

BLP BLACK BOX THEATER

Operations & Troubleshooting Guide

For Staff, Tech Crew, Interns & Show Volunteers

This guide covers the basic operation of the BLP Black Box Theater, including lighting, sound, microphones, backstage procedures, facility issues, and common troubleshooting.

When something goes wrong: Start with the simplest checks first. If you cannot resolve the issue quickly, contact the appropriate person listed in the **Who to Call** section.

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1. OPENING THE BLACK BOX

Room Lights

When you enter the Black Box, there is a **numbered lighting pad immediately on your right**.

Press one of the numbered buttons to bring up a standard/generic lighting look in the room. This is the easiest way to get basic lighting without using the lighting board.

House Work Lights

The **house work light switch** is located on the wall on the **opposite side of the audience chairs**.

Be sure to turn the house work lights OFF before a show begins.

Backstage Lights

The **backstage light switch** is located near the **rear exit door**.

2. Computers & Screens

The keyboard and mouse used with the computers and lighting system are **wireless**.

Keyboard or Mouse Not Working?

1. Make sure the keyboard or mouse is powered on.
2. If it still isn't responding, replace the batteries.
3. Both use **AA batteries**.

Screens Won't Wake Up?

First, press a key or move the mouse.

If nothing happens, the computer itself may be turned off.

The computer is the **small silver box with the Apple logo**. The **power button is located on the underneath side**.

Computer Password

Password: `shineyourlight`

3. LIGHTING SYSTEM

Camera Preview

Once the computer is running:

1. Open **Safari**.
2. Go to **History**.
3. Find the most recent IP address ending in **#preview**.
4. Log in using:

Username: admin

Password: admin

Starting Vista

1. Plug the **silver DMX cable** located behind the lighting board into its outlet on the back of the board.
 2. Go to the Mac's bottom menu/dock.
 3. Click **Vista** to launch the lighting software.
 4. Open **BL Productions**.
 5. Open the **top/most recent show file**.
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Opening an Existing Show

Go to **Edit** and locate/open the appropriate show.

Creating a New Lighting Plot

1. Click **New** on the top menu.
 2. Go to **Edit** → **Cue List Properties**.
 3. Rename the cue list for the show.
 4. Click **OK**.
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Programming Cues

- The **green + button** in Vista creates a new scene/cue.
- **Fixture Cue**, located in the top right, is where you program the lighting.
- Keep **Link** selected while programming so you can move from cue to cue.
- Generally, ignore the color buttons on the physical lighting board unless you specifically need them.

Fixture Cue vs. Console

Fixture Cue: Where you build and program the actual lighting look.

Console: Where you drag the show onto the lighting console. Add it to the top and bottom of the channel as needed.

Saving

Save your work using:

Command + S

Do NOT use the Save button at the top of the screen.

Save frequently while programming.

Lighting Intensity Guidelines

Spotlights: Rarely need to be higher than **75%**.

LEDs: Can more easily be run at **100%**.

DP Dimmer

Periodically—particularly before a show—turn the **DP dimmer on the wall OFF for approximately 20 minutes** to allow it to rest.

Also do this if:

- Lights begin flickering.
- The lighting system appears stressed or unstable.

If the problem continues, contact **Thomas Bailey** or **Billy Ryan**.

Proper Lighting Shutdown

Before ending the night:

1. Save your work using **Command + S**.
2. Hit **Release**.
3. Unplug the DMX cable from the lighting board. Leave the USB.
4. Power down the system.

ALWAYS hit **Release** before unplugging the cable.

4a. SOUND SYSTEM

Floor Sound Console

The **ONLY** button you should normally use on the floor sound console is the **WHITE** button on the left.

If the white button does not work, someone may have changed the position of the red or black button on the right side.

Do not routinely use the red or black buttons.

Load the BLP Main Scene

Do this before beginning mic checks or using the microphones.

1. Go to **Scenes**.
2. Select **BLP Main Scene**.
3. Hit **Recall**.
4. Select/confirm **Processing**.

This restores the standard BLP sound setup.

Mixing Board Layer

Look at the layer controls on the far left.

The layer should be **YELLOW**.

If it isn't, press **both layer buttons together** to turn on the custom layer.

Adjusting Mic Gain

If a mic is working but the volume or EQ seems wrong:

1. Press that mic's **green SELECT** button.

2. Adjust the **Gain** as needed.

Avoid making major EQ changes unless you know what needs to be adjusted.

Monitor Levels

To control monitor levels:

1. Press the **9–10 button** on the bottom right.
2. The **Mac channel** controls track volume.
3. **Master** controls the overall monitor level.

To return to normal mixing:

- Press **9–10** again, OR
 - Press **LR**.
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4b. MICROPHONES & HEADSETS

Pre-Show Mic Check

Every mic being used in a performance should be checked before the audience enters.

For each mic, confirm:

- ☐ Receiver is powered ON
 - ☐ Pack is powered ON
 - ☐ Pack is NOT muted
 - ☐ Headset is completely screwed into the pack
 - ☐ Battery level is sufficient for the performance
 - ☐ Mic sounds clear without popping
-

Headset Connections

Headset connections must be **completely screwed into the mic pack**.

A loose connection is one of the most common causes of popping or intermittent sound.

Whenever a student changes or exchanges a mic backstage, an adult or crew member should **check the connection before the student returns to the stage.**

Do not assume the student tightened it completely.

Batteries

If a student's battery level is **running low before a performance, replace the batteries.**

Do not start a performance hoping low batteries will last.

Handheld Mics

A handheld mic and headset mic sharing the same channel **CANNOT be powered on at the same time.**

If using a handheld, **make sure the headset sharing that channel is powered OFF.**

Mics 13–15

Receivers **13, 14 and 15** work slightly differently:

- Their packs do not have screens.
- Monitor their status using the receivers.
- If the light on one of these packs is **NOT GREEN**, the battery is getting low.

Replace low batteries before a performance.

Spare Headsets & Supplies

Replacement headsets are stored in the **upper gray cabinet in the backstage area.**

Keep an eye on our supply of:

- Batteries
- Mic tape

If we are beginning to run low on either, tell Jordan Watts ASAP.

Do not wait until we are out.

5. MIC TROUBLESHOOTING

MIC IS POPPING

1. Check the Connection FIRST

Check where the headset connects to the pack.

Unscrew/reseat it if necessary, then make sure it is **completely and tightly screwed into the pack**.

Test the mic again.

2. Still Popping?

If the connection is secure and the mic continues popping, the **headset itself is probably bad**.

Replace it with a spare from the **upper gray cabinet backstage**.

MIC ISN'T WORKING

Even if the mixing board appears to show that the mic is on, check these items **in order**:

1. **Receiver** — Is it powered ON?
2. **Pack** — Is it powered ON?
3. **Handheld** — Are all handhelds turned off?
4. **Mute** — Is the pack accidentally muted?
5. **Connection** — Is the headset completely screwed into the pack?
6. **Cable/Headset** — Is anything loose or damaged?
7. **Battery** — Does the pack need fresh batteries?
8. **Headset** — Swap it for a known working headset.

If none of these fixes the problem, contact **Thomas Bailey** or **Billy Ryan**.

RECEIVER SAYS "MUTED" BUT PACK ISN'T MUTED

This occasionally happens.

For unknown reasons, a receiver may sometimes display **Muted** even when the pack itself is not muted.

If the microphone is working normally, the receiver display alone is not necessarily a problem.

MIC VOLUME OR EQ SOUNDS WRONG

If the mic works but the level sounds wrong:

1. Find the channel on the mixing board.
2. Press its **green SELECT button**.
3. Check/adjust the **Gain**.

If you are unsure about making additional EQ changes, contact **Thomas or Billy** rather than making major changes to the board.

6. BACKSTAGE & PERFORMANCE PROCEDURES

BEFORE OPENING THE HOUSE

Before audience members are allowed into the Black Box, do a complete walk-through of the theater and confirm that the space is ready.

House-Opening Checklist

☐ **Curtains are fully closed.**

Check all stage/backstage curtains for gaps. Students and staff frequently walk through them during pre-show preparations, so do not assume they are still properly closed.

☐ **Pre-show lighting is set.**

Confirm that the correct pre-show lighting look is active and the theater looks ready for audience entry.

☐ **House work lights are OFF.**

The house work lights should not remain on once the theater is ready for the audience.

☐ **Pre-show music is ON.**

Confirm that the correct music is playing in the theater at an appropriate volume before guests enter.

☐ **Bathrooms are clean and ready.**

Do a quick bathroom check. Make sure toilets are functioning, counters and floors are reasonably clean, trash is under control, and the bathrooms are ready for guests.

☐ **Late-arrival sign is on the main door.**

Locate the laminated Velcro sign and attach it to the **outside of the main Black Box door**.

Using the Velcroed dry-erase marker, write in the **show director's phone number**.

Late-arriving patrons will call this number so someone can let them in through the back door.

Make sure the correct phone number is on the sign before the house opens.

Final House-Opening Check

Before giving the go-ahead to open the house, physically look around the room one more time:

Curtains closed → Pre-show lights set → House lights off → Music on → Bathrooms ready → Late-arrival sign posted

Only then is the theater ready for audience entry.

CURTAINS — CHECK EVERY SCENE CHANGE

The curtain check does not end once the house opens.

Students frequently walk through the curtains during a performance and accidentally leave gaps.

Before the lights come up after EVERY scene change, check the curtains.

Make sure they are **completely pulled closed with no gaps.**

Fix any openings before the next lighting cue.

Student Mic Changes

Whenever students exchange microphones backstage:

1. Make sure the correct student has the correct mic.
2. Make sure the pack is ON and not muted.
3. Check the battery level.
4. **Check that the headset is fully screwed into the pack.**
5. Send the student back onstage only after everything is secure.

7. FACILITY TROUBLESHOOTING

TOILET OVERFLOW

The Black Box toilets can back up easily.

If a toilet begins overflowing:

FIRST: STOP THE WATER.

1. Look behind the toilet.
2. Find where the water pipe meets the wall.
3. Turn the knob to shut off the water.
4. Confirm that the water has stopped flowing.

THEN:

5. Immediately notify the person in charge on site.
6. Close the affected bathroom/toilet to guests.
7. Determine a temporary cleanup and alternate-bathroom plan.
8. Contact the plumber if needed.
 - a. Tim the plumber: (404) 786-7243

Priority #1 is stopping the water before dealing with cleanup.

AIR CONDITIONING/HEAT PROBLEM

HVAC Contact: Robby Nearing

Phone: (770) 713-2441

Also notify **Brittany or Jordan**.

LIGHTS FLICKERING / SYSTEM SEEMS STRESSED

1. If appropriate, turn the wall-mounted **DP dimmer OFF**.
2. Allow it to rest for approximately **20 minutes**.
3. Restart and test the system.
4. If the problem continues, contact **Thomas Bailey**.

5. If Thomas is unavailable, contact **Billy Ryan**.

8. CLOSING THE THEATER

Before leaving for the night:

Lighting

- ☐ Save lighting work with **Command + S**
- ☐ Hit **Release**
- ☐ Unplug the cable from the lighting board
- ☐ Properly shut down the system

Sound

- ☐ Power down the sound board using the **white button on the top left of the receiver cabinet**

Equipment

- ☐ Make sure mic packs and receivers are handled appropriately
- ☐ Return equipment to its proper location
- ☐ Report broken equipment
- ☐ Report low battery or mic-tape inventory to Jordan

Backstage

- ☐ Check for equipment left out
- ☐ Return spare headsets and supplies
- ☐ Make sure the space is ready for its next use

9. WHO TO CALL

Sound / Lighting Board / Back-of-Theater Camera

1st Call — Thomas Bailey

404-797-7956

2nd Call — Billy Ryan

678-598-1007

Call for:

- Sound board issues
 - Lighting board/software issues
 - Microphone problems you cannot resolve
 - Back-of-theater camera issues
 - Other technical system problems
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Ticket Issues

Stacey De Martini

404-281-7913

Call for:

- Ticketing problems
 - Guest/ticket questions that cannot be resolved onsite
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Concessions / Volunteer Issues

Jen Watson

770-910-4779

Call for:

- Concessions issues
 - Volunteer questions or problems
-

Air Conditioning / HVAC

Robby Nearing
(770) 713-2441

Plumbing

Tim the Plumber
(404) 786-7243

Other / General Issues

Brittany Leazer
404-735-9188

Jordan Watts
678-793-8610

10. WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG

START HERE:

Mic isn't working?

Receiver ON → Pack ON → Not muted → Connection tight → Battery → Headset → Call Thomas/Billy

Mic is popping?

Check and tighten the headset connection FIRST → Still popping? Replace the headset.

Keyboard or mouse isn't working?

Check power → Replace AA batteries.

Screens won't come on?

Move mouse/press key → Check small silver Apple computer → Power button is underneath.

Need basic room lights?

Use the numbered lighting pad immediately inside the Black Box entrance.

Lights flickering?

Rest DP dimmer for approximately 20 minutes → Retest → Call Thomas/Billy if unresolved.

Toilet overflowing?

TURN WATER OFF FIRST → Notify person in charge → Close bathroom → Address cleanup/plumbing.

About to bring the lights up?

CHECK THE CURTAINS. Make sure there are no gaps.

Mic batteries running low before a show?

Replace them.

ABOUT TO OPEN THE HOUSE?

- ☐ Curtains are closed
- ☐ Pre-show lights are set
- ☐ House work lights are OFF
- ☐ Pre-show music is ON
- ☐ Bathrooms are clean and ready
- ☐ Late-arrival sign is posted with the director's phone number

Don't know what to do?

Technical issues: Thomas → Billy

General issues: Brittany or Jordan