

Topic 009**Lighting for Dance Program**

Lighting for dance is taken to mean all forms of performance dance, including; Ballet, Modern, and Contemporary. More traditional forms of dance are often presented under the controlled conditions of a proper theatre, with complete technical and lighting facilities. Other forms of dance (Modern & Contemporary) may be more comfortable in 'found' or nonconventional spaces. In this respect, dance venues range from the elegant proscenium house, to the church basement to the shopping mall.

Dance Lighting-Techniques:

Theatre lighting is concerned with lighting the actor's face for visibility. Dance lighting is concerned with lighting the human form for plasticity, interest and emotional impact first and visibility of the face, second. In theatre, front light usually provides the main lighting to the acting areas. In dance however, side lighting is usually a main source of illumination. Front lighting, if used at all is usually reserved for the provision of color washes or specials.

Side light was introduced to dance by Jean Rosenthal a famous American lighting designer in the early 1940's. "My system required fixed lighting booms along the side at every entrance as a basis for flexibility and for lighting the whole stage. That made the ballets look different, which roused the European choreographers and designers for Ballet International in 1944". (Rosenthal, *The Magic of Light*). Ms. Rosenthal also worked with the well-known American choreographer, Martha Graham, for many years.

In addition to the extensive use of side light, dance lighting often uses 'down lights' (pools), and 'back lights' (to silhouette dancer). Front light is seldom used due to its 'flattening' characteristics, and this position is usually reserved for 'color wash' lighting. The follow spot is often used in Ballet to highlight the principal dancers. Side lighting techniques; usually require a vertical lighting boom in each 'leg' or entrance. Often 6-8 booms may be required (each side). Each boom may have one (1) or more fixtures (usually 3-5). The fixtures (usually ellipsoidals) are focused straight across the stage, and usually 'shutter' off, of the opposite side, stage masking.

A typical three (3) fixture boom, might have fixtures mounted at 10', 8' and 1 ft., above the floor. The fixtures are often referred to as being in a TOP, MID or SHIN positions. The TOP and MID fixtures are usually used for general side light. Often the TOPS and MIDS will have different colored filters. The bottom lamp (shin or shin buster) has been traditionally used to light the legs of the ballet dancer, and to provide light up, under the tutu. Modern dance designers may use the shins as the principal source for a non-naturalistic angle of light, often with strong color(s). If properly shuttered off of the floor the effect can cause the dancer to appear to 'float' across the floor. The effect is very dramatic, particularly with opposing colors from opposite sides.