

## WOKING DRAMA FESTIVAL

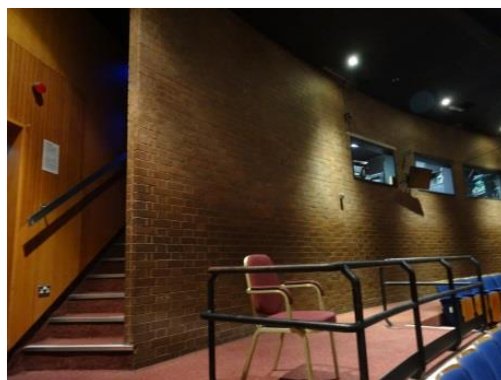
### SOUND FACILITIES

The sound plot is an important part of any play. As part of entering a play in the Woking Drama Festival, each group will need to provide their own sound operator. This is someone who will sit in the sound box at the back of the auditorium on the night of the performance to press “play” and “stop” on various different media players and set the volume of any sound effects, music and/or microphones using the sound mixing desk.

The guide below has been prepared in order to familiarise new sound operators with the sound equipment in the Rhoda McGaw Theatre.

#### THE CONTROL BOX

The sound operator sits in the Control Box at the back of the auditorium during the stage technical time and the performance. The Control Box is accessed by a set of stairs at the back of the auditorium. As you look out from the stage into the auditorium, the stairs to the Control Box are up and to the left.

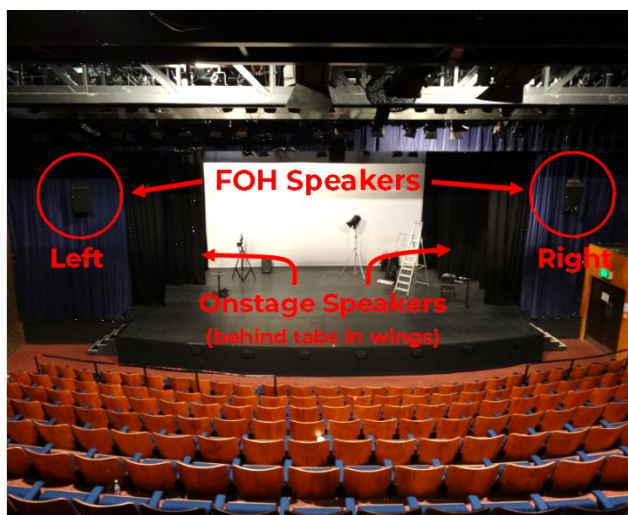


#### THE SOUND EQUIPMENT

The main items of sound equipment that a sound operator will be faced with when they reach the Control Box will be the following:

##### 1) The speakers:

- **Two main front of house (commonly abbreviated as “FOH”) speakers.** These are fixed in place and sit either side of the stage in front of the main blue curtains (often referred to as the “main tabs”). These are typically used for music or any atmospheric sounds (e.g. waves lapping on a beach and the calls of seagulls for a seaside setting).
- **Two onstage speakers.** These are mobile and can be placed anywhere on the stage itself, usually to simulate sound coming from a particular part of the set (e.g. a doorbell or telephone). Unless a request is made to move them, these will typically be placed in the wings at the very back of the stage.



## 2) The media players:

- **Two CD players** – one player labelled “CD1” and another labelled “CD2”. These are Numark MP103USB players. They can also play MP3 audio files from a USB memory stick. However, it is strongly recommended that you bring your own laptop and use that instead, if you wish to play digital audio files (please see below).



## 3) The sound mixing desk. This is a Yamaha TF5 digital mixing console.

You may also bring your own laptop or digital media player (e.g. an MP3 player) to play sound effects or music from. The Festival Stage Crew will provide two 3.5mm jack audio cables, each of which can plug into the headphones socket of a laptop or digital media player for connection to the sound mixing desk. If you wish to use a different method of connection, you will need to provide the relevant cable yourself and it will need to end in either XLR or TRS phone connectors in order to be able to plug into the sound mixing desk. Please inform the Festival Stage Director at or before the Producers Meeting if you wish to use equipment other than the CD players or the 3.5mm jack audio cables.

The theatre also offers microphones, if required. Again, please consult the Festival Stage Director at or before the Producers Meeting if these are needed.

Please note that the MiniDisc (MD) player that was available for use in previous years has now been replaced by the CD players. **Please do not bring your sound effects or music on an MD.** Please instead record your sound effects or music to a CD or bring the sound files on a laptop or digital media player.

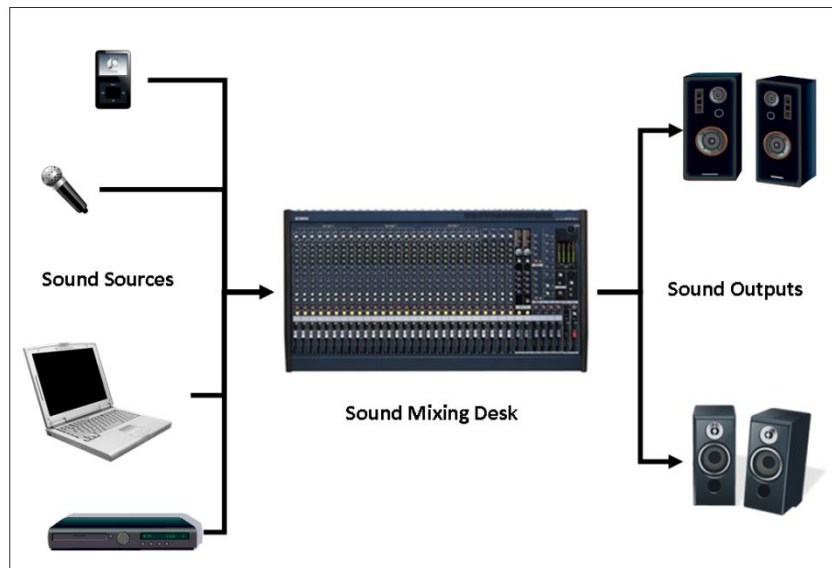
### THE SOUND MIXING DESK

By far the most unfamiliar piece of kit in the Control Box for a newcomer to sound operation will be the sound mixing desk. It has a whole array of knobs, buttons, faders, lights and screens and can be quite intimidating.

However, for most purposes only the faders (the sliding buttons) in a relatively small area of the desk are used.



The most confusing concept for any new operator of a sound mixing desk will be the idea of dealing with both inputs and outputs. A sound mixing desk is designed to combine or “mix” together the sound from various inputs or sources (such as CD players, MP3 players or laptops) into an array of different outputs (such as speakers).



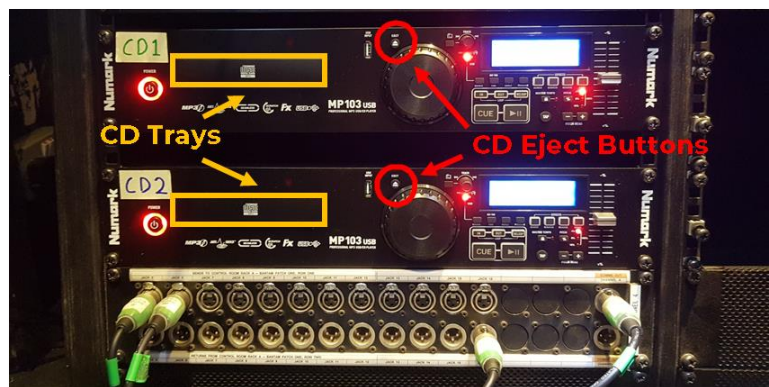
Unlike a hi-fi which just has one volume control for everything, a sound mixing desk normally allows you to separately set the volume or level of each source and the level of each output. However, in order to hear a sound out of the speakers, the levels must be turned up for both sources and outputs.

At the Festival, we have tried to make this process easier by using one set of volume controls or “faders” to control sound through the FOH speakers and another set to control sound through the onstage speakers.

### PLAYING SOUND EFFECTS AND MUSIC ON THE FESTIVAL SOUND EQUIPMENT

1) Firstly, the CD(s) should be inserted into the CD player(s) and/or the laptop or digital media player should be connected up to the desk.

- a) For CDs, this involves pressing the eject button next to the disc tray, placing the disc into the tray and then pressing the eject button again to close the tray, much like any home audio CD player.
- b) For laptops and digital media players, there will be a cable connected to the sound mixing desk ending in a 3.5mm jack (like a headphone jack) which should be plugged into the headphones socket on the device.



2) Next the correct sound effect/music or “track” should be selected.

a) For CDs, the track can be selected by turning the track selection knob clockwise and anticlockwise.

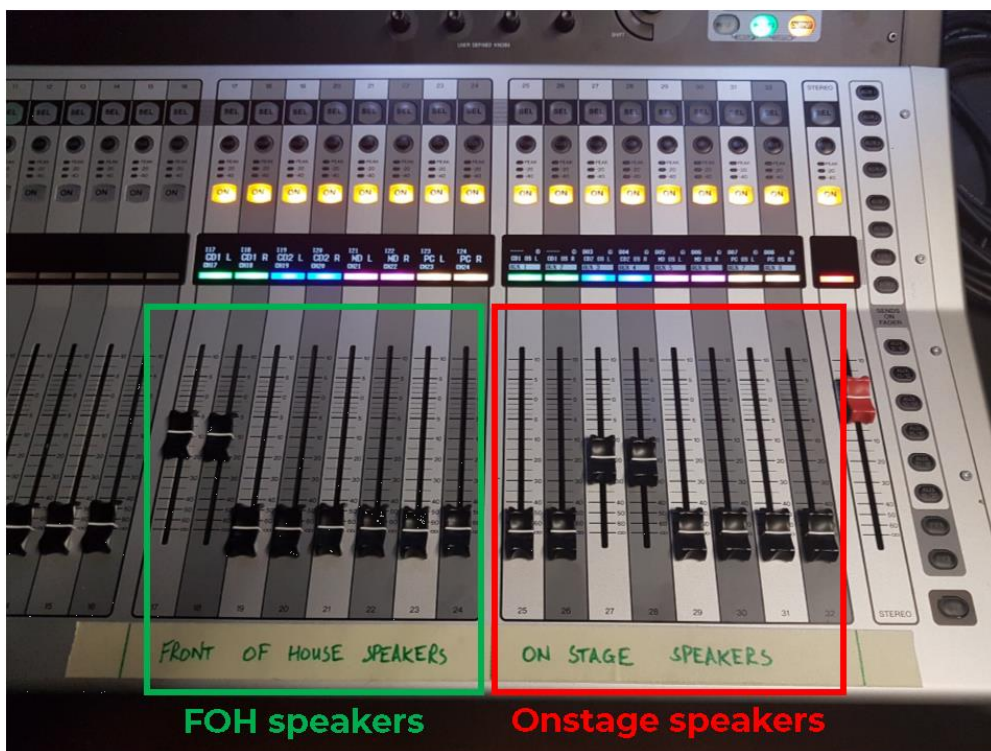
b) For laptops and digital media players, the way a track is selected will be governed by the software or device being used. The number of possible types of software and device is so large as to be beyond the scope of this guide and so you should ask the owner of the laptop or device to assist you in this case. As always, the Festival Stage Crew will be happy to help, if required.



3) Then the levels on the sound mixing desk should be set.

a) This requires moving the correct faders (the sliding buttons) on the sound mixing desk upwards.

b) The first decision to make is which speakers the sound should be played out of. Sound can be played out of either the FOH speakers or the onstage speakers or both at the same time. The faders on the left of the sound mixing desk control the volume for the FOH speakers. The faders on the right control the volume for the onstage speakers.



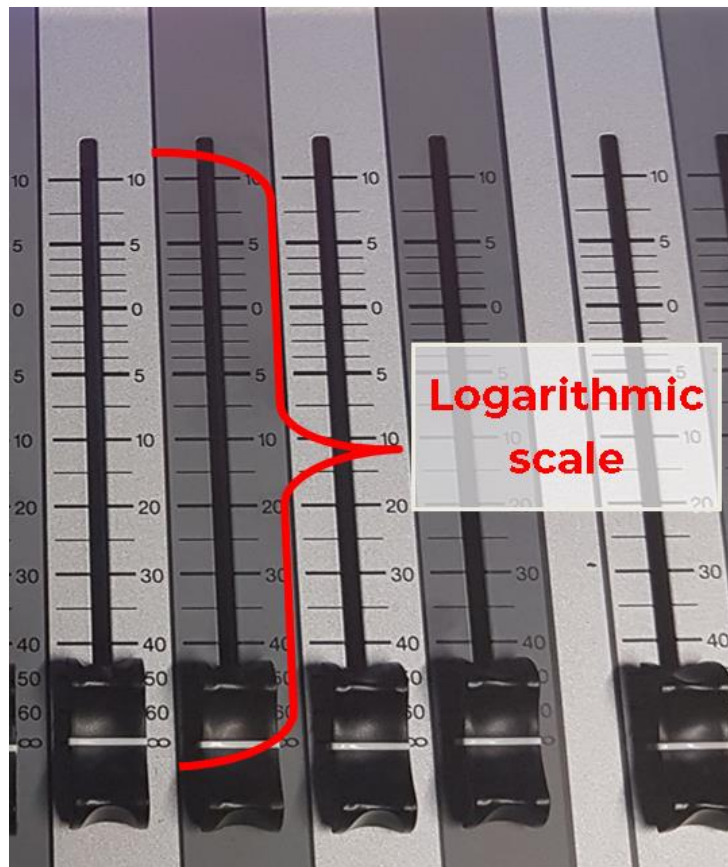
c) Within each area for each set of speakers, there are two faders for each input or source (such as each CD player) – one controls the sound on the left side and one the sound on the right. The small screen above each fader indicates which source and which side of the stage the fader relates to. There are faders for the CD1 and CD2 players and for the two 3.5mm jack audio cables (for use with laptops and digital media players and labelled “PC1” and “PC2”).



- d) The sources are labelled “L” for left and “R” for right on the desk with respect to someone viewing the stage from the auditorium. This is sometimes known as “camera” left and right. Please do not confuse this with stage left and right which is the opposite way round.



- e) The scale next to each fader is a logarithmic scale from negative infinity to +10. Numbers below the zero mark are negative. Please do not be put off by this, it is just the standard used for volume controls on professional audio equipment. If the faders are at the very bottom of the scale, no sound will be heard. As the faders are moved upwards, the sound heard from the speakers will become louder.



- f) As an example of setting the faders, to hear music from the CD1 player out of both left and right FOH speakers, the two faders for the CD1 player within the section for the FOH speakers should be pushed upwards.



- g) If you are not sure what volume level to use, set the faders at a low volume to begin with as these can later be moved up whilst the sound is playing to increase the volume.
- 4) Next the track should be played.
- For the CD players, this is achieved by pressing the play button denoted by a ► || symbol.
  - For laptops and MP3 players, this will need to be determined by asking the owner of the device or by reading the instruction manual as this is beyond the scope of this guide. However, usually there is a ► icon or button which allows for playing a track.
- 5) The faders can then be adjusted as the track is playing to make the sound louder or quieter.
- This is simply done by moving the faders up to make the sound louder and down to make it quieter.
- 6) Finally, the sound is often faded out before the end of the track.
- This is achieved by gradually moving the relevant faders to the bottom of the scale.



- 7) The track can then be stopped and the next track can be made ready to play or “cued up”.
- a) For the CD players, this is done by pressing the “cue” button which will pause the player at the beginning of the current track and then turning the track selection knob to find the next track to be played. The track number will be shown on the CD player’s display screen.

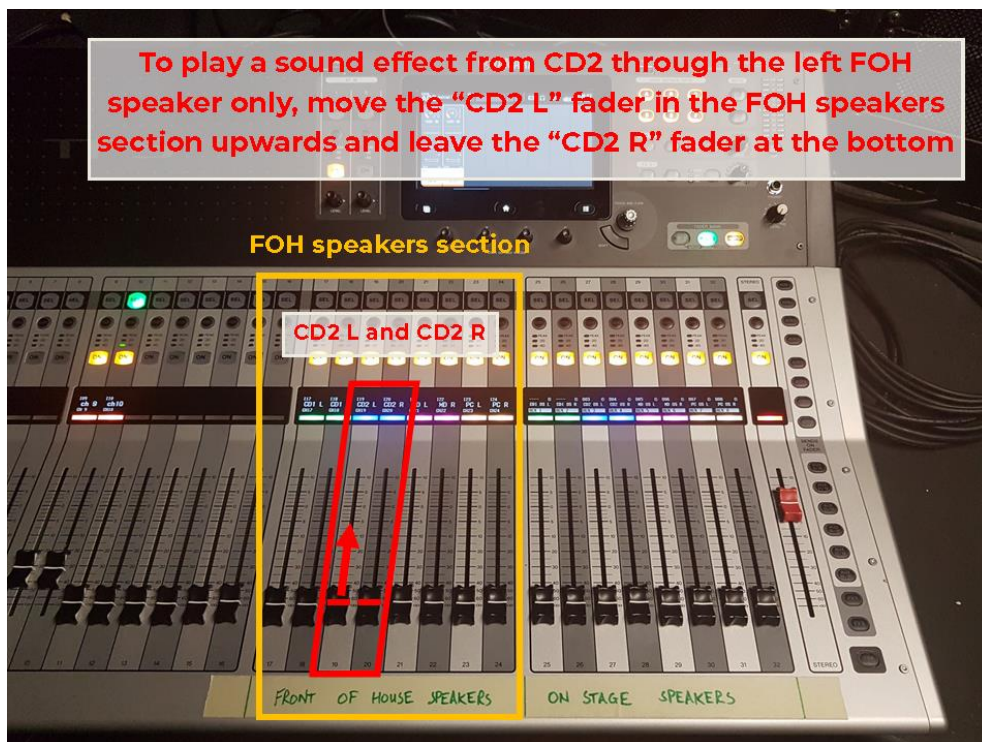


- b) Please note if the CD players reach the end of the current track, they will automatically pause themselves ready to play the next track in sequence. Please let the Festival Stage Crew know at your stage technical time if you would like this setting changed.

The whole process can then be repeated for each sound effect or piece of music.

It may be necessary to play a sound from one side of the stage and not the other. This can be achieved by recording the sound to a CD on only one side or by setting up your laptop to play on only one side.

Alternatively, the sound can be set to play on only one side using the sound mixing desk. This can be achieved by only moving up the fader that relates to the correct side.



For example, if you are playing a sound from the CD2 player, to hear the sound from the left FOH speaker as you look at the stage, only move up the “CD2 L” speaker fader in the FOH speaker section and leave the “CD2 R” fader at the bottom of the scale.

## WHAT TO BRING TO THE STAGE TECHNICAL TIME

The stage technical time is the only opportunity a sound operator will have to test out their sound effects and/or music before the performance night. The stage technical time can be brief and so it is best to be well prepared. These are the main items that a sound operator should bring with them:

- **The sound effects/music to play.** These can be recorded/stored on any of the following:
  - CDs.
  - Laptops (with a headphones socket). *Please note you must bring your laptop with you – the theatre does not have its own.*
  - Digital media players (e.g. an MP3 player). *This must also be provided by the visiting group.*
- **Something to write on and something to write with.** This is **crucial** to allow you to record the volume of the sound effects or music so that the sounds are played at the correct level on the performance night. A piece of blank paper and a pen will do. However, better would be a sound cue sheet such as the one included at the end of this guide.
- **A script.** This can be optional depending on whether someone else (such as the stage manager) will be telling the sound operator when to play the sounds or whether the operator is following the script and waiting for certain cue lines.
- **A backup set of sound effects.** Again, this is not obligatory but it is often safest to have multiple copies of the sound effects just in case there are any issues, ideally on different types of media (i.e. one on a laptop and a copy on CD as a spare).
- **A friend.** This is very useful so that one person can be playing the sound effects in the Control Box and noting down the levels that the faders are set to (and, where appropriate, the volume settings on the laptop or digital media player) and another can be listening to the sound effects in the auditorium and deciding upon the correct volume. Ideally, the person listening should be the director or producer but if the director is busy with setting the lighting and other technical aspects, another member of the group will be almost as effective.

## DURING THE STAGE TECHNICAL TIME

The stage technical time should allow the sound operator to ensure that the sound equipment is set up as required for the performance night. This includes:

- 1) The placement of the onstage speakers.
- 2) The setting up of any microphones.
- 3) The checking of recorded sound effects/music and equipment, such as laptops.
- 4) The setting of volume levels.

The first two of these will be done by the Festival Stage Crew according to the requests made at or before the Producers Meetings. If any of these requirements have changed, please inform the Festival Stage Crew at the **start** of your stage technical time.

The second two items are essential in ensuring that the performance night goes smoothly. The sound effects and music can only be checked and the volume levels can only be set during the stage technical time. No other time will be allowed for these tasks. If the recorded sound effects and music are not tested and the volume levels are not set and noted down, the sound effects may be too quiet and may not be heard by the audience or may be too loud and drown out dialogue that is occurring on the stage. Alternatively, if not tested, the sound effects may not play at all which will greatly detract from the performance.



As a result, it is important to spend as much time as possible playing through the sound effects and music and to not leave this until the last 10 minutes of the stage technical time.

As the sound heard in the Control Box will be slightly different from that heard in the auditorium, the sound levels should be set by the sound operator with the assistance of someone in the auditorium judging whether the volume is at a suitable level.

Each sound effect or piece of music should be played, the levels should be adjusted (using the faders and, where appropriate, using the settings on the laptop or digital media player) until the volume in the auditorium is correct and then the fader settings should be noted down so that the same volume can be re-produced on the performance night.

### **ON THE PERFORMANCE NIGHT**

Each sound operator will want to bring the following items to the performance night:

- The sound effects/music to play (i.e. CDs, a laptop and/or a digital media player), including backup sets.
- The cue sheet or record of the sound levels noted during the stage technical time.
- The script (if required).

Shortly before your performance is due to start, you will be directed to the Control Box. Incidental music will be playing through the sound equipment.

At this point, please do not touch the equipment, move any switches or put your CD(s) into the players.

The Festival Stage Crew will move any speakers or microphones into place on the stage, as previously agreed at the stage technical time.

Once the audience is ready and once clearance has been obtained from the front of house staff, the incidental music will be faded out by a member of the Festival Stage Crew and then you will be invited to set up your equipment ready for the first sound cue.

The Festival Stage Crew will check that you and your group are ready and then hand over to your stage manager. You will be able to talk to your stage manager and other members of your technical crew via an intercom headset. The intercom belt-pack unit has a blue “talk” button to activate the microphone and a volume knob. To allow others on the intercom to hear you when you speak, you should hold down the blue “talk” button. Alternatively, you can double press the “talk” button to lock the microphone to on. Pressing the “talk” button once more will then switch the microphone off again.

### **Intercom Belt-Pack**



**Please remember that, as there is no glass covering the window between the Control Box and the auditorium, you must speak quietly over the intercom to avoid the audience hearing you.**

A member of the Festival Stage Crew will generally stay in the Control Box until the first sound cue is played so that they can assist if there are any issues.

Towards the end of your performance, a member of the Festival Stage Crew will return to the Control Box to assist you in removing your equipment and to restart the incidental music.

## **SUMMARY**

This is a simple guide for those who have not operated sound before at the Festival and obviously cannot cover all eventualities. If you have any queries or special requests, please contact the Festival Stage Director.

However, in summary, the most important points to remember are:

- Each group must supply its own sound operator for the Festival to start, stop and adjust the volume of their sound effects and music.
- Each group should bring two people to the stage technical time to set the sound levels: one to operate the equipment and note down the equipment settings and one to listen in the auditorium to check the volume.
- At the stage technical time, each sound operator should record a note of the volume settings on the sound mixing desk for each individual sound effect or piece of music so that these can be replicated during the performance. The sound cue sheet at the end of this guide can be used as a template.
- To hear a sound out of the sound equipment, you must move up the faders for the correct sound source, such as “CD1 L” and “CD1 R” for the CD1 player, in the correct speaker section of the sound mixing desk, such as the right-hand section if you wish to hear the sound from the onstage speakers.
- On the performance night, shortly before the performance, the sound operator will be directed to the Control Box but they should not touch the equipment until told to do so by the Festival Stage Crew.
- Once clearance has been received from the front of house staff, a member of the Festival Stage Crew will reset the sound equipment and allow the performing group’s sound operator to set up the equipment as they wish. The stage will then be handed over to the group’s stage manager.

## SOUND CUE SHEET

Drama Group: .....

Play Title: ..... Page: ..... of .....

Cue No.	Script Page	Cue Point	Cue Description	Source	Track No.	Left/Right	Output	Level

## SOUND CUE SHEET - EXAMPLE

Drama Group: ..... *The Rhoda McGaw Theatre Company* .....

Play Title: ..... *A Play with No Name* ..... Page: ..... *1* ..... of ..... *1* .....

Cue No.	Script Page	Cue Point	Cue Description	Source	Track No.	Left/Right	Output	Level
1	1	<i>As houselights go down</i>	<i>Intro music (track fades after 20s)</i>	<i>CD1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>L + R</i>	<i>FOH</i>	<i>-5</i>
2	5	<i>Trevor: "I can't find the purple slippers."</i>	<i>Doorbell</i>	<i>CD2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>Onstage</i>	<i>-10</i>
3	7	<i>Rupert: "It's terribly frightful weather."</i>	<i>Crack of thunder followed by rain (rain continues through scene)</i>	<i>CD2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>L + R</i>	<i>FOH</i>	<i>-10 to -30 (over 30s)</i>
4	12	<i>Masked Man pulls locket from body</i>	<i>Strange music (cuts as Man exits)</i>	<i>CD1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>L + R</i>	<i>FOH</i>	<i>-15</i>
5	16	<i>Trevor: "And then the tadpoles were everywhere!"</i>	<i>Telephone ring (until answered by Jo)</i>	<i>CD2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Onstage</i>	<i>-15</i>
6	20	<i>Policeman enters</i>	<i>Police radio chatter</i>	<i>CD2</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>L + R</i>	<i>FOH</i>	<i>-20</i>
7	26	<i>Trevor: "What time is it?"</i>	<i>Church bell strikes ten times</i>	<i>CD2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>L + R</i>	<i>FOH</i>	<i>-10</i>
8	34	<i>Jo: "Oh my goodness - he's got a gun!"</i>	<i>Gunshot offstage</i>	<i>CD2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>Onstage</i>	<i>0</i>
9	37	<i>On blackout</i>	<i>Closing music (fades after 20s)</i>	<i>CD1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>L + R</i>	<i>FOH</i>	<i>-5</i>

*Please note that this sheet is just intended to assist sound operators in recording volume levels at their group's technical stage time. It is entirely optional and does **not** need to be submitted with the other entry forms for the Festival.*