. This work takes place in an office or workstation environment.

Creative design team or performers are brought together for a specific dance work and work collaboratively to develop and perfect the performance. Once again, their work is primarily in the active experimentation of movement and takes place in an open dance appropriate space.

Finally, the audience is another segment of people involved in [NAME] performance. While their participation is limited to the final moments of a production process, it forms an important piece to the type of work that [NAME] engages in. To accommodate an audience, additional space beyond what is needed for rehearsal is required. Most often a specific venue is identified and the performance with audience is hosted for a short period here.

## Schedule of Activities

Efficient use of a dance space requires attention to when and for how long the space is required by any one group. While it is wonderful to have a space simply available and waiting for the company when it is ready to make use of it, practicality often dictates that creative development and

rehearsal be more closely planned in order to make best and fullest use of the space. Scheduling of activities includes several different components:

- Daily routines
  - The regularly occurring and repetitive activities which support both running of the non-profit and development of dance skills
  - For [NAME], this may only be consistent for a time certain period during development of a dance work. Following the production a change or downtime from the routine marks a shift in daily routines.
  - Often daily routines take only a short period in the day and may be accomplished either before or after regular hours
- Rehearsal timing
  - Once a production is in full development, bringing the cast together on a regular basis is essential. Finding a regular schedule which accommodates the range of individuals involved, and also pairs with available space can be a challenge.
  - Often the frequency and duration of rehearsal scheduling increases as the performance date approaches.
  - Since rehearsal space can be at a premium (and certainly is more expensive to maintain or rent) compared to other more common spaces, well organized use of the space and coordination of the performers in the space is important.
- Peak usage times
  - Certain times of the day, or week can be identified as critical and in high demand
  - Being able to work around these, or take advantage of scheduling opportunities that these peak times create can open up
  - From an owner/manager perspective of space, these provide a good opportunity for income generation when other groups require space for themselves.
- Unused availability of the space
  - One way to address constrained availability of space or to manage the high cost of space is to make better use of times of the day or month where space is in lower demand or sits unused
  - This may include early or late times in the day, weekends or Fridays (for example), or seasonal lulls which make space more available.
- Frequency of activities
  - Good space selection and planning includes a clear understanding of the frequency of space need
  - [NAME] generally goes in cycles surrounding the initiation, development and performance of a production, with a period of rest or pause between productions
  - When in full swing of a production, [NAME] benefits from 24 hour access to the space to maximize flexibility, increase intensity and time for rehearsal and to maintain the floor surface and set in place between rehearsal times.

The attached schedule provides an example of the demand and time blocking for dance rehearsal space and other types of space over an 8 month period.

## Space Size & Characteristics Requirements

1. Dance floor rehearsal space - the core element of space for [NAME]. Most useful for [NAME] is a space with the following characteristics:
  - approximately 600 – 800 sq ft
  - fairly regular dimensions
  - no protruding corners or objects (pipes, coat racks, etc.) as these significantly reduce the available space for free movement. Dancers feel they need to constrain movement to avoid these
  - good lighting with day light as much as possible
  - good ceiling height – 12 ft ideal
  - no pillars
  - sprung hardwood floor
  - marley covering on floor surface
  - sufficient head room for a lighting structure to be suspended for theatrical lighting
  - electrical to support
    - sound system
    - additional lighting
    - computer charging

This space accommodates most rehearsal activities and creative development work. It can also accommodate smaller, intimate performances (particularly where there is active audience participation).

### 2. Performance Space

Generally a larger space which accommodates both performance and audience. At times with a raised stage area for visibility. It is most common to identify a specific performance venue and develop the production to accommodate well within the performance space. Access to the performance venue is often up to 2 weeks prior to the performance to allow for rehearsal in the space and final adjustments to positioning and set design. The specific venue selected varies significantly and is driven by the specific attributes of the production under development.

Given the larger size and additional audience capabilities of the final performance venue, it is not generally cost effective to conduct most of the creative development and rehearsal activities in this space. For that reason, the primary target for permanent space for [NAME] is for the smaller rehearsal type of dance space.

### 3. Administrative Space

An important but much smaller component of the space need is for an administrative area. Ideally something like a regular office sized room removed from the dance area which can be locked off from general access would suffice. It would house the administrative records of the non-profit and allow for computer based office type

activities. In practice, this can be a much smaller space with flexibility in timing of usage.

#### 4. Support Spaces

Spaces in this category include such areas as washrooms, kitchen, entrance way, lounge area, etc. The identified areas which are important to [NAME] usage of the space include:

- Washroom – unisex
- Changeroom – from street clothes to dance wear
- Kitchenette – minimal area to prepare a quick lunch, wash dishes and have access to water, fridge, microwave
- Entrance area – an area for people to come in during inclement weather which also holds coats, umbrellas etc. The main purpose is to retain the dance floor with no street shoes or wet coats. A more generous space might have an expanded entrance way with comfortable furniture for waiting/lounging between rehearsal sets.
- Storage – to keep unused dance equipment, tables, chairs or other room use equipment out of the way and/or locked. If the space is shared amongst more than one agency, security and safety of equipment is ensured with adequate storage.

The attached sketch of a potential space floorplan provides a sense of proportions and balance of different areas within the overall space.

## Accessibility

Accessibility considerations for a [NAME] space can be categorized into three different elements:

1. Site/building access
  - Good transit access – the dance community is urban based and frequent users of public transport
  - Proximity to urban centre (and other dance venues)
  - Mobility access to space – in a comparative study of smaller company rehearsal venues, the ability for disabled access was less significant. This is much more of a concern for the performance venue.
2. Timing/permanence of access
  - Blocks of time (2-3 hours) – are most useful for rehearsal activities. Often longer as the production approaches performance date

- Generally desired from 10:00 am – 9:00 pm. This is true for a wide variety of uses including other related activities in the space (yoga, dance school). For dance rehearsal, usage of the space later at night is common, however not past midnight.
  - Blocked availability – of significant advantage is unrestricted and dedicated access to the space during a period of intense rehearsal. This allows for late night rehearsal and the ability to leave equipment and sets in place overnight.
3. Convertibility of Space – dance space lends itself to a variety of other uses – as an open medium sized room it can comfortably accommodate a range of other uses such as:
- Dance rehearsal
  - Dance training
  - Yoga
  - Fitness classes
  - Ballet school
  - Group meeting space
  - Birthday parties

Considerations for different uses of the space include the flooring surface, allowing street shoes, conversion of flooring or equipment from one use to another, food and beverage uses, security, third party or after hours access.

## Options for Space Ownership

An important element of overall space usage relates to the nature of ownership or control of the facility. The ability to make independent decisions about configuration, access, overall space usage or investment in interior improvements is often a function of the ownership structure. Several options are presented with commentary here:

- Single ownership
  - The most flexible arrangement where one individual or organization has full ownership of the facility
  - Unhindered decision making and unfettered ability to accommodate others in the space as you choose
  - Long term tenure at the site
  - Opportunity for equity appreciation in the real estate
  - Full long term benefits to capital improvements to the facility
  - Requires an upfront capital investment for purchase and/or lengthy financing terms
- Shared ownership
  - Similar to ownership described above but shared between two or more organizations
  - Requires a strong alignment of intentions and a protocol for decision making
  - Capital requirement is shared amongst more than one organization
  - Can give rise to conflicting demands for space availability or intentions around capital investment for improvements

- Lease options
  - Likely the most common arrangement for smaller dance companies
  - Provides a mid-term permanence at the location
  - Full access to the site
  - Often permitted to provide access to others or sublet in some way
  - Does not require an upfront capital investment
  - Improvements to the site accrue to the benefit of the landlord
  - No long term equity gain in the property
  - No assurance of lease renewal at the end of the term
- Short term rental
  - Highly flexible arrangement
  - Can be put in place for a specific production or aligned with specific funding
  - No long term commitment
  - Can be difficult to find (particularly for the timing needed)
  - Available space may not fully accommodate needs
  - No opportunity to make any investment to improve space usability
  - Weekly or monthly cost is higher than more permanent space
- Event/performance hosting sites
  - Needed for performance logistics
  - Cost of rental can be offset by ticket sales
  - Much higher cost than other rehearsal facilities
  - Usually booked for final short period of rehearsal and performance period
- Residencies
  - a very useful mechanism to allow smaller dance companies to access established facilities
  - sometimes come with access to workshop facilities and experts in various components of performance and production (set design/build, sound tech)
  - usually available only for short periods (say, 2 weeks)
  - are generally at no cost to the company
  - encouraged by grant funders to the larger venue operators

# Plastic Orchid Factory

## Calendar of Space Usage

Month Week	January				February				March					April				May					June			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4
Mon am	class																									
Mon pm	rehearsal																									
Mon eve	rehearsal																									
Tues am																										
Tues pm	rehearsal																									
Tues eve	rehearsal																									
Wed am																										
Wed pm	rehearsal																									
Wed eve	rehearsal																	event								
Thurs am	class																									
Thurs pm																										
Thurs eve									performance					event												
Fri am	rehearsal													class												
Fri pm	rehearsal																	rehearsal					event			
Fri eve									performance																	
Sat am																										
Sat pm																										
Sat eve									performance																	
Sun day																										
Sun eve																										

- Plastic Orchid Production
- Dance class delivered by third party instructor
- Partner org production

- Venue rental for external performance
- Venue rental for external event

