



## Out-of-Town Production Specifications

Since 1981, the Capitol Steps have done over three thousand shows in hotel ballrooms, convention centers, clubs, museums, theaters, auditoriums, and other venues around the country. Whatever the venue, our production's specifications can be divided into three general areas:

- A Stage & Quick-Change Area
- A Piano
- Technical Requirements (Sound and Lights)

Please read these specifications completely!

If you find that you have trouble complying with any of these requirements, or if the price quote from the sound and/or light company you are considering seems excessive or out of the ordinary, please call Andy Fahs, our technical director at (703) 683-8330. His email is [andy@capsteps.com](mailto:andy@capsteps.com) and the fax # is (703) 683-5912.

We are looking forward to working with you and helping you provide the best presentation of the Capitol Steps.

### Stage & Quick-Change Area

A properly placed stage with good sight lines enables your audience to better appreciate our performance. Also, the correct size and location of the Quick-Change Area are essential to the success of the performance.

#### Stage Requirements

1. The Capitol Steps require a stage playing area at least 12 feet deep by 16 feet wide.

If you do not have a built-in stage, i.e., a theater or auditorium, you must construct one using risers. We recommend four risers, 6 feet by 8 feet each, and high enough off the ground (usually between 16" and 18") for everyone in the audience to see the performers. We will bring our Capitol Steps banner, which measures about 9 feet by 9 feet and is free-standing. We will place it upstage center as shown on the accompanying **Stage Plots**.

2. The stage risers should be stable, securely connected, and be covered with some industrial rug-like covering to help absorb sound.
3. Stairs should be placed on the side of the stage or, if designed like **Stage Plot A**, directly upstage. They should be in good repair; stable, free of loose nails and sharp edges, etc.
4. The stage area (risers) should be placed no less than 12 feet from the wall of the venue. This vacant area becomes our **Quick-Change Area**, as described on the following page.
5. Please place the stage so everyone can see the show. Our show faces forward, so no one should be seated on the side of the stage, or worse, behind it.
6. **If there is to be dancing, the dance floor must NOT be placed in front of our stage!** A comedy show like ours must have the audience **as close to us as possible**. A dance floor, or just a large empty space in front, puts up an invisible barrier between the performers and the audience. Also, we strongly discourage clients from having us share our stage with a dance band or D.J., despite the size of the band or the stage. A second stage for the band and its accompanying dance floor should be placed in another part of the room.

## Quick-Change Area

### Requirements

The Capitol Steps uses several different kinds of props, signs, costumes and banners, which must be immediately accessible. Since our performance is fast-paced and consists mostly of two- or three-minute songs, we must have a working Quick-Change Area immediately behind the stage. If situations make this impossible, the Quick-Change Area should be on the side of the stage, preferably stage right (on your right as you stand on stage and face the audience). Here are the requirements:

1. For Stage Plot A curtain-like covering, consisting of pipe and drape at least 8' high, should be positioned along the entire back of the stage. Then, both sides of this pipe and drape should be angled toward the back wall, forming an enclosed area. If the Quick-Change Area is on the side of the stage, refer to Stage Plot B. The area formed by this pipe and drape curtain will serve as the Quick-Change Area and **it should be at least 20 feet long by 12 feet deep or a minimum of 240 square feet**.
2. Two dressing tables, each approximately 30" by 60" for use as prop tables.
3. Two pitchers of ice water or bottled water and about 15 cups, to be set on one of the tables before the start of the show.
4. Six chairs for cast in Quick-Change Area.
5. **The area should have dim lighting (no colors/gels please), but cannot be left dark, or the performers will not be able to see the props.** If necessary, a small table-lamp or gooseneck-lamp should be provided.

**Note:** In addition to prop tables we do require a similar table in the lobby or entrance area of your event for programs and/or tape sales.

## Piano

The piano, which you will provide, is the musical backbone of the Capitol Steps performance and, therefore, should be of the highest quality. Here are our piano requirements:

1. The preferred style of piano is a grand. If this style isn't available then an upright is acceptable. The piano must be in perfect working order, including:
  - All notes working properly.
  - Pedals working properly.
  - Tuning done within 24 hours prior to the show.
2. The placement of the piano, when risers are used, should be on the floor. It should be on the stage left side of the stage if set up like Stage Plot A, or on the opposite side of the Quick-Change area if set up like Stage Plot B. In theaters or auditoriums where a built-in stage is used the piano should be placed on stage left. **The exact orientation of the piano will be determined on-site by our pianist, so cabling to the piano mic(s) should be left loose and adjustable until the soundcheck is completed (i.e., leave some slack on the cables so that we can turn the piano if need be).**
3. In extremely rare cases it may be impossible to fit an acoustic piano in the performance space, either on-stage or off-stage. In this instance, a **digital piano** is acceptable. Capitol Steps pianists are familiar with Kurzweil's PC-88mx and PC-2x, both of which are 88-note models with weighted keys. Other make/model pianos should be cleared with the technical director, Andy Fahs, prior to renting the unit.

## Technical Requirements (Sound & Lights)

The Capitol Steps show is both vocal, with several singers and piano accompaniment, and also visual, employing many signs, props, costumes, etc. The sound reinforcement and lighting requirements for the Capitol Steps are relatively simple but definitely essential. The client is responsible for providing a complete sound system with an operator, and sufficient lighting to brightly light the performing area.

### Sound

The sound system should be of the highest quality. Virtually no system built into hotel ballrooms, banquet halls, or large function rooms, is adequate for our performance, since they are mostly designed for amplification of speeches, lectures, and the like.

Equipment to be provided by the client includes the following:

1. A mixing board with no less than six channels and two separate monitor/aux outs. (Pianists monitor should have a mix of about 75% vocal/ 25% piano, and vocalists mix about 50/50.)
2. Amplifiers
3. **A separate 31-band, 1/3 octave equalizer for each mix.** Channel EQ's are to be used for adjusting individual voices, not the overall monitor sound.
4. Speakers for the house to be situated high enough off the ground (at least five feet) as to not blow away the audience members up front.
5. Three monitor speakers.
6. All necessary cables. (Note that there needs to be about 15-20 feet of slack for mics.)
7. Piano mic(s) and boom stands.
8. **An experienced sound engineer.** No trainees please.

**We will supply the vocal microphones and stands, but we require you to supply the piano microphone(s) and boom stand (unless you are using a pzm). Also, it is advisable to have back up microphones and stands. If you have wireless microphones available we will be happy to use them.**

### Sound Check and Rehearsal Time

About two weeks before our performance we will contact the sound company and arrange a time to check the sound levels in your venue. This sound check requires about an hour to 90 minutes. Setting the sound levels usually takes only about twenty or thirty minutes but we leave extra time in case of problems or for extra rehearsal. Since we travel a great deal we would greatly appreciate it if this sound check could take place just before the house opens, as opposed to sometime in the middle of the day. Since we have no major equipment; only bags of props, a separate load-in isn't necessary.

**Note to sound engineers:** Please do not ring out the system (create feedback) with performers in the room! You should complete the line check and adjust your graphic EQ's before the Steps arrive.

### Lighting Requirements

The client is also responsible for providing the necessary lighting for the show. Our requirements are fairly simple. We need a general, bright, white wash over the performing area. This is easily provided by theater spaces, but for hotel ballrooms and the like, some sort of lighting usually needs to be brought in. Overhead "track" lights are not acceptable and will not sufficiently light the stage.

1. Fixtures (two or more Lekos or Par cans) of at least 2,000 watts on trees or an overhead truss for throws of under 40' or 50'. If the throw is longer you should add more.
2. A dedicated 20 amp circuit, 25 amps if 3000 watts are used.

3. Gels can be used only if they help create a bright "sunny" look. "Salsa band-like" reds and greens should not be used unless they are properly combined to form an attractive white.

**Note to lighting technician:** There are no internal lighting cues during the show but the co-ordination of the house lights (which should be off during the performance) and stage lights should be discussed with a member of the Capitol Steps before the start of the show.

## Stage Plots



