

Last month, I wrote about the latest version of LightWright, a computer program that is essential for any busy lighting designer because anything that helps organize your work has a purpose.

The entertainment industry is filled with new and exotic technologies which are being created faster than I can write about them. There are literally hundreds of manufacturers of highly efficient conventional lights, LEDs, moving lights, dimmers, smoke and haze machines, gobos, wireless DMX systems and computer controlled lighting consoles. But are they ALL useful, all the time? I believe that technology used without a specific purpose is a toy.

I believe in experimenting with these technological innovations if they are needed in your production. But one problem with these new devices is that they can be very expensive to rent. And your show budget may not permit you to use them at all! I'm talking about theatre and dance; not Rock & Roll.

In concerts, there is something dynamic about using moving lights to rapidly change colors and gobos with the rhythm of every song. But area and mood control in theatre should affect the audience from the curtain rising to the final moment of a production, so a designer must make a conscience effort to create lighting that matches the tempo of the play or musical. For me, it is far more important to know WHY a specific quality of light or color is used than your choice of a lighting fixture. The CHOICE is technical. The art is WHY.

Now, I don't want you to think that I am talking down to designers because I'm not. I have discussed these same ideas with many designers over the years. This is how I was taught to think when I worked as an assistant to lighting designer, Tom Skelton in New York. And I write a monthly article where I am allowed to express my point of view. Alright; I'm opinionated. But without a point-of-view about your show, what would your designs look like? And how can you justify your choices to your director or producer if you don't have a clear idea yourself?

Specific technologies like moving lights should be used. And we have Phil Collins of "Genesis" to thank for investing in a small Texas company that manufactured the first moving light, Vari*Lite back in 1980. Whether old or new, technology should expand a designer's possibilities. For example, I know that PARs are very popular to use, in part, because they are the least expensive light to rent. And every designer wants to get the most lights for their budget. Plus PAR's do a good job of illumination.



Personally they are not my first choice because you can't precisely control the beam of light. My general lighting preference is the ETC Source4. It gives an incredible amount of light output within



a very even beam field. And you can control the light with shutters as well as moving the lens to soften the edge of the light. There are more options to try as well.

An accessory to try is the color changer. It can be mounted on PAR or Source4. Add this “technology with a purpose” to your lighting design’s area lighting or backlight and now you have multiple colors to work with in the same light. You now have a lighting source that is versatile and affordable. Many more sets of these conventional lights with color changers can be rented for the price of renting one moving light. If you use color changers you will also add some meters of DMX cable to your lighting

rental. But unless your design includes 155 color changers and 100 dimmers, your show would still fit inside a single DMX “Universe”.

Any DMX addressable lighting console, like the Grand MA or ETC Eos, can easily control your color changers. You can also control your smoke or haze effects from the same console. This is the reason why DMX is so functional. If a device understands DMX, it can be controlled by your console. Now that I’ve mentioned smoke and haze, I’d like to briefly discuss its use.



In outdoor use, I understand that hazers must be kept on all the time, especially in Rock & Roll or it wouldn’t be seen. But in a controlled indoor environment, it should be used judiciously. It’s just not an effect if it is “ON” all the time. The human eye gets



easily bored and ignores things. This time I am not being simply opinionated, it’s a physiological fact. The human eye tires quickly whether it is rapid changes in intensity or long lasting visual effects. I know some lighting designers like to “see” their beams of light throughout a production. But a show is usually NOT about the lights. It is about WHO is lit and how they are lit.





As a designer, I know that there is no standard formula for creating a design. In fact, I attempt to make every show I design look different. The sets, costumes, stories and time periods should reflect a unique reality in every production. This is the great challenge for all designers. An aspect of design that has also been undervalued is the beauty of the sculpted form on stage. By this, I mean lighting a human body from more than one direction. Whether it is a dancer's graceful lines being revealed by dramatic side light or a single actor's monologue in a

shaft of light; a human being, lit, is a three dimensional object that only has form when lit from multiple angles.

And now I would like to suggest a design idea for you to try. Add texture and dimension to a scene by using gobos. In a theatre, an outdoor scene becomes more alive with an additional layer of leaf gobos. While an interior night scene could use break-up patterns in a darker hue to accent a scene without raising the apparent light level.



I can hear producers groaning out loud as they read this. "What? Spend more money on lighting? No one will care." I strongly disagree. Beautifully lit, sculpted and highly crafted lighting is found on Broadway because it adds to the entire theatrical experience. And New York producers know it! As a result few people complain about ticket prices because you really do get what you pay for in New York. It works the same way everywhere I've been, from the U.S. to Europe and the middle-East. Brasil is no different because you can find the latest technologies in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. What's missing is a visionary producer who understands the contribution that lighting makes to a show. After all, without lighting, an evening of theatre would be like watching radio!



Producers are always looking for new and different ways to create their productions. Modern theatre has become so complex that shows must run like a machine, in a smooth, seamless fashion, with all the elements working together or the story falls apart. And in a global market, finding the best products and technologies for your money is absolutely essential. But the



entertainment world also has skills and methods that we should explore.

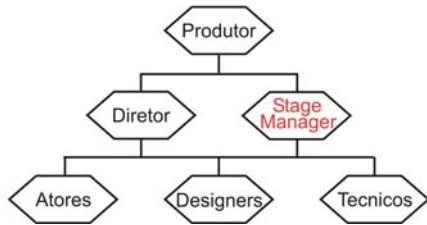
As theatrical productions grow in size and complexity, the need to coordinate all activities on stage becomes necessary. That coordinator is the "Stage Manager". I am not referring to the "Diretor do Palco" (known as a Technical Director in the E.U.A.) which is a technical

position. The “Stage Manager” is a middle management position in the hierarchy of a theatrical company (See graphic) that is central to effective communication when creating a production of any size.

In 1984, the West End of London gave birth to Starlight Express, a show whose technology was integral to the story. From actors on roller skates to motor driven ramps that opened and closed on cue, this was a technically challenging show. The show would have been impossible to do without the use of a stage manager. With the ever increasing complexity of productions, the use of a stage manager to maintain the director’s vision, the show’s quality and the designer’s work is essential because the stage manager conducts a production like a maestro with an orchestra.



Organograma Simplificado de produção



In technical rehearsals, the stage manager learns to control the sequence of events on stage and behind the scenes so that they run smoothly and safely. By communicating with the stagehands and telling them when each action needs to happen, while the stage manager watches all the performance on stage, production values improve immeasurably. After all, the goal should be to make the best show possible for the public.

So, good technology does several things for a show. It gives fluid movement to every aspect of a production from changes in lighting to scenery moving. And with a stage manager you can make coordinated changes, on command, which simply cannot be done by independently working stagehands. A great show does not simply happen. It is created moment by moment and scene by scene.

The successful inclusion of these new technologies and techniques into productions means that projects need be proposed, created and funded, to allow for the exploration of these new ways to create live shows. Producers create the projects. Their dreams become a show. And a single producer, who dares to dream differently, can change how productions get created in the future.



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