

Topic 030

The lighting Designer: Good or Bad

Lighting Designer - Good & Bad

The stage lighting designer is traditionally responsible for the design and supervision of all aspects of lighting for a typical stage production.

In the mid 1900's lighting designers in Britain and America developed and refined the methods of modern lighting design for theatre, dance, and opera. It was only after the development of the electric filament lamp that these early pioneers were able to establish new foundations and standards in design.

Whether working in a small community theatre or in a large opera hall, the lighting designer is (or should be) an important and respected member any modern production. This designer, collaborates with the director and with other designers (set and costume) to ensure that the production is properly and suitable illuminated in all respects, from inception to completion.

Producers and theatre managers have realized years ago, that they can spend 'millions' of dollars, on scenery, costumes, and performers and have it all wasted because of 'bad' lighting. Many commercial productions now make high demands of their lighting requirements and in this respect, the lighting designer has become an important and integral member of the theatre and entertainment industry.

The lighting designer is often the last designer into the theatre, and everyone fully expects him to perform magic, miracles and to make the sets, costumes and actors...'look fabulous'.

There were many individuals in the 1700's and 1800's whom contributed to the evolving art and science of stage lighting design. It wasn't until the early 1950's however until the role of the lighting designer as an artist was finally firmly established as **Lighting Director**.

Up until this time lighting was largely something to be taken care of by the technicians. Today, many thousands of lighting designers work around the world in many different entertainment industries.

Lighting designers today often tend to specialize in specific types of entertainment productions, each requiring slightly different working methods and techniques.

Specialization may include lighting for; Theatre, Dance, Opera, Television, Film, Theme Parks, Ice Shows, Outdoor Pageants, Trade Shows and Industrial or Corporate productions.

Regardless of the lighting discipline, all lighting designers must have a full understanding of their tools and both the physical and psychological aspects of light.

Basic Principles of light:

The only real differences from one lighting industry to another are the methodology and equipment types involved. For example, display designers may use a 3"-150 watt fresnel, theatre designers may be at home with an 8"-2000 watt Fresnel (pronounced as FRENEL), and the television or film designer may be used to working with a 30"-10,000 watt fresnel.

Further, the lighting designer must have knowledge and experience with the lighting methods, fixtures and hardware that are available to serve their particular lighting industry.

Tasks of Lighting Designer

The Lighting Designer is responsible for the creation of the lighting design for a given production. Working in concert with Artistic Staff and Production Personnel, the Lighting Designer becomes part of a collaborative team. This team is led by the Director and strives to create a unified production product.

Responsibilities:

Design Phase

- Meet with the director and other members of the production team throughout the design process
- Establish a calendar of meetings with the Faculty Lighting Design Advisor
- Attend rehearsals
- Attend all design meetings

Create the following documents in order to communicate the design to all members of the production team:

- Visual research: emotional, color, period and lighting
- Design concept
- Scene analysis
- Ground Plan with acting areas marked
- Working cross section
- 1/2" scale drafted light plot
- Cue synopsis
- Channel hook up and instrument schedule
- Magic sheet

Create a production notebook containing:

- Contact information
- Schedules
- Notes from meetings
- Research
- Sketches
- All lighting documentation

Be in communication with all members of the production team about any issues that might affect others such as:

- Color
- Texture
- Floor surface
- Set mounts
- Fog
- Safety issues
- Special Effects

In preparation for the first meeting with the Director, the Lighting Designer will have:

- Read the script at least three times
- Created a break-down of all scenes and what the lighting requirements are
- Completed basic research regarding time period and anything else that might be needed
- Prepared a list of questions for the director

The Lighting Designer will collaborate with the other designers to create a unified production concept working closely with the director.

In the initial meeting with the Faculty Lighting Design Advisor, Staff Master Electrician and Master Electrician the following will be addressed:

- Discuss all deadlines
- Lighting inventory and budget
- Discuss working procedures in the theatre
- Discuss responsibilities for the Assistant Lighting designer and the Assistant Master Electrician

The Lighting Designer should include the Assistant Lighting Designer in as many process meetings and discussions as possible. It is the responsibility of the Lighting Designer to give direction to the Assistant and to help the Assistant better understand the process in preparation for the time that the Assistant will become a Lighting Designer in a subsequent production.

The preliminary lighting design deadline is established at a point in the rehearsal process where the lighting designer has been able to see the flow of the show. The Designer will present to the Faculty Lighting Design Advisor the following:

- Lighting designer's approach and how it supports the director's concept and the other design areas
- Scene analysis
- Visual research
- Ground Plan with acting areas marked
- Working cross section
- Set up color key in the light lab and demonstrate major visual concepts

During the preliminary design stage the Lighting Designer should meet with the Master Electrician to discuss any special lighting requirements for the show.

After seeing a run through of the production, the Lighting Designer will present the final lighting design to the Faculty Lighting Design Advisor, Staff Master Electrician, Master Electrician and Assistant Lighting Designer. Following is what is required at this meeting:

- Design concept statement
- Ground Plan of the set with acting areas marked
- Final cross section showing all lighting angles, masking and trim heights
- 1/2" scale drafted light plot
- Channel hook up and instrument schedule

The Lighting Designer needs to provide the Master Electrician:

- 3 copies of the light plot
- Access to a soft copy of the Lightwright paperwork
- Details of practicals and any necessary drawings

Once the lighting design and light plot has been approved by the Faculty Lighting Design Advisor and the Staff Master Electrician, the Lighting Designer and the Master Electrician will meet to go over the plot, crew and tech schedules, and to discuss priorities.

Budgeting Phase

The Lighting Designer should discuss any special lighting requirements for the show such as practicals, moving lights, color scrollers, etc. to aid the Master Electrician in assembling a production estimate.

- Build Phase-Before plot due date
- The Lighting Designer will attend rehearsals as necessary.
- The Lighting Designer must attend production meetings.

Build Phase - Between plot due date and beginning of load-in

- The Lighting Designer will present the design to the Crews and the Cast
- During the build period the Lighting Designer will be in close contact with the Director, Stage Manager, Production Manager, Master Electrician, Technical Director, Scene Designer, Costume Designer and Sound Designer for any changes that might affect the lighting.

The Lighting Designer will be available to answer any questions for the Master Electrician.

At this time the production estimate developed earlier in the process needs to be finalized based on the Lighting Design. All budgeting issues arising will be dealt with in conjunction with the Staff Master Electrician.

- The Lighting Designer will attend rehearsals as necessary.
- The Lighting Designer must attend production meetings.
- Load-In Hang
- The Lighting Designer will be available to answer any questions for the Master Electrician.

Focus

Before the focus calls begin the Lighting Designer will meet with the Faculty Lighting Design Advisor to discuss preparation and strategy.

- The Lighting Designer will attend all focus calls.
- The Lighting Designer is responsible for being prepared and organized to ensure that focus calls proceed as efficiently as possible. This includes: °Training the Assistant Lighting Designer in how to call a focus
- Accurately marking out center line and acting area points
- Discussing with the crew the focus communication to be used
- Planning in advance the order of focus and what scenic elements will be necessary

Focus should be complete prior to the Cue Writing period.

Cue Writing

Before the cue writing sessions the Lighting Designer will present to the Faculty Lighting Design Advisor:

- Cue synopsis
- Cues marked in the script
- Magic sheet

During the cue writing phase the Lighting Designer is responsible for the following:

- Meet with the Director to talk through the cues of the show
- Meet with the Stage Manager to place all cues in the prompt book
- All cues written and programmed into the light board
- Follow spot cue sheets, if applicable

Cue Writing should be complete before the beginning of Tech.

Tech/Dress

- Work on perfecting visual content and timing of cues
- Take focus and cue notes to be worked on in production calls outside of tech

- Help problem solve with issues that arise during tech that involve lighting

Production Run

Give Stage Management a list of lighting shots for photo-call

Post Production/Strike

Return all necessary keys

Meet with the Faculty Lighting Design Advisor to discuss the process and final product. The

Lighting Designer will hand in a final production notebook for grading which will include:

- Design concept
- Visual research
- Scene analysis
- Working cross section
- 1/2" scale drafted light plot including all updates
- Channel hook up and instrument schedule including all updates
- Magic sheet
- Cue synopsis
- Script with cues marked
- Follow spot cues if applicable
- Attend any departmental post production critiques

At any time throughout the production schedule the Lighting Designer may utilize the faculty advisors to help resolve any ambiguities in a particular project's process.