

SEEN & HEARD AT THE DANCE TEACHER SUMMIT

SPOTLIGHT ON JOE NAFTAL

If you've ever gone into a cold sweat just thinking about the lighting, sound, backdrops and other technical elements of your upcoming recital, Joe Naftal wants a word with you. As the marketing director and production manager for Dance Connection in Islip, New York, and a frequent consultant to dance studio owners from around the world, Naftal has made a career of mastering the controlled chaos of backstage. He recently spoke with us about his seminar, "Producing the Perfect Recital from Behind the Scenes: Stagecraft, Organization and Communication."



Naftal designs productions for Dance Connection studio in Islip, NY.



Dance Teacher: What's the technical element to recitals that is most likely to surprise studio owners and teachers?

Joe Naftal: What I've found with many dance studios I've worked with is that their technical requests come in too late. Usually, most theaters and technicians are able to make what you need happen, but it does take some lead time. If you need any effects or lighting or sound that aren't standard fare, make sure you ask ahead of time. That may require an additional cost or may require you to rent equipment the theater doesn't own. Make sure you ask questions of your theater about their technical capabilities. Make sure you're on the same page as to what you expect the scale and scope of your show to be.

DT: How can you avoid chaos and confusion backstage as much as possible?

JN: Backstage chaos is usually the result of a lack of planning, a lack of a system or of people not knowing the system. Some of the recital chaos is inherent. Producing theater is always stressful, because it's an exciting night that everyone wants to go off without a hitch. Clear signage telling parents and dancers where to go and volunteers to help guide them along the way is my best suggestion to avoid chaos.

DT: Any tips for making technically brilliant productions on a budget?

JN: Once you decide what your budget is, the next step is to decide how you want to split it up. Obviously you want to pay particular attention to your opening and closing pieces for each act. They are the first and last impression you're giving the audience. That being said, don't spend all your time, money and energy there. Find ways to enhance the entire show overall. When it comes to scenery, look through your studio community for someone with art experience who might like to paint some scenery for you, or a parent who has that extra level of creativity or the dad who's skilled with carpentry and can build that prop exactly how you need it.

—Helen Rolfe



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Dance Teacher Summit.