

# Student Design Guide: Lighting Designers

## **Introduction**

This information is meant to help guide student designers through the process of realizing a design for the Welsbacher, Wilner or Miller performance spaces. We consider the realization of designs to be a very important element of your education, if not the most important. This guide is designed to help you maximize the quality of your experience as well as to help streamline the process for you, your production team, and the shops. It is very important that you stay in close contact with your design faculty through this process. If you break the chain of communication with your design faculty member then when you do feel that you need help that faculty member will not be in a position to help and advise you.

In addition to reading this guide, you should be familiar with the School of Performing Arts Handbook, included on the CD as a .pdf file.

## **Getting Started**

Step one, get the script, as soon as it is available. Don't wait until the last minute hoping you'll have time. Read it early so you have time to mull your ideas over. Become very familiar with the venue you will be designing in. Make sure you understand the equipment and the lighting control system you will be working with.

## **Design Meetings:**

You may want to be included in design meeting the set designer schedules with the director. If you participate in these meetings you are there to observe and answer questions regarding lighting. This may help you understand the director's and set designer's thoughts. Once the set design is well underway we will need to schedule a design meeting between you and the director. If at all possible your design faculty should be included in that meeting. Try to come to that meeting with some ideas and sketches. ABSOLUTELY come to that meeting with the script read and an understanding of the performance space. Things you will bring to that meeting:

1. Script
2. Color ideas
3. Notepad and pencil
4. Research materials if applicable.

You should come away from this meeting with a fairly solid direction to follow. You will be following the set designer's progress. Keep up with the changes.

## **Production Meetings**

Different productions will have different production meeting schedules depending on where they fall in the semester. Be sure to keep up on the notes from these meetings and any notes that come in rehearsal reports. Check your e-mail daily. At the first meeting you will get a plot-due deadline from the design faculty.

## **Starting the Process**

Once you have received the set design drawings you should have everything you need to start the design. Schedule a meeting with your design faculty to discuss your approach. It's in your best interest to have several of these meetings so I can help you avoid problems.

### **Special Items**

If your design requires special equipment beyond what is in the inventory then you will need to discuss this at one of the first production meetings. That equipment will most likely need to be rented and that will affect the budget that is left for color and patterns.

### **Color and Patterns**

In the past students have often just used whatever color they could find in stock. I want you to be free in your color choices and pattern choices. Over time our stock will increase and we will have to spend less. Do keep in mind that you have a budget to answer to. Currently sheets of gel are about \$6 and patterns are about \$12. We purchase these materials from Theatrical Services, Inc. (TSI). TSI does not stock every single color out there. Here are the ranges of colors you may choose:

Roscolux: R01 through R132. This includes any 300 series color. Do not pick a 2000 series color.

Lee: L101 through L202 and the Lee frosts.

### **Final Design**

On the date that your plot is due you will turn in your final design. Your final design will include the following items:

1. Light Plot and section in ¼“ or ½” scale. Every unit on the plot will be labeled with color and channel. Do not forget a key and title block.
2. Light Plot in 11x17 format, 5 printed copies.
3. Lightwright hook-up complete with channel and color info. Don't forget to put in the theatre inventory and gel frame sizes. One printed copy to faculty and also e-mail the LW3 file and any plots.

**DO NOT** be late with your drawings. If you miss the deadline be prepared to get less help with preparing your light plot. Time evaporates quickly and others may not be able to rearrange their schedules to help you. Lab students are scheduled to pull your gel. Their times are arranged at the beginning of the semester. If you're late you will have to pull your own gel and you will not get to purchase gel or rent equipment. If you are really behind be prepared for your design assignment to be assigned to someone else. Lateness causes problems with scheduling and at some point we have to switch from production to damage control. This may also affect future design assignments. If personal issues arise that prevent you from carrying out your duties you will need to contact your design/tech faculty as soon as possible.

### **Hang and Focus**

You should be present at all hang calls if at all possible. You must be present to focus. Come to the focus call with a clear idea of where each and every light is focused. When you come to focus you must have your paperwork complete, printed and organized in a binder.

### **During Production**

You will need to see one or more rehearsals. Some students find a videotape helpful. Cues must be marked in your script prior to Paper Tech. Get your cues programmed before tech rehearsal time. Your design faculty can help.

### **The Deadline**

Opening night is not the deadline for having things finished. First tech is the deadline. The tech/dress rehearsal process is for finishing touches and fine-tuning. I cannot stress this enough. The attitude that opening night is the deadline has prevailed for too long. Do everything in your power to stay on top of things. Problems will arise during the tech process. If you are still trying to finish

focus or pick color then you will not be in a position to deal with these issues. Either they will not be dealt with adequately or someone else will have to step in to bail you out. Either way, you failed.

**Strike:**

You are not required to be there but you should be.

**Summary**

You have taken on the responsibility and honor of a design position as an elemental part of your education. If you are reading this I can assume that you are not at WSU because you love writing English papers and exploring algebra. You are at WSU to learn how to design or to learn design as an element of other goals. This is a professional training program and these are the minimum standards expected of you as such.