

A publication of Pro AV, Inc. • Sales, Design & Installation of Audio, Video, Lighting & Keyboards

A Look Back at Easter

By Bruce & Yoli Lee

He says:

Last month I gave you a recap of our Easter production in which I ran sound. I want to take this month to look at what we would have done differently, if we had the opportunity to do it all over again. Some of this we would not have been responsible for, but would have made suggestions.

AUDIO

1. I would have made sure we had a full rehearsal with all the equipment set up and operational. Saturday morning was the only rehearsal and they only went through it once with no warm up. During the rehearsal we were scrambling to find the best locations for the mics, making decisions about who we would have to mic individually and running down any problems. As a result, there was little time to focus on the actual play and the cues.

2. The stage boxes that were provided had non-locking XLR connectors. Even though they were placed out of the walkway and all cords were taped down, one still managed to get kicked loose during the performance. We lost a critical overhead mic. I would have found another place for that box or taped the connectors in place.

3. I would have had someone in the room where the costume changes were happening. Their only responsibility would have been to make sure the mics were in place. In one of the costume changes, the mic on the actor playing Jesus was knocked off. Fortunately, it was toward the end of the play and we only missed him saying "Mary" two times. If it had happened sooner, it would have been really bad.

4. I would have brought my

own mixing console. The one we used had a fader acting up that interfered with recalling the scenes. That meant a major reason for using a digital console was lost. My guess is this fader was dirty and the sensors were being interfered with. An attempt to clean it without taking the board apart helped but didn't fix the problem.

RECORDING

1. Because of time restraints and budget (there was none) I elected to take a feed off the aux send to the video/audio recording device. That meant I was mixing for live and recording at the same time and trying to juggle between the two. The live was more important, so the recorded sound suffered. If possible, I would split those duties.

2. A full rehearsal with all the

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cameras functioning properly would have been nice. Instead, we were trying to check placement and run down a couple of issues. I was the only one with real experience on our 5 person team. I had to prioritize trying to make sure everything needed for the live event was working properly and then focus on the things pertaining to recording. This placed my wife - the person operating the robotic cameras and doing the switching - in a difficult position. She was unable to get a full rehearsal practicing with the cameras and had to improvise during the live event.

She says:

VIDEO

1. I had decided the placement of all the cameras on Wednesday night. Instead of having a backup plan, I then concentrated on making notes on the play booklet as to where the actors/actresses were coming from and the shot angles. We used two robotic and two manned cameras. This was the first time I had recorded and mixed a live event, so I was super nervous about it. Not being able to practice before the event made it harder and more stressful. Based on the captured video, it revealed I started feeling comfortable with the equipment (not making so many obvious mistakes!) after 15 minutes into the 45 minutes play. I was only able to preset the robotic cameras to one scene instead of several scenes before the event.

2. We should have worked more diligently with the lighting tech/designer to give us some different lighting schemes that were more video friendly.

3. A robotic camera was set at the back of the room for the wide angle shot. Only the live portion was captured. An unmanned backup video camera recording to mini DV should have been placed next to the robotic one, making it possible to record for editing purposes. A camera flash will be used next time!!

4. I was communicating with my camera "men" (11 & 13 year old sons) through a wireless system where I could talk on the wireless mic and they listened on the headset (they couldn't talk back which made it SUPER nice!). One of my sons couldn't hear me consistently as the signal kept dropping.

This made it difficult for him to get the camera shots I was looking for. Leaving only one manned camera, I had to try to set the 2 robotics during the play to get some different angles. If we have had the whole system tested on Saturday during the rehearsal, we could have solved this communication problem.

5. The audio that came into the captured video was so low that it hardly created an audio wave when captured. This made it extremely difficult to sync between the manned cameras, the DV recordings and the live mix.

6. Cables from the robotic cameras should have been run to a distribution amplifier (i.e. Kramer 104 LN), sending the signal into the Vaddio DV Capture for the live mix and also, into a DVD recorder for editing. This would have captured the footage from the robotic cameras to be used as a backup.

7. We missed the Pastor starting the play as we were shooting the audience and still dealing with some issues. We had the audio recorded, so I had to start the DVD with the audio welcoming the attendees while showing the attendees on the video and then transitioning to the Pastor speaking. This could have been avoided by having all the equipment running smoothly the night before or by telling the Pastor to let me know when he was ready to start (I was stationed on the first pew).

8. Our 11 year old son, Joshua, had never touched a video camera in his life before Sunday morning! I was planning on having the 13 year old son, Javi, run one camera and the 15 year old, Robert, run the second one. Robert decided he wanted to do Audio with his dad, leaving me no other choice than "pretending" I would use Joshua's footage. I gave Joshua a 5 minute crash course on filming and recording before the play started as we realized Javi couldn't hear me well. Joshua became my main camera man and did an awesome job! After the play, several people came to him to congratulate him on his amazing "focus" in handling a cam-

era and being so young! Much to his dismay, he has already been warned that he will be shooting every event we do!

9. My "loving" husband changed the speed sensitivity settings on the Vaddio mixer and I didn't notice until I tried to zoom in on the Pastor and got the ceiling instead!

10. When I presented the free, final DVD to the choir members, I told them that I was now expecting a musical presentation every Christmas, Easter, and appropriate holiday. It was our privilege to make complimentary DVDs available to every person at church.

MISCELLANEOUS

Here are a few suggestions for the overall event.

1. The auditorium was fairly dark. I would have had the ushers carry flashlights to escort those who came in late or had to leave early.

2. One of the actors had his lines written out on a poster board on the front row. With the spots in his eyes and no lighting on the poster board, he couldn't read them. A person with a flashlight next to the board would have been helpful. A rehearsal with the lighting effects would have revealed this problem.

3. I should have made the participants more aware of the mic locations. Some became too enthusiastic waving the palm fronds welcoming Jesus and repeatedly "whacked" a couple of the mics.

In closing, I must say this was an amazing event. For many of the participants, it was the first time they had ever been a part of something like this and they need to be congratulated for a job well done. I think, for the most part, it was better than anyone would have imagined. The technical side was fairly flawless when you take into consideration all the challenges that were faced.

We were blessed to do our first live, family production working as a team - our family team!

The most important thing was not the lights, cameras and audio system. The most important thing was that the Lord honored a group of humble servants by moving in and touching the lives of those present. It doesn't get any better than that!

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