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MASQUE SOUND MAKES HEADLINES WITH CUSTOM AUDIO EQUIPMENT PACKAGE FOR REVIVAL OF CLASSIC PLAY, *THE FRONT PAGE*

One of a Kind "Ringer Box" Delivers Authentic 1920's Era Telephone Sounds On Cue

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 6, 2016 — When the 1928 comedy classic *The Front Page*, from Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, fired up the presses for its highly anticipated Broadway revival at the Broadhurst Theatre, [Masque Sound](#), a leading theatrical sound reinforcement, installation and design company, made headlines with its custom audio equipment package for the star studded play.

Often cited as the greatest play ever written about the newspaper business, the revival of *The Front Page* features some of stage and screen's biggest names including John Slattery, Nathan Lane, and John Goodman. Set in the dingy press room of Chicago's Criminal Courts Building, *The Front Page* tells the tale of reporters covering the story of an escaped prisoner. When star reporter Hildy Johnson (Slattery) accidentally discovers the runaway convict, he and his editor Walter Burns (Lane) conspire to hide the man from the other reporters, while they chase the biggest scoop of their careers. *The Front Page* premiered on August 14, 1928 at the Times Square Theatre, in a production staged by George S. Kaufman.

For Sound Designer Scott Lehrer, *The Front Page* presented its own unique set of challenges. "The play follows a group of reporters during the 1920's in their bustling newsroom with consistently ringing phones," says Lehrer. "Separate from a system that does all of the other typical things that we needed to do (playback, sound effects, reinforcement, etc.), my goal was to make sure we fully encompassed the 1920's era vibe when the phones rang. The telephone rings motivate a lot of the scene work and changes what the actors are doing, which is integral to the flow of the play."

When Lehrer first spec'd the show, he sat down with his Associate Sound Designer Hidenori Nakajo and drew up a schematic of what he wanted. "Gary Stocker from Masque Sound listened to us and created a 'magic' box that allowed us to deliver authentic rings to each telephone on command," adds Lehrer. "Our scenic designer, Doug Schmidt, wanted to incorporate authentic telephones on set. We worked with Prop Master Pete Sarafin on getting the actual 1920's ringer boxes and he went all over the country to find them. In addition to acquiring the ringer boxes, I wanted to make them part of my sound cue list so my Production Sound Engineer David Stollings could ring them from my QLab system. We needed to be able to ring six telephones in fairly close time to one another."

In order to make it all work, Masque Sound's Gary Stocker used his expertise to create a one-of-a-kind piece of equipment. "Gary built this amazing box that allowed us to send the MIDI output of QLab into a MIDI Solutions R8 box, which is a relay box that takes MIDI in and puts a relay closure out," says Lehrer. "We took those eight relay closures from the R8 and went into Gary's magic black box which opened up a 90-volt ringer voltage that went to XLR's on the output. We ran a multi-cable from the stage to Gary's magic box and broke it out to the six ringers. It took us a while to get the ringers to all work properly but now we have the actors with real 1920's era telephones with 1920's era ringer boxes ringing on stage as well. While this may seem like a small part of the bigger picture in terms of the overall sound design, the authentic telephone sounds were the basis for the entire show."

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Masque Sound also provided a custom PA system featuring mainly d&b audiotechnik E-Series speakers (E12s front of house, E8s, E3s, E0s and Q7s, and Q1s for center position) that Lehrer has used in the past and is very comfortable with. Because of his years of experience, Lehrer can go into a theatre and get the speakers balanced fairly quickly. On stage, Lehrer is using EAW cabinets with a combination of JF200s and JF80s.

For his foot mics, Masque Sound provided Lehrer with DPA 4021s, which feature a 4000-cardioid head going to a wire that delivers a very low-profile capsule on stage. Lehrer also used a selection of DPA d:screet™ 4061s placed all over the stage for local micing. According to Lehrer, "I don't use radio mics for plays. I generally use area mics for the stage, which is a challenging job for David as he is very busy mixing area mics. There is a lot of dialogue to deliver in this show and it's important the audience hears it all. David does a great job moving around from mic to mic and we have every one delayed to every speaker position. We really try to keep the sense of where the actors are talking from in the sound system and use as few mics as possible in mixing."

Another interesting component of Lehrer's sound design was the use of HelixNet digital network Partyline intercom and FreeSpeak wireless digital intercom from Clear-Com. "This is my second show using HelixNet," says Lehrer. "It's a big deal for a play to switch over to HelixNet as typically plays don't have budgets for it. It was a really great replacement for analog com. It makes the setting up and running of com so much easier and so much more reliable in terms of noise and buzz and the typical problems we have with analog com. The sound guys just love it because it makes their lives so much easier during set-up. We were very happy that Masque Sound made the purchase for us."

For his console, Lehrer selected a Yamaha CL1 mixer. Since *The Front Page* is a small show only using a dozen mics and 20 channels of QLab, and a few utility mics with not a lot of channels, the CL1 was an ideal fit.

"Masque Sound always provides really great service and did another great job on this show, especially Gary Stockers and his custom built ringer box," says Lehrer. "Gary made something that is very straight forward, works well and does the job for this very unusual function. It will probably be called *The Front Page* box from now on and anytime someone does a production of *The Front Page*, they can call up Masque Sound and ask for it. In addition, my crew Hidenori and David did an excellent job as did Prop Master Pete Sarafin. We had a lot of fun facilitating the ringer box. The show sounds great."

For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit: <http://thefrontpagebroadway.com>.

About Masque Sound

Founded in 1936 by a trio of Broadway stagehands, Masque Sound evolved into one of NYC's most successful theatrical sound reinforcement, installation and design companies specializing in theatrical, house of worship, sporting, corporate, TV broadcast and live concert events. Celebrating more than 75 years in the industry, the company is led by President Geoff Shearing. The company also operates Florida-based Professional Wireless Systems, a leader in the development and implementation of wireless technology. Credits range from major Broadway shows and tours including Phantom of the Opera, MAMMA MIA!, Lion King, Jersey Boys, The Book of Mormon, Once, Kinky Boots, Aladdin and Fun Home to yearly Super Bowl broadcasts and installations of varying sizes, including Western Connecticut State University, the Jim Wise Theatre at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) and the historic St. Patrick's Cathedral. Masque Sound's 70,000 sq. ft. corporate headquarters and main assembly facility is located at 21 East Union Ave., East Rutherford, NJ, 20 minutes from midtown Manhattan. For more information, call (201) 939-8666 or visit www.MasqueSound.com.

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