

RESTON COMMUNITY CENTER – Performing Arts, Arts Education, Community Events

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS – 2019 USE & OUTCOMES

How a public-serving, comprehensive arts delivery system functions

Prepared for RCC Board of Governors
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Use of Reston Community Center Performing and Visual Arts Spaces - Introduction

To understand how a facility complex featuring a performing arts venue, visual arts gallery and classrooms, and related space features might function under the operational oversight of Reston Community Center’s professional staff, what follows is an analysis of how such space is utilized and what the related costs, revenue and participation were for the last “normal” year of operations, 2019. Preliminary observations about post-pandemic behaviors suggest:

- attendance at events is increasing, but gradually,
- participation is inching back to pre-pandemic levels in classes and is particularly strong in offerings where ventilation and controlled capacities are assured, and overall,
- people remain hesitant about whether engaging in public activities will be safe but are eager to return to these activities.

Older venues have had to adapt to the desire for video/audio feeds to external viewers. Not every arts space has the technological infrastructure available to offer content virtually if new variants take hold and require that, but such features will be a necessity in terms of planning for new venues. RCC has been accomplishing those technological improvements on a piecemeal basis and to the degree that greater bandwidth and new tools facilitate the option to be either virtual or hybrid, we are heading in that direction. A new venue anywhere should have such technical capabilities built into them as architectural features.

For the 2019 year, these tables illustrate what a publicly serving, subsidized and comprehensive arts program costs and generates in revenue and participation.

Program Cost Center	Personnel Actual Cost	Operating Actual Cost	Revenue
Performing Arts	536,958	273,848	(ticket sales) 54,075
			(rental income) 63,899
Arts Education	327,429	48,360	221,535
Community Events	136,311	204,515	5,975
TOTALS	1,000,698	526,723	345,484

Cost Recovery: 22% (Note: Board Financial Policy – not more than 25%)

Program Cost Center	Participation
Performing Arts (Professional Touring Artist Series and Community Arts Org Shows)	3,204
	10,699
Arts Education	1,731
Community Events	82,993
TOTAL	98,627

Overall cost per participant: \$15.49

Theatre Complex: the CenterStage, Dance Studio

Notes

The CenterStage is a specialized venue; its use necessarily depends on the attendance behavior of audiences; the requirements for rehearsals, changeovers, maintenance and repair; and arts education program needs. For the CenterStage, the dressing room also functions as a dance classroom. Key factors affect the number of hours and days of use for this (or any) theatre space:

Holidays: Audiences attend shows in the evening, more often on weekends, for timeframes ranging from an hour to two hours. Annually, the weekends that surround some holidays are better than others for scheduling performances. Holidays that don't attract audience interest are New Year's Eve, Valentine's Day, Easter, Passover, Ramadan, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Jewish High Holy Days in our community are to be avoided (occurring typically in September/October period).

Rehearsals: The premises of CenterStage use for rehearsals fall into categories and types of shows. Reston Community Players (RCP) shows typically have two complete weeks of seven-day-a-week rehearsals prior to the opening night. Those rehearsals allow for actors to acclimate to the sets, and designers to light and produce the sound for the show. Performance runs are three weekends (straight shows) or four weekends (musicals) making the RCP impact on the CenterStage calendar a total of eight weeks of rehearsals, and 14 weekends of performances. For dance companies or music performances by community-based organizations, a minimum of three rehearsals with full sets and cast(s) are required.

Professional Touring Artist Series: The CenterStage hosts (on average) 20 performances by touring artists annually. For each performance, an average of two consecutive rehearsals are required and may be scheduled back-to-back or on consecutive days depending on the nature of the show and its schedule.

Young Actors Theatre (YAT): Three sessions of YAT occur in the September to June timeframe. Classes meet for 10 weeks on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings. During the final week of the session, four rehearsals occur and one public performance. During the summer, three groups of up to 25 kids in each group attend class daily for five weeks culminating in three public performances. There are no public events held in the CenterStage in the summer months due to the intensity of the YAT program, and to avoid competing with our outdoor summer concert and entertainment series.

Maintenance/Repair/Capital Projects: Maintenance and repair for all the theatre equipment must be scheduled in two different break periods that are calendared during the lowest interest times from the perspective of audience behavior: mid-August to mid-September and again from mid-December (including Christmas, Hanukkah, etc.) through to the RCC MLK weekend events. Theatre equipment is both extensive and requires annual thorough cleaning, repairing and replacing (when applicable) to be reliable and fully functioning

through the peak periods of the performance calendar. Cyclically, extensive capital projects (seating replacement for example) will be scheduled in the August-September timeframe.

Miscellaneous Programming: In addition to the community season cycle, the CenterStage hosts a film series for daytime adult attendance, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute shows, dance classes during the out-of-school-time hours during the week (roughly 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.), occasional daytime business meetings on a rental basis, and all-staff meetings.

Type of Use	Number of Staff Required	Special Considerations	Total Number of Days
Holidays – Programmed: MLK, George Washington Day, Juneteenth	All merit staff, average of 4 per show. Part-time employees for tech: average of 3 per show.	Merit employees get paid double time on holidays.	Including rehearsals: 9
Rehearsals - Rentals	Merit staff: average of 3 per show.	At least one merit employee is on staff for RCP rehearsals; all others have full merit tech staffing.	RCP: 56; Others: 28 Total: 84
Performances – Rentals	Merit staff, average of 3 per performance. Part-time tech: average of 3 per show.		RCP: 36; Others: 20 Total: 56
Rehearsals – Professional Touring Artist Series	All merit staff, average of 5 per show. Part-time employees for tech: average of 3 per show.	Often, rehearsals may occur back-to-back. Each rehearsal counts as a “day” from a labor practice perspective.	40 (on average) rehearsals but some are simultaneous with performance day. Total: 30
Performances – Professional Touring artist series	Merit staff, average of 5 per performance. Part-time techs: average of 3 per show.	Occasionally, a major dance premier or other technically demanding performance takes more staffing/time.	20
Young Actors Theatre – Sept-June: Rehearsals	Merit staff, average of 3 per show. Part-time employees for tech and teaching: average of 4 per show.	Working with youth. Two days per week for 10 weeks; 20 days of instruction plus final week 4 days of rehearsal	Entire program: 24 x 3 sessions Total: 72
Young Actors Theatre – Summer: Rehearsals and Performances	Typically, each show has a week of technical rehearsals; up to 4 merit staff for each.	Working with youth.	Entire program: 25 days

Young Actors Theatre – Performances (Sept-June)	Merit staff, average of 4 per performance. Part-time employees for tech average of 3 per show.	Working with youth. One performance per session.	3
Young Actors Theatre – Performances (Summer)	Merit staff, average of 5 per performance; part-time teachers and tech average of 6 per show.	Working with youth. One performance per group.	3
Maintenance/Repair/Capital Projects	Staffing varies depending on the nature of the projects. Annual leave is also encouraged to be taken during this timeframe.	Projects can include cleaning and rehangng of drapes; cleaning and refurbishing all the lighting instruments; restocking supplies; checking and repairing microphones, cables, amplifiers, speakers, monitors, etc.	52
Miscellaneous Programming (CenterStage Cinema, OLLI, dance classes, business rentals)	Staffing typically involves a minimum of 3 merit employees, up to 2 part-time tech.	May involve a quick run-through, or just screening of the films – no rehearsal needed. Dance classes: 3 per day, 3 days a week, 30 weeks a year: 90 days	Entire program: 28 performances; fewer than that for rehearsals due to nature of programming. Perhaps just one quarter of that time (7). Dance classes: 90 Total: 125

TOTAL DAYS ANNUALLY OF CENTERSTAGE USE: 489

Notes: The fact that we end up with more “days” than there are in a year is a consequence of overlapping scheduling during the busiest periods of the CenterStage calendar. The above array of uses and time involved represents peak use. It could well be the case in the coming years that prevailing philosophy and practice for theatre professionals will significantly change and lead to more “humane” working conditions. This will necessarily curtail some of the overlapping scheduling we have done that leads to consecutive workdays of up to 14 days and workday schedules of up to 16 hours. That overlapping scheduling is a consequence of the appeal of peak periods of audience interest and getting as much mileage out of the space as possible.

While we follow all the rules for overtime, scheduling of meal breaks, Equity or other union practices when needed, we have not been subject to union work rules. Given that Fairfax County government has determined it will enter into collective bargaining agreements in the future (FY25 and beyond), the kind of schedules described in this document will no longer be feasible with the number of employees staffing them. We will either have to add staff or decrease use hours or some adaptation using both strategies.

Community Room – RCC Hunters Woods

Notes:

There are arts organizations using the Community Room at RCC Hunters Woods for performances. These are primarily presented by the Reston Chorale and Reston Community Orchestra. The use of the Community Room by local arts organizations is relevant to the use of the CenterStage because the professional arts staff is limited to the current merit team (seven fulltime or fulltime equivalent – one position is a job share) and part-time employees (10-12) who give tech support to performances. This means scheduling has to accommodate the dynamic of two venues in one facility as well as the staffing resources.

Type of Use	Number of Staff Required	Special Considerations	Total Number of Days
Reston Chorale – Rehearsals	Two are mandatory before shows; involves up to 4 merit staff.	Depending on sound/lighting/video components that are needed.	36
Reston Chorale – Performances	Typically, a minimum of 3.5 (one half-time merit box office employee).	Requires moving in risers, equipment for the scheduled shows.	2
Reston Community Orchestra – Rehearsals	Typically, 2 technical merit staff.	Requires added Maintenance Team support for chairs, etc.	4
Reston Community Orchestra – Performances	Typically, 3 merit for technical and box office.	Requires considering noise, foot traffic.	4

TOTAL DAYS ANNUALLY OF COMMUNITY ROOM USE FOR PERFORMING ARTS: 46

Notes: Community Room performances would be replaced by more typical social event rentals if these large footprint shows shift to a new venue with the stage and related space capacities to support them. Calendar management is critical to successfully presenting all Reston arts organizations in our spaces equitably and appropriately.

For the CenterStage and Community Room as performing arts or similar (lectures, readings, etc.) programming, the department director turns away on average three-five requests a month for the popular timeframe of October through June, and occasional requests (perhaps on average one-two a month) for other less popular calendar periods. Because it's been impossible to add much to the current use calendars of both spaces, we don't really know anymore what the true unmet demand could be as the reputation of our venue is that it's impossible to book.

As we endeavor to use arts residencies more to serve local school-age youth, activity that has to occur in the schools themselves requires the staffing resources of RCC professional arts staff to execute. While this doesn't put a strain on the facilities at RCC, it does draw down on our available labor.

Arts Education – RCC Lake Anne: Ceramics and Art Studios

Art Studio

The Art Studio is designed for visual arts instruction. In addition to a multitude of visual art classes for all age groups, the studio hosts the summer visual arts camp, LARK. The camp runs for four 2-week sessions Monday through Friday during the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This allows for instructional programming for adults in the summer in the evening hours.

Use Total: 75 days during the summer

During the fall, winter and spring cycles of offerings, the studio is used primarily from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.; 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Saturdays and Sundays provide for specialty workshops.

Use Total: 253 days from September through early June:

Ceramics Studio/3D Studio

The RCC Ceramics and 3D Studio has a consistent schedule for the fall, winter/spring and summer seasons of instructional offerings. Classes are scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, for six or eight week sessions, utilizing both spaces.

Use Total: 331 days year-round

Each Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and Saturday from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Open Studio access is provided.

Use Total: 24 days year-round.

Holidays: The RCC Lake Anne facility is closed for 17 holidays. Analysis of facility use on work holidays revealed that people typically made travel plans or otherwise failed to attend, so the cost-benefit to keeping the building open just wasn't sound.

Maintenance/Repair/Cleaning: Maintenance and repairs for all visual arts spaces occur from mid-August to mid-September.

Use Total: 30 days

Miscellaneous Programming: In addition to visual arts programming at RCC Lake Anne, a Glass/Mosaic studio occurs in the Woodshop two days a month at RCC Hunters Woods.

Use total: 24 days.

TOTAL DAYS ANNUALLY OF ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAMMING: Arts Studio: 328; Ceramics Studio: 355.

Offsite Performances/Entertainment Events – 2019

Title	Number of performances/days	Staffing	Days required for rehearsals/setup
Reston Multicultural Festival	1	10	2 (setup and breakdown of tents)
Holiday Parade	1	1	0
RTC Holiday Entertainment	15	1	0
Northern Virginia Fine Arts Festival (Now Tephra Fine Arts Festival)	2	5	5 (rehearsals and technical walkthroughs with dance companies performing)
Take a Break Concert Series	14 (4 were canceled due to weather)	2	0
Summerbration Concert and Events Series	39 (2 were canceled due to weather). Summerbration events occurred on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.	2	0
Family Fun Entertainment Series	8	2	0
Sunday Art in the Park Concert Series	12 (3 were canceled due to weather)	2	0
Lunchtime Concerts	9	2	0
Founder's Day	1	3	2
Spring Festival (RA event; RCC provides entertainment)	1	1	0
Artist Residencies	2	5	0
MLK Volunteer Activities	1	4	0
MLK Luncheon	1	5	0
Community Coffees	50 (all but two weeks, Saturday mornings)	1	0

Notes: In 2022, we will be doing 14 Summerbration concerts. The lunchtime concerts have been rebranded to Thursdays with the Arts at Mason (or Darden Purcell) and we have increased from 9 to 13 of them. Theatre in the Park is a new event at Reston Town Center – three performances, six staff, five full days. There will be three Family Picnic Days. The offsite and community events calendar is relevant because of the staffing limitations of the present team of employees. The optimum calendar of offerings across all environments considers audience patterns, employee levels and space issues. RCC is currently at – actually, often well beyond – the limits of staff/facility use that is sound and safe. Demand will not diminish in the coming years, we will need to prepare accordingly.