

Sound Control Protocol of Stadsschouwburg Utrecht

1. Introduction

Stadsschouwburg Utrecht wants to present its audience with performances and events as optimally as possible. Hospitality and comfort are important aspects, but the safety of the visitors must also be guaranteed. Therefore, the systems meet the standards, and to cope with serious incidents, extensive precautionary measures have been taken and a company emergency response organisation has been established.

In the past years, we discovered at various times that the sound pressure levels during shows and events can cause complaints. In some cases, visitors were even injured. This requires action to be taken, therefore this protocol.

2. Protocol

This protocol concerns controlling the sound experienced by the audience. To protect the employees, other rules apply, which have been specified in the "Branchecatalogus Podiumkunsten Versterkt Geluid" (Sector Catalogue Dealing with Amplified Sound) dated 2008 (chapter 7, part 2).

3. Covenant

For the safety of its visitors, Stadsschouwburg Utrecht conforms to the 2011 Sound Policy for Music Locations ("Geluidsbeleid Muzieklocaties"), produced by VNPf, VVEM and the Nationale Hoorstichting. The full text of the covenant is available here:

http://www.arbopodium.nl/media/convenant_geluid_mei_vnpf_vvem.pdf (only available in Dutch)

4. Sound limits

4.1 Sound limit covenant

The members ensure that audio emissions are limited to ensure that the sound level does not exceed 103 dB(A). Sound level is understood to mean the Leq level in dB(A) measured over a period of 15 minutes at the mixing desk at a height of 2 metres above the floor.

4.2 Application in Stadsschouwburg Utrecht

The maximum level and the measurement method specified in the covenant are adhered to. Each auditorium of Stadsschouwburg Utrecht contains a calibrated measuring device that is continually operational. The measuring height of 2 metres is difficult to achieve in the theatre, therefore, measurements are taken at a fixed, carefully selected measuring position. To determine in advance whether the sound levels of a show pose a risk, the performers are asked about the levels they produce during the regular contact moments. If the level exceeds 96 dB(A), the performers must specify this in the "Production Risk Inventory and Evaluation" (PRIE).

5. Sound pressure measurements

5.1 Sound pressure measurement covenant

Appropriate meters (minimum IEC 61672:2003, class 2) are used throughout the musical activity to measure the sound pressure level.

5.2 Application in Stadsschouwburg Utrecht

In consultation with the performers, Stadsschouwburg Utrecht offers a sound pressure measuring service. Both auditoriums of the Stadsschouwburg have permanent appropriate sound meters. An appropriate mobile sound pressure meter is used to perform on-site measurements. Technicians of Stadsschouwburg Utrecht perform the installation and operation with an explanation being given to the visiting sound engineer. If the maximum levels

are exceeded, the sound engineer operating the equipment will be requested to reduce the levels, initially by the theatre technicians. If this does not give the desired result, the head of engineering, or his deputy, will be called in.

6. Hearing protection

6.1 *Hearing protection covenant*

Affordable hearing protection, which offers sufficient sound damping (at least SNR 17), will be available at the music location for the visitors.

6.2 *Application in Stadsschouwburg Utrecht*

The reception desk always has free earplugs available for the audience.

7. Information provision

7.1 *Covenant concerning information provision to visitors and employees*

If the sound level at the music location will exceed 96 dB(A), members will provide the visitors adequate information in advance and during the (music) activity. This information will at the minimum cover the expected sound level, the risk of hearing damage and the possible measures to prevent such damage. The Nationale Hoorstichting (Dutch National Hearing Foundation) will, in consultation with the parties involved, develop supporting materials that the members can use when providing information.

The information will be communicated in such a way that it is brought to the attention of the visitors. Speakers that can produce sound levels higher than 96 dB(A) are, where possible, located at a safe distance from the audience. If this is impossible, warnings to keep a distance will be displayed on or near to the speakers. The (future) employees at the music locations (will be) are aware of the sound standards, the risks of hearing damage and the protective measures that can be taken.

7.2 *Application in Stadsschouwburg Utrecht*

If the audience will be exposed to sound pressures exceeding 96 dB(A), they will be informed about this prior to the performance on the LCD monitors or the notice boards in the foyers. The house rules, which are displayed in a visible location in the foyer, state the following:

"During performances, you can be exposed to sound levels that exceed 96 dB(A). Stadsschouwburg Utrecht will provide you with information about this to the best of its ability and will offer you earplugs free of charge. You can ask for them at the reception desk. However, Stadsschouwburg Utrecht accepts no liability whatsoever for any adverse effects arising from high sound levels. Therefore, you attend a performance entirely at your own risk".

Performers are informed about the sound requirements through contact with the technical organisation of the engineering department. Moreover, the technical information of the theatre refers to this protocol. Finally, the contracts that are concluded with the performers refer to the protocol that is published in both Dutch and English on the website of Stadsschouwburg Utrecht.

The employees will be informed by the floor supervisors of the risks of exposure to high sound pressures and they pursue an active policy on the floor during events. The Dutch 'Branchecatalogus Podiumkunsten Versterkt Geluid' (Sector Catalogue Dealing with Amplified Sound), is made available to everyone via the intranet and can be found at

www.arbopodium.nl/media/branchecatalogus_site2.pdf

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