

## Topic 011

### General Design Method - Overview

#### Introduction to Lighting Methods

There is no one 'method' for lighting the stage - there are many. Or put another way, the first rule of stage lighting is...there aren't any. As long as the objectives of the lighting design and the lighting concept are met, the designer may use any appropriate DESIGN technique that he wishes. The professional lighting designer must however communicate his design to others, through the use of standard conventions.

Each production has very different lighting needs. Lighting for a production of 'Annie' vs a Martha Graham dance piece have totally different styles and requirements. The lighting student must not look for a 'system' or a 'method' that will work for all lighting needs. There isn't one. Instead the lighting designer must understand the needs of each particular production, carefully define them and then produce the lighting design accordingly. It is only by this approach that the lighting design will be most efficiently suited to the exact needs of the production. No two productions are ever the same and no two lighting designers ever work alike.

#### Visibility VS Mood

The first and most important principle of stage lighting is still considered to be VISIBILITY. This was probably also true for early lighting designers, using candles, oil lamps, gas lighting and electric arcs.

Usually the designer will light the actor first for visibility and then for mood and atmosphere second. There are times however when MOOD may wish to overpower visibility (at least temporarily). Today many concert designers may light a stage first for mood and impact and then second for visibility. In this respect, much of the general lighting might consist of strong colors, projections, or moving effects. Using the follow spot or the automated lighting fixture, the designer can 'cut' through the mood lighting and add controlled, precise lighting to performers, anywhere on the stage.

#### Evolution of Method and Equipment

Most lighting methods have evolved from light source and fixture technology. Spotlight fixtures today provide the designer with narrow beam spreads of about 10-40 degrees. This was not always the case. Less than 100 years ago, most lighting consisted only of flood lighting, as the narrow spot did not exist. With the development of the spotlight (lime light, electric arc, then incandescent), lighting methods changed. It now became possible to precisely place and localize light, anywhere on stage. As equipment continues to develop, so will lighting methods. With the new generation of automated fixtures, new lighting looks never before seen - are now possible.