



## Recording performance advice sheet: Recording the Performance

### Different types of recording

There are essentially 2 types of archival recording:

1. 'Outside broadcast' type recordings, with a director, engineer and other members of the crew working from a film van parked near the venue, with cables running to the (usually 3) cameras. The director will have prepared a shooting script, indicating which cameras are to take which shots, using a 'scratch' tape or wide shot recorded from the back of the theatre and talking via intercom to the camera operators in the theatre. The director 'vision mixes' or cuts between the cameras live, during the recording, so no editing is needed afterwards. Broadcasters and the V&A Theatre Collections' own National Video Archive of Performance uses this technique. Such recordings are expensive and complex, and are beyond the scope of these notes

2. 'In venue' recordings, which are edited afterwards. Recordings can use one, two, three or more cameras. This technique is within the means of many people who would like to record small scale, amateur and community performance:

a. **Single camera recordings** can be effective in a small venue – but always take the camera to the venue beforehand, to establish how close a shot you can get from the back – or when the recording will be seen on a large screen. Be aware that if the result is to be seen on a small screen, the performer's face might be very small in frame and it will be hard to see facial expressions. A successful way of filming on one camera is to watch the performance while annotating a script to indicate where the camera could move without missing any action; then talking the cameraman through the performance by sitting backstage with a monitor and a head set connected to the camera operator's headset.

b. **Two camera recordings** are usually successful and easy to edit. The cameras should be side by side at the back of the venue, one camera taking the wide shot, the other relevant close-ups. The wide shot camera will still have to be operated because the camera's aperture has to be adjusted whenever the theatre lighting state changes. This 2 camera set up most accurately reflects the audience's view of the performance.

c. **Three camera recordings** allow for the greatest flexibility in editing. The centre camera takes the wide shot while the side cameras 'cross shoot' so that the resulting image is closer to a television or film image. In order to avoid the close up cameras both filming the same thing, it is very helpful if one of the close up cameras has a small monitor (on the floor, under the tripod) to check what the other one is filming, either to match the size of the close-ups or to take groups while the other takes close ups, or vice versa.

### PITFALLS:

**Camera positions:** ALWAYS check out the venue before the recording. You will need the space of several seats for each camera position: you will want the seats immediately in front of the camera to be empty and you will be obstructing the view of the seats behind the camera. Remember to allow space for the sound recordist.

**Length:** always establish how long each act of the performance is. The longest tape that can fit on a DV camera is 83 minutes, so if either act is longer, you will need to hire a tape recorder (to accommodate a longer tape) which will also have to fit into your allocated space.

**Colour balance:** One of the biggest problems with 2 or 3 camera shoots is when the cameras are not perfectly colour balanced, which can make editing very tricky. It is important to experiment with all 3 cameras beforehand, to compare their colour output, and once in the

theatre to ask the theatre electrician to show you some lighting states, particularly the opening state, to establish whether to 'white balance' the cameras or to use the tungsten setting.

**Sound:** it is essential to have microphones other than those on the cameras, and very useful and time-saving to have a sound recordist to supervise this. Agreement should have been reached beforehand as to where stage management will allow microphones to be put and ideally the sound recordist will feed them through a mixer and then into the cameras.