A Work in Process: The Diligence Behind the Art

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A WORK IN PROCESS: THE DILIGENCE BEHIND THE ART

by

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Abstract

The following is an in depth analysis of the development process from script to stage for the lighting design of five productions. These productions were commissioned to MFA lighting design candidate Marc Hurst during his three years in the University of South Carolina Department of Theatre and Dance’s Master of Fine Arts program. This paper critically examines the process by which the artist develops their lighting design from first read to fully realized production.
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Chapter 1: *The Winter’s Tale*

Trial By Fire

Figure 1.1: Lighting Storm

“In storm perpetual, could not move the gods, To look that way thou wast.”

–Paulina, *The Winter’s Tale*

Queen Hermione is unjustly accused in an open trial by the jealous storm of her husband King Leontes. Her world torn apart, the distraught Hermione collapses and dies. Leontes in shame, retreats to wallow in regret. The storm of rage now falls upon Leontes as Paulina in her love for Hermione crumbles the stone heart of Leontes that for
so long stood immovable. Ultimately in *The Winter’s Tale* love breaks through the dark night of jealousy and distrust.

*The Winter’s Tale* explores the nature of jealousy and how it can blind us into rash decisions. The play explores the depths to which we will go in executing revenge, and in the end that goodness and the truth prevail. In the first three acts the setting of the Sicilian court is a cold dark claustrophobic world that reflects the tyrannical nature of Leontes. The story jumps sixteen years in time and to the location of Bohemia where the vibrant joyous sheep shearing festival is taking place. This is the tone of bohemia. It is meant to reflect the carefree nature of Perdita and the love between her and Florizel. This renewed hope is brought back to Sicily at the end of the play where Leontes discards his tyrannical resolve and his blind jealousy causing the lifelike statue of Hermione to morph into the living, breathing woman Leontes loves so much. Given the heightened emotions present in this classic play and the lessons that can be learned about the trust and forgiveness through love, this tragicomedy still has strong relevance today. This spring 2010 University of South Carolina’s department of Theatre and Dance production of *The Winters Tale* would take place in the proscenium space, Drayton Theatre.

Guest director Kathleen Conlin, Associate Artistic Director at Utah Shakespeare Festival, saw the world of *The Winter’s Tale* as being shiny, shimmering and magical. Kathleen reminded the design team that we would be telling a story to the audience at
all times, and that the production should maintain a level of awareness to this throughout. As she said, “the audience is here to be told a tale.”

One of the first challenges in The Winter’s Tale was with the Shakespearian language barrier. The use of iambic pentameter coupled with the Elizabethan English makes the script harder to understand. This meant that more readings of the script would be necessary, as well as writing detailed notes into the script. The complex emotions and storyline that are present in any Shakespeare play are a challenge to properly support in the lighting design. The lighting should enhance without overpowering any given scene.

After reading the play a few times I was just scratching at the surface of the script. I saw the play as a simple straightforward story, with a fully realistic setting and fully realistic lighting choices. Although the journey has interesting twists and turns, it was my feeling that the play did not reach into a realm of fantasy or other worldliness. The main focus for my research was based in the two locations, the court of Sicily and the Bohemian wilderness, in which the play is set.

One fundamental error made was that I chose to limit my early pictorial research. I felt that too many images, and too much knowledge of past productions might lead me down the wrong path. This left me with a reduced knowledge of the play and ultimately led to my not ever truly grasping the more complex details needed to bring the play to a fully successful realized artistic production.
Even with the minimal research, ideas about what the two different worlds might look like were still developed. This crafted a world in which to imagine the characters during future readings of the play. This has become a key part of the process for me, as it helps me to visualize the world in more detail. It is from these subsequent readings that the rules by which to light the production begin to take form. Additional research was conducted as to general conceptions society has connected with elements specific to the play. For example in researching the locations of the play, what is it that Bohemia means to those seeing the play today. This would allow me to keep my lighting choices relevant to what the audience perceives they are seeing.

The discussion during the first design meeting enabled me to shed my old ideas of the script, and take on newer, far more exciting paths of research. The artistic vision brought by the director, was certainly not something that lined up with my research so far. Kathleen said that the play should be about the emotion of the characters. That we
should focus on telling the audience a tale, as suggested by the title of the play, and that there should be a level of magic, wonder, and extreme artistic beauty to everything presented. Kathleen inspired me to build new layers into my early design ideas for the play requiring a magical overlay to supplement my original research. I was now more motivated to discover inspiring design imagery and to find what it was I felt the lighting should be bringing to the production. It is critical to find inspiring and evoking images, from which to base the lighting for the show. Some images might be used specifically for one single moment in the show and others might be used throughout.

Figure 1.3: Later Research Focused on the Magical Wilderness of Bohemia

This research really could have and should have been started prior to meeting with the director. It is not necessary to have knowledge of the directors design concept specific to the production to know what emotion is taking place on stage throughout the play. Building ideas about the look of the show early is being prepared and having several ideas for what a scene might look like is an important step in the process prior to
talking with the director and other design team members. This is important because it builds a trusting relationship with the rest of the design team by showing that you are competent and committed. It is further important because it is not the job of the lighting designer to take a back seat approach. Due to the nature of lighting, it is hard to represent to others what the end product will look like. Being the last designer to have a tangible visual product does not mean that you do not have an equal say throughout the process. This is a personality and identity flaw in myself that would resurface several times. Having ideas of what the show may look like is far better than not having any ideas about the show, which I had mistaken for being open-minded. I will need to come with lots of ideas developed from research and be open minded to the ideas of my peers. It is through the sharing and development of these ideas that collaboration occurs. The sum of the parts is greater than that of the individual.

The next phase of research explored the themes outlined by the director. Artists such as Carlo Bonavia and Joseph Mallord William Turner seemed of the world Kathleen was envisioning because of the way in which they used light to add mood and emotion to their work. Their work has a magical overlay created by use of light. They strongly pronounce the lighting in their work so as to add emotion to their art. It is exactly in this way that Kathleen saw lighting being able to enhance the emotion on stage. Kathleen had suggested Francis Bacon’s work in particular for Hermione’s trial scene and it was very clear that paintings such as Study after Velazquez were exactly the imagery we would like to be creating on stage. The emotions evoked by the painting are exactly what Hermione’s trial scene should feel like. The vertical lines representing prison bars
and chains support the emotion of entrapment. The scream of agony on the face reflects the emotions of fear and sadness during that scene. Finding works crafted by other visual artists was particularly effective. Their deliberate use of light and emotion spoke to me in a visual format far more powerfully than the simple photographic research I had been conducting prior to this point. In paintings the human element of creation deliberately affects emotional contents of the art.

![Figure 1.4: Francis Bacon, Study After Velazquez](image)

A challenge for the lighting of this play would be that we would need to establish two different worlds on the same set. There would be the world of Sicily and the world of Bohemia. A step in finding a commonality between the two different worlds in the show was seeking something that would be present in both of the created worlds. It became clear that the sense of beauty and magic was present in both. It would also be
effective to unify the production by using this magical overlay. Durand-Hollis’ *Winter Breeze Brushes* evoked the style of magic and wonder that should be present throughout the show. Since it does not specifically belong to one world or the other, it can live in both, and serve to tie them together. The image as shown has been manipulated from its original state because the original was too cold to live in the world of Bohemia.

Figure 1.5: Xavier Durand-Hollis, *Winter Breeze Brushes*
Emotions in *The Winter’s Tale* the run very high and drive the dramatic action. To enhance this, it was important to envision what the audience should be feeling and how to assist in emphasizing these emotions. In one scene King Leontes of Sicilia is enraged with Hermione whom he falsely accuses of adultery. The more he looks like an angry tyrant the less the audience is likely to believe she is guilty. The lighting can support the action by casting unnatural shadows on Leontes’ face. This will lead the audience to distrust him since they can’t see him the perception will be that he has something to hide. Hermione on the other hand could be softly and clearly lit to show she has nothing to hide. Lighting, like that inspired from the sinister depiction in Horace Spatula’s *Shadow Face B&W* can help to illuminate the dramatic action.

![Figure 1.6: Horace Spatula, Shadow Face B&W](image)
Being a designer who connects emotionally with music, I sought to use music to help myself connect with the emotional content of each scene. I collaborated with colleagues, listening to many different artists before finding selections that felt similar in style to what are the central emotions to each scene. Listening through several pieces of each artist’s music until the tracks that best fit took time but this technique forced me to explore emotional content and discover more precisely what the contents of each scene were. Deciding what about each song worked or didn’t work for each scene helped me relate emotions to the lighting. For example, the music for the trial scene would have to be dark and frightening like Schnittke’s *Concerto Grosso No. 1 Recitativo: Lento*, yet there should be a sorrowful undertone and not that of a horror film. So too, the lighting in that scene should appear dark, yet we need to be able to see the sorrow on the actors faces, not only the surrounding shadows. The exercise helped me to discover what worked and forced me to think about why it worked.

Another example of music inspiring the lighting is where Paulina verbally disgraces Leontes. The scene needs an angry piece of music, like Paul Haslinger’s *Anger and Retribution* which also maintains some level of beauty. This mirrors the way in which Paulina describes the beauty of Hermione as she delivers incredibly powerful and moving lines. The lighting also needs to be angry, raging and relentless in support of the scene. Certainly Paulina needs to be the focus and a strong down light special on her would help draw the audience’s eye to her. This unnatural light would cast shadows across her face while the brightness highlights her as the center of the scene, illustrating the power behind her words. Leontes should seem pathetic, which would be supported
by the more powerful lighting of Paulina. The lighting needs to support a majestic quality in Paulina and the way she describes Hermione. This can be achieved by lighting her in a color that will complement her and look soft on her skin. Culmination of these decisions causes Leontes to look less powerful than Paulina.

Having completed all of this research it was time to re-read the play, with the new ideas in mind. Ideas about what the world of Sicilia would look like, where the emotional accents may need to be and what colors might work for the different locations in the play. For example the world of Sicilia would have to be cold mirroring the cold nature of Leontes and his tyrannical actions toward his wife. The world of Bohemia being wild and sometimes savage brings to mind lush greenery and fierce orange sunsets. I did not however, take the time to write all of these ideas down in an organized manner so that I could refer to them later when I would need them. This mistake hindered cueing the show. Basic notes would have been extremely helpful in keeping me focused and not trying to remember too many details.

The set design by Professor Nic Ularu, would work be effective in establishing the physical world of the play. The way the set had significant mass and yet allowed the audience to see through it as if it were an open courtyard or large palace-like interior.

The twenty foot tall set forced the lighting positions to be very high up. The sides of the set meant that traditional sidelight could not be used as the set almost completely cut off light from the wings. The most challenging aspect was that in the garden scene, a scrim would be flown in immediately downstage of the sides of the set.
leaving only a small triangle that would need to be lit without the possibility front light. Pushing all the lights up creating steep and unnatural angles was a concern. In hindsight misgivings about the set were a serious mistake. Instead of seeing the beauty of the set and the opportunities presented by it, I was too concerned with the difficulties it presented.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 1.7: Nic Ularu’s Scenic Design for The Winter’s Tale

The construction of the set required that the light plot be designed and partially hung prior to a run through of the play. This was something I had never before done and led to too many generic choices resulting in many changes late in the process. This mistake partially emanated from the lack of early research. Sufficient research and more importantly, better organization would have led to stronger choices throughout the design.

Early in the process I decided to attend rehearsals. The director started with breaking the script down and really getting to the meaning and depth of the text. This
was something that helped me to understand the play and allowed me to get a feel for how the ideas from our early design meetings might develop into reality. Kathleen’s understanding of the script and professional experience taught me much that I may not have ever gained by myself. Attending rehearsals was one of the more successful steps I have taken on this show. I will incorporate it into future productions.

A unique aspect to this production of *The Winter’s Tale* was the use of projections. This brought additional complexities for lighting to co-ordinate with. After seeing the projections and discussing with projection/scenic designer, Professor Nic Ularu, what the projections would look like I had a much better sense of when the lighting would be the dominant visual element and when the lighting should pull back so that the projections could be the dominant visual element. Sound would also need to be integrated into the performance and as such I worked closely with the sound designer, Professor Walter Clissen, who provided me with a digital file copies of the soundscape he was creating in his design. Access to these files proved to save significant time in technical rehearsals. The opening of the show featured a long soundscape and the lighting was pre-programmed using the exact sounds and timing that we would be using for the production. I also met with the costume designer, MFA candidate April Brown where we discussed what the costumes would look like including what the differences between Sicilian and Bohemian costumes would be and what colors she was planning on using.
During the load-in and the focus time, it became apparent that not enough of the available lighting resources had been assigned to accentuating the set. With the set compromising the ideal lighting positions, an unusual amount of equipment had been assigned simply in lighting the actors. This resulted in the people on stage looking flat, and the set did not look as beautiful because it was not treated with light. It was at this time that with guidance from Lighting Professor Jim Hunter I modified the plot to add low sidelight that would allow for texturing of the set and actors as they moved through the space. This would also help with the additional complexities of the scrim being just downstage of the set because the sidelight was able to light the actors on stage without casting light onto the scrim.

In my final design meeting with the director we discussed how we both saw specific and challenging moments of the play coming together. For example, we would achieve the transition of the statue of Hermione returning to life by making it look as if the statue was glowing. This is the moment when Leontes is forgiven, and all of the joy is restored to Sicily once again. It is a particularly challenging moment because the script is unclear as to if Hermione’s statue really does come to life or if Hermione’s death was faked to punish Leontes and protect Hermione until this moment. Our intent was to over time make it extraordinarily bright to create a magical and almost blinding effect. We did not intend for the audience to believe that Hermione was alive the whole time and so this moment did need to have more magic in the lighting to help convey to the audience that this is a statue coming to life. This was achieved by using lights from many different angles and gradually brightening the intensity on Hermione.
Another moment discussed in this meeting was the scene where Time addresses the audience to inform them of the sixteen years passing and our location change to Bohemia. In discussing how lighting could help add to the mysticism and transition through time, we determined that using rotating gobo effects would suggest the turning of hands on a clock, and therefore add to the passage of time. This one on one meeting with the director close to the technical process was helpful in solidifying the final ideas for what the show should look like.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 1.8: Production Photo of Time Scene from *The Winter’s Tale*

When it came to preparing for the paper tech, it was very important to me to have planned out my cues, not only for the onstage blocking and action, but also to very subtly emphasize the emotions taking place on stage. This meeting was between myself, the sound designer, the stage manager, the director and the scenic and projection designer. The paper tech allows the designers, the director and the stage
manager to discuss placement of cues in the hopes that prior to technical rehearsals we can talk through the technical elements of the show and collaborate about where to place cues. The goal is to speed up the technical rehearsals by making decisions early. I added each and every cue I might need into the production, placing even the subtlest of cues. In the end this was counterproductive, as it ended up that in writing so many marker cues (cue that maintains the overall look of the scene as the cue before it with the intent that the cue will be modified on the fly during technical rehearsal with all of the actors onstage) that when it came to technical rehearsals, each marker cue became slightly different as fixes were made. This led to problems maintaining consistency throughout scenes. The idea of thinking through these needs was not in and of itself a bad idea. I had not filtered my initial cue list down to cues that would benefit most from being preprogramed. In future pre-programming would be more successful if the list of cues were to be condensed into major cues with minor adjustments based on blocking to be added later in technical rehearsals. It is important to make as many decisions as possible before technical but not if those decisions lead to several more changes and decisions during technicals.

It quickly became apparent going into the technical rehearsals that I had not taken enough time to prepare. Compounding this lack of preparation with having more instruments in the air than I had ever previously had, I felt at a loss to find everything and quickly became overwhelmed. Once I had accepted the situation, put my pride to one side and gathered my thoughts I started working step by step through the show. The process would be frustrating but there was no going back and the only way forward.
was to work through the show. This was an important lesson to learn. It was also becoming obvious that lighting and projections had not come together early enough to solidify when the lighting would need yield to projection. I constantly had to remove lights from cues where projections would be. The mistake in this situation was not taking detailed notes when discussing with the projection designer that I could have referenced when pre-cueing the show.

During the technical process I focused too much on the physical notes of moving lights, changing colors, refocusing lights, and reassigning lights to other purposes. Had I spent more time modifying cues and looks onstage the design would have progressed and developed at a much greater rate. I would also have earned more trust from the director since she would have seen a more developed design much quicker with the note that it would further improve once physical notes were completed.

I had lost confidence in myself and started to rely solely on the opinions of the director and the help from my advisor Professor Jim Hunter. The first few days were a challenge since correcting each and every cue was a considerable task. After two full days and one evening rehearsal we did manage to get through the whole show once and I felt better that at least the show was workable and it was now a case of refining the lighting to look like my original research images. It was altogether obvious that the tools to do this were not embedded in my design and that there would not be time to rectify all of the problems. There was not the ability to zoom down to any certain part of the stage without highlighting the side walls of the theatre, which was very distracting. The
front light systems did not reach everywhere onstage and were not continued to the areas upstage of the set and so those entering and exiting were not lit. I have learned that it is imperative that all systems reach all of the stage. The side light systems were lacking such that they could only light about 60 per cent of the stage. The walls of the set could not all be lit evenly or controlled in a way to combat the front lighting causing the walls to be gray all of the time.

At this point the realization that the design wouldn’t remotely encompass what had originally been envisioned was a difficult pill to swallow. It was still early enough that by cutting a front system and reassigning it to further texturing, using different lights for wall lighting, re-patching a front system for greater isolation and with much rescueing of the show some of the original ideas were able to make it to the stage. In the end the design was not a complete loss.

As a student and as a designer this show had taught me a wealth of information. Even though the show was not particularly successful as far as my design was concerned I had failed miserably and yet come through it and survived. I learned the importance of knowing as much if not more than the director about the show. The importance of knowing what every light you hang does and thinking through where each light is hung and how is intended to be used. I learned a lot about how to make a channel list. That it is not simply putting lights into a list and rushing to place them on a plot. It is important that as the initial shopping list is generated first, that the purposes for each light need to exist before the light is even assigned a channel. A shopping list is a list of
necessities and ideas for the show, and the channel list is a list of lights by which those requirements will be met. When you place the instruments on the plot, you already know where they will be because, that decision has already been made in making the channel list.

I learned a lot about the important way side lighting, affects the human body, helps sculpt the figure and also what its limitations are. Side light can be beautiful at sculpting but a problem when there are many actors on stage at the same time since one actor can block sidelight all the way across stage from where they are standing.

*A Winter’s Tale* was a very important show for me and it taught me a lot about myself, both strengths and weaknesses. Taking this information and applying it to the next production is the final step in the process of *The Winters Tale*.

![Image](Image.png)

Figure 1.9: Production Photo of Sheep Shearing Scene from *The Winter’s Tale*
Chapter 2: *Big Love*

A Most Unusual of Marriages

![Figure 2.1: Lombardo Italy](image)

“Marriage is a wonderful thing”

-Bella, *Big Love*

Fifty sisters from Greece come to the beautiful Italian shoreline. They are fleeing their tyrannical cousins who would force them into marriage. Here in Italy, however, will the beauty that surrounds them open their hearts anew to their long held promise of marriage?
This is a central question posed by playwright Charles Mee, to which the University of South Carolina’s Department of Theatre and Dance’s fall 2010 production of *Big Love* would try to answer. The play is based on Aeschylus’ *The Suppliants* in which the daughters of Danaus were to be forced into a marriage with their Egyptian cousins. *Big Love* explores the idea of arranged marriage and the issues surrounding women as property by telling the story of these refugee women on the run from their arranged marriages. The play explores the idea of dysfunctional relationships and how it’s possible to make an arranged marriage work. We see this in the characters of Nikos and Lydia who with sufficient effort and respect for the other are the only of the cousins to be happily married. Although in western culture arranged marriage is no longer common, the play is still relevant as the characters either seek to uphold the arrangement or escape it. We find that it is only by connecting with the other person and working on the relationship as do Nikos and Lydia that the relationship can work. Everyone can relate to wanting to uphold a relationship out of obligation or escape one because of the work it requires.

Guest director Chris Clavelli certainly had a variety of things to say about the story of Charles Mee’s *Big Love*. In our first design meeting we talked about the show as being set in a vibrant, vivid colorful world. The director stressed the idea that the play should always keep the audience wondering if the men or the women will come out on top. The world should be beautifully simple, clean and embody all of the romance that can be associated with Italy. Pop and Italian love music should inspire the audience to want to fall in love. We would then discuss the characters of the play. The differences
between the characters who have arrived and Pierro, Bella, and Guiliano in whose home
the play is set. How the Italians should be received over the Greeks and how they
should emanate Italy in the same way as the set should. In closing the director told all
of the designers that this should be a rock and roll concert, and that we should make it
as crazy as possible. The level of energy would be more along the heightened level felt
at a rock concert and music would be pivotal to this play. Chris saw the show as
designer’s wet dream, and that we should feel as free and crazy as possible at every
step in the process. It was in direct connection with this meeting that my design
became too embedded in the idea of rock style lighting, and did not focus sufficiently on
what the lighting should do to in serving the story of the play.

We had our second design meeting the very next day. During this meeting, MFA
Candidate April Brown, the costume designer already had renderings of costumes. The
fabrics and pastel color choices would allow the lighting to color the costumes when
appropriate. To my detriment however, I had not solidified ideas and concepts about
the play as diligently as she had. We had seen the finished scenic design the previous
day, so the only topics for discussion for scenic were what colors the set might be
painted and what sort of texturing might be applied to the floor. At this point in the
process I was not vocal enough. My concerns about the set being painted grey with the
premise that the lighting should be left to color the world and bring the vibrancy and
brilliance to the stage were not shared with the team. This was a mistake as the lighting
was never truly able to turn the grey set into the beautiful pastel Italian summer
afternoon we had envisioned. Had I expressed my concerns it is likely that further
discussion would have led to better choices about color with the limitations of the lighting more in mind. Had my research been developed into solidified ideas prior to these meetings, my confidence would have been sufficient enough to express myself. Yet again the theme of my problems from the last show being that as the last designer to bring something to the table I had a misconception that I didn’t need to be at the same place in my process as early as everyone else.

Prior to the first two design meetings I had trouble seeing a flow or understanding the rules of the play. I was struggling to see what the world would be like and in what ways the characters would be able to interact with it. This was largely due to the style with which Charles Mee writes. Mee allows each and every production to be completely different and tailored to any style that the design team can dream of. Mee provides the production team with a blank canvas and challenges them to be creative. Mee’s approach provides a great opportunity to each production team to be creative. This level of creativity requires that much more time be invested in research and early planning. I did not complete sufficient primary research about the playwright to understand the style of the script.

It is often restriction that inspires growth and new ways to explore the confines of a script. Without these restrictions, the artists have the challenge of creating everything out of nothing. This can culminate in each design team member developing his or her own direction, which may not be supporting the production as a whole. I have
learned that respectful, candid communication is important for any show to have some semblance of unity once it hits the stage.

After gaining a better grasp of the script from the first two design meetings I went back to my early research and focused on what this beautiful simple, elegant Italy might look like. It was clear that ambers and pinks in the lighting would be suggestive of Italy during the day. This was the extent to which I thought about the play’s main dialogue scenes. Given that these scenes make up approximately eighty per cent of the play, it is clear now that I should have given this imagery significantly more consideration before progressing into researching the other twenty per cent of the play. Further thought should have been given to what this beautiful world may look like at different times of the day, and what elements of lighting such as GOBO texturing I could use to suggest where or when each scene is taking place.

Figure 2.2: Mikki Senkarik’s Painting Capturing the Colorful and Beautiful World of Italy
The next phase of research focused on what type of rock and roll concert would best fit the play. Taking into account the beautiful and romantically colorful world of the play meant that not all concert lighting would make sense. The colorful nature of Phish’s design combined with the lighting’s fluent integration into the music made that style of lighting the most fitting choice. In the end I felt that I had a grasp as to what kind of concert the play might be, but was as of yet not sure how to balance between the completely different looks and more specifically how to transition between them.

Figure 2.3: Phish Concert Lighting Research

Over the next few weeks I started to refine my research by looking into ideas and ways to transition between the rock and roll inspired world of the breakdowns, and the much more realistic, beautiful scenes taking place outdoors. The breakdowns would be heightened emotional moments where we suspend the rules of reality and enter a place where the emotional content is all that drives the moment. From reviewing my research imagery, it seemed logical that a jump from Italy during the day to night time
to rock concert would lessen the intensity of the dramatic change in lighting so long as a transitional step was incorporated. The design needed to flow well and to make sense to the audience. This idea was eventually rejected as the design team decided to be more obvious about the way in which we handled transitions. This was one part of the process that was successful. Being open to change in spite of having fully embraced an idea meant that the design would be more in conjunction with that of the rest of the design team.

I began to build in 3D CAD software VectorWorks, a three dimensional model of the set. Using the software allowed me to explore the use of lighting from different angles, what different GOBO’s might look like and what different colors might do to the set. I attempted to recreate some of the images from my research. Once sufficiently close to recreating the research images, ideas about where to place lighting instruments became clearer. This visualization technique solidified what lighting angles, colors and textures could achieve similar looks to those in my research. Discussions with
collaborators became more successful when they had realistic renderings to understand the lighting.

I decided that the lighting instruments should be visible to the audience. This would support our creating a sense of rock and roll lighting and serve to bring together other more theatrically realistic lighting. Seeing the lighting instruments at all times would help keep the design unified. At the same time I decided that having haze throughout the production would help bring some rock and roll elements to Italy and should help unify the design. Once again I was making a crucial error by focusing on bringing the twenty per cent of the play that existed in some other world into the eighty per cent in Italy, rather than influencing the special looks with the world of Italy itself. This approach meant the whole show would be non-realistic and bringing such theatrical elements into the world of Italy would make sense.

In hindsight, my initial idea of Italy at night would have been a stronger choice. Moving from a beautiful daytime world that captures the story of love and romance into stylized wild night-time passionate lighting would have been more effective in isolating the wilder scenes in the play, yet would have been inspired by the majority content of the play. Instead of envisioning abstract angular lighting beams I should have been focusing on using for example warm sunset lighting reflected off the ocean across actors faces. This would have better helped support the world of the play. I was trying to make the lighting be its own element and noticeable, just like at a rock concert.
After solidifying ideas about what I wanted the lighting to achieve, I began to work on my shopping list. This is a list of lighting tools that keeping in mind the feeling and emotion of the play will be needed to bring the production to realization. This list of required items included area acting lights, lighting for the drops that surrounded the walls of the theatre. In addition to practical items, aesthetic descriptors such as warm soft tones to highlight the emotion of love, and a dramatic alternate lighting world for the breakdowns would be on the list. The lighting design also needed a romantic look that would make the audience want to fall in love and the warm Tuscan sun.

Next would be the needs and wants list which would feature items for the show I would need V.s want. This is a way to prioritize the importance of elements of lighting so that when developing the channel list and using in conjunction the equipment list, better decisions about what to include and where to appropriate higher quantity and quality of equipment can be better made. The importance of this part of the process is clear. Had the special effects items been listed in the wants, not the needs it may have led to alternate decisions about the importance of those moments.

The lighting would need to provide a foliage breakup pattern on stage to relay the outdoor location of many scenes and some lower level side lighting to help make the actors look sculpted and crisp. The lighting needed to overcome the flat and inconsistent looks, as was a problem with The Winter's Tale. The plot included low side lighting to avoid this problem. The design also included lighting to support the sound and motion of waves used in the show. Another important element was texturing for
the walls around the sides of the theatre. To support what the wall design brought to the show a warped checkerboard texture seemed right. These were good decisions in support of the show, and showed that I was moving beyond prior weaknesses. Remembering what it is the show would need and not just what the lighting in hand can do. Without realizing it, I was tailoring the lighting to the show even if I was preoccupied with many other of the wrong elements.

After deciding upon purposes the next step in the process would be to pick gel colors. Pastel colors dominated the main area lights and from the design included bold choices for the rest of the palette. It ended up that the pastel color choices for the main scenes looked muddy as a result of being non-committal. Clearly my focus was toward the break down lighting and sufficient thought was not given to making eighty per cent of the play look like it was the beautiful Italian landscape from my research. This would become a pronounced problem during technicals because no matter what happened, I could not find a way to make the show look beautiful during these main scenes. In the end I had to make more bold choices about color driven by my research and content of the play in order to produce a more beautiful look for the show.

Before the actual lighting hang we completed a few tests to see how some of my ideas might work. These included how to achieve the maximum impact with the visible lighting instruments and how to best light the walls around the theatre. These experiments led to changes in the area lighting instrumentation choices to lights with higher output, more precise quality beam control and consistency. The units lighting
the walls were also relocated to newly created positions in order to achieve better coverage. Having learned the importance of sidelight, the tests led me to move the fill lights to a lower side angle. In addition the angle of the area lights was also adjusted to a much lower angle. The original high angle had been chosen to reduce glare from lighting in the round. Ultimately it was more important for the actors to look natural and have better plasticity. Glare was not a problem with the lower angle.

I prepared for paper tech by placing all of my cues into my designer’s book. I chose not to number the cues and did not name them either. During paper tech I numbered cues as we went which allowed me to add and remove as we went through without putting odd cue numbers and point cues into the show. Although this did keep the number of point cues lower, it made me less prepared as I had to flip back a few pages to find the last light cue’s number to give the stage manager the current cue number correctly. Ultimately I added point cues anyway and again had I just committed from the beginning I would have been more prepared. I learned yet again that delaying a decision is always a mistake. In my determination to remain flexible, I had ignored making critical decisions. It is always easier to modify a decision than to have to make a less considered decision later under pressure.

Pre-programming the console included inserting all the cues, labeling them and setting a fade time of ten minutes for each cue. The idea of inserting this long fade time was to force myself into thinking about the timing of each cue rather than simply taking a default value. Although helpful this long timing proved cumbersome when trying to
run through the cues in cueing. Had the timing for cues been fully considered and committed to as the cues were written, this would not have been necessary. During my internship time I did have experience with a designer who did make a default time so that he would always know if he hadn’t deliberately programmed a time, but his time was 3.9 seconds. I learned here that because four is a good default from which to start, 3.9 seconds is indistinguishable, yet easy to spot when cleaning up a show later in tech. Most of the cues which retained a time of 3.9 seconds after the long technical rehearsals became 4.0 seconds.

I did not label my cues in my script and should have simply copied what I had labeled everything in the light board to my book. It would have made it much easier to track what I was doing and stay better organized during technicals.

During level set with the director, I was able to show what the systems were, what they did and suggestions at how they might be used in the show. This allowed the director to see the tools with which I would be working and would allow for more effective communication through the technical rehearsals. After level set I spent the evening cuing the show, working in peace at night, where I could listen to music, work at my own pace and craft looks for the show. I also had the necessary time to develop the effects that would be used for the breakdown scenes throughout the show. Courtesy of the sound designer Adam Bintz, I had a copy of the sound files we would be using for the show and this allowed me to get the timing of the cueing for the breakdown moments correct before technicals. This meant that even if the cue did not look correct,
the timing would synchronize with the sound thereby saving considerable time later.
The time spent working by myself preparing for the technical to come was one of the
most successful moments in my process. Ensuring that I wasn’t tired and setting myself
in the right frame of mind to sit back and enjoy creating the show with no pressure
allowed me to focus.

During day one of technical significant time was spent looking at different looks
and ideas of what each part of the show might look like. At the end of day one I felt that
my special effects moments in the show although not perfect, were no longer a high
priority and that what was most lacking was achieving the right look for the daytime
scenes. This should not have been surprising considering the lack of time spent thinking
about these choices that affected this. The foliage texturing was not visible enough, and
no matter what I did, the lighting lacked definition during these moments. I would take
the advice of my mentor Professor Jim Hunter and turn everything off and attempt to
build up using only three elements, but could not get the daytime scenes to look right.
The reasoning behind the pick three tool is that it forces the designer to think about
what the essential elements are for the scene. It allows the designer not to muddy the
scene by turning on too many fixtures. After making alterations to cues and satisfied
that the show had a base look for each moment and it was now time to further develop
the lighting in the direction of my research.

Day two saw significant improvement in the lighting. With guidance from
Professor Jim Hunter to break scenes down into a few crucial elements, we were able to
push the boundaries of what scenes could look like. We were able to bring the beginning of the show to look sculpted, beautiful and to have the warm Tuscan glow like that from my research. This process helped me establish some trust with the director that later on allowed us to collaborate on decisions about what scenes should look like.

![Figure 2.6: Big Love Production Photo From Early Scene After Working with Professor Jim Hunter](image)

Jim was also able to help identify a few problems with the lighting rig as it stood. The area lighting color choices although correct in their basic instinct were not saturated enough to create the different tones across the actor’s bodies and faces from different angles. This caused everything to look muddy. I learned the importance of having lighting from different angles being visually different enough that it would help in seeing different shadows and filling shadows with different colors of light. Jim suggested that the foliage needed to be more prominent, and helped me make the difficult decision to
change one of the more exciting breakdown scene systems to being another foliage system in order to create a more suggestive look of outdoors to the show. This was a lesson that I needed to learn as I would have never made that change if left to my own devices. I learned that it is important to step back and look at your work so far and make an objective choice that will best serve the show. This new approach led to adding unused lights and focusing them at the stage creating additional color toning. Coming back to look at everything after making all of those changes, the daytime scenes started to take form. The lighting was clean and crisp and better sculpted the actor’s bodies and faces. Using more highly contrasting colors from the four point system meant the shadows would appear as different colors giving the actors a plastic look. An element of working in Longstreet Theatre as opposed to Drayton Theatre was the design of the theatre itself. Longstreet being an arena theatre, the audience is seated all around the stage. From a lighting perspective this adds many complications. What one audience member sees at the downstage might be upstage to another. To compensate for this a four point lighting system was used. With this system no matter what way the actor is facing, the lighting is very similar. What would be considered the conventional backlight position was moved to a down light position. Again no matter what angle the audience is viewing from, the actor is lit the same. The arena layout also can be very limiting to sidelight. In a traditional proscenium theatre the sidelight spill will disappear into the opposite wing space. In the arena setup, this would project light into the face of the audience. In Longstreet theatre there are vomitoria or entrances between the audience seating sections from which the actors might enter the stage. It was these
entrances in which low sidelight was used so that the spill would be cast into the opposite vomitoria, and not into the eyes of the audience.

We were finally at the first dress rehearsal the costumes enhanced the lighting. It was mesmerizing to see the way the lighting molded around the clothing. Most notably the white wedding dresses took all different colors of light and looked incredible due to the folds in the fabric. Adding some blue low side fill further enhanced this effect since it was from a very different angle to all the other lights and penetrated all the shadowy areas of the costumes pronouncing all of the details.

The one area in which the lighting was still weak was the way the drops on the theatre walls were lit. These walls had a silhouette of a skyline on them that created an atmosphere around the audience. This made the whole environment feel unified. There was not sufficient coverage or brightness meaning there were dark spots along the walls. Reluctantly, but having learned from prior mistakes all colors were repurposed to add to the blue wash. The flexibility to make the walls turn other colors was lost but this was worthwhile to have significantly improved and consistent coverage. This was an obvious fix considering most of the play takes place in the more realistic skyline look. Lowering the intensity and having a dull blue also functioned for night time scenes.

As the week developed more and more moments in the play where we should have been straying from reality revealed themselves. Again, prior research into the playwright would have benefitted the design. I would have known where these
moments were and should have been suggesting interesting choices to the director before the start of rehearsals. It also became apparent that instead of easing into and out of the rock and roll look, that we should make a very obvious statement with those moments.

By opening night the show was close to complete but I was still unhappy with the women’s pact to kill the men, and the trial scenes. After attending the show two more times it became clear from the language and heightened emotional content of those scenes that they were never meant to be realistic scenes. They should have been in the same world as all of the other non-realistic moments throughout the show. Unfortunately it was far too late to make such radical changes but it was a worthwhile exercise to learn what I had missed. Again, had the research been conducted early enough, I would have come to this conclusion far earlier in the process and would have had a more complete design for the show. In addition, a stronger early relationship with the director along with my confidence in researched ideas would have improved our collaboration.

The most valuable lesson learned was to do sufficient research on the play and playwright prior to the production. Had I known what kind of playwright Charles Mee is and what he might be intending from a production, I would have come to the solutions much sooner. Another part of the problem was the director being afraid to take risks in the beginning of technical rehearsals. This was a problem caused by way the show looked in the beginning of technicals. It looked of average quality and did not look
exquisite like it should have. I had never built up the trust in him that would allow us to
take bolder risks, still see the actors and stay within the world of the show. He was not
convinced that the dramatic changes would make sense throughout and look good at
the same time. After Jim’s help and suggestions about what to do and showing the
director new ideas which did look very beautiful, he was willing to go much further than
he had initially.

*Big Love* was a step in the right direction for me yet it is clear that researching
early, forming opinions and thoughts about the play is still an area I need to improve
upon. Not only will this help me get to the end product faster, but it will enable me to
communicate my ideas and concerns during the process in a manner that is respectful.
Chapter 3: *The Comedy of Errors*

A Comic Strip

“O, grief hath changed me since you saw me last,
And careful hours with Time's deformed hand
Have written strange defeatures in my face.
But tell me yet, dost thou not know my voice?”

-Egeon *The Comedy of Errors*

Egeon divulges the entire confusion by use of which *The Comedy of Errors* is the classic tale at the center of many a comedy. Returning to Drayton Theatre, I would be designing another Shakespeare play. A year later in the spring of 2011, the University of South Carolina Department and Theatre and Dance would be producing *The Comedy of Errors*. Egeon divulges the entire confusion by use of which *The Comedy of Errors* is the classic tale at the center of many a comedy. Shakespeare addresses many a deep issue in this story. He touches on broken families, slavery, violence, and unbending tyranny. All of this should not be taken seriously as it is the trivializing of these issues from which the comedy is born.
Design meetings started early for this production and were very informal. This allowed for more candid discussion. Meeting with the director, Professor Robert Richmond, I felt renewed excitement about the project inspired by the rules specific to this production. Richmond is known for shortened scripts and stylized productions. Richmond’s inspiration for this production came from the Herge comics, Tintin. Shakespeare’s story would take place in a world inspired by that of Tintin. Having grown up watching Tintin I was immediately at home with the world being created and was able to relate with what Robert was suggesting. The world would need to be extremely colorful and vivid with well-defined lines and edges. Everything the audience sees would be overstated. We would have slapstick moments and exaggerated movement. We would have dancing girls, singing and it would bring aspects of a musical to this traditional non-musical play.

Color decisions with the lighting would need to be bolder. In keeping with the “pop out” quality of Tintin, the lines of the actors bodies should be noticeable by using low side light as well as strong backlight to help accentuate the shape of the actors onstage. The comic book approach allows the lighting to be very overstated with obvious cueing. The audience should perceive the lighting. The challenge for noticeable lighting is ensuring the lighting does not distract from the story. The lighting approach would need to be akin to that found in a musical with cue timing working in harmony with the soundscape to accentuate particular musical moments and choreography.
There was much to research and I immediately revisited my childhood to remind myself what this world would be. *Tintin* always seemed exceptionally exotic to me. The locations portrayed were very exciting and unfamiliar. Clearly *The Comedy of Errors* was going to be set in a world resembling the Middle East. Although familiar with *Tintin*, I had never explored and dissected the artistic qualities used by Herge. For this reason I watched *Tintin and the Temple of the Sun* as well as reading some printed comics.

![Figure 3.1: Tintin Research Focused on Color and Street Scenes](image)

![Figure 3.2: Tintin Research Focused on Herge’s use of Lighting](image)

The design of the show would be similar in style to the 1951 film *An American in Paris* in that the play would have several dance numbers throughout. The transitions would feature musical dance numbers and would feature sections of the story, acting as not only a chance to set the stage for the next scene, but to tell a story of what is happening between the scenes, and lead the audience into the next scene. These transitions would stylize the production as well as maintain a level of energy throughout the play.
In order for the lighting to be a part of the story and to be able to couple with music to bring excitement into the transitions, certain specials were used such as the down lights inspired from research into the movie *Nine*. I felt that using haze to show the beams would further enhance the showy overstated lighting.

![Figure 3.3: Nine Research Relevant to Transition Style](image)

This was my first time working with scenic design student and MFA candidate Heather Abraham. She aimed to push the boundaries of what the set could bring to the production. Being familiar with Heather’s work, I knew that the set would be a canvas to light and would need to apportion lighting equipment to this. Therefore using lighting to enhance the scenic elements would be important. Heather uses ideas such as translucency and shape to give the lighting designer more to work with. As such, I placed set accents on my shopping list. She was planning a market scene from the Middle East to be the town square. The buildings would be a gray color allowing the
lighting to control the color palette for each scene. The set also limited placement of lighting instruments. The opportunities provided for the lighting by the scenic design coupled with the many needs for lighting from the production itself presented a unique and complex challenge. Deciding where to place electrics that would not show the instruments, and yet achieve some of the exceptionally sculpted looks we were in search of would prove to be a challenge. A dance style of lighting would best serve to light the transitional dance numbers effectively, and also to be in keeping with the feel that Herge created with the outline of characters in the *Tintin* comics.

The rig would need to achieve many different tasks, but that having learned from *Big Love*, the lighting for the transitions would not be at the expense of successfully lighting the majority content of the production. Although the scenic design inspired a very creative lighting treatment, it was clear from the plans that it would be difficult to get light into certain locations. After taking time to absorb the plans, I saw the set as an opportunity by accenting the textures and light across the various architectural elements. The buildings that surrounded the marketplace were made of a translucent material. It was possible to backlight these buildings and make them appear as if they glow. This should enhance the sense of depth on stage. In the end backlighting the set resulted in seeing the structural frame of the flats used to create the buildings. The structure of the buildings had not been designed to accommodate being backlit and the support structure was not aesthetically in fitting with the rest of the set. All of this backlighting system equipment was reassigned to more successful uses.
Inspired by showy musical numbers such as American Dream from the musical Miss Saigon sparked the idea to have low-lying fog for some of the dance numbers. This would enhance the lighting choices inspired by the film Nine that would be used for transitions. After many attempts to make the fog work the visual impact of using it did not outweigh the fact that it was noisy and looked out of place seeing that the fog was only coming from one location. Cutting the fog was clearly the correct choice. Inspired from research images of town centers in the Middle East, we added festoon lanterns into the set, which would add depth to the stage, and give the appearance that the space between the buildings was either a street or alleyway.
The costumes designed by MFA candidate Amy Turner closely matched this Tintin world. They were very colorful, vibrant and overstated. They would make the characters look cartoony and pop them out from the grey colored set. Even the actor’s hair and makeup was designed to make the characters look as if they were a part of a Tintin comic. This meant that the lighting design would need to be able to light a variety of different costume colors. With the variety in color, it would be important to be able to make any combination of costumes look good at any one time. The best way to achieve this is to project light that contains the entire color spectrum thereby guaranteeing that any color costume will have light that it can reflect to the eye. This meant that the front light color was not important and only one color system was needed for the general acting lighting.
The production would be focused on highlighting the comedy and bringing it to life in a cartoonish manner. Using the Tintin research, many of the buildings in the cartoons feature pastel colors. To achieve this and to be able to change the locations on stage, we used LED wash fixtures focused on the buildings to allow us to tone them any color as we saw fit. This proved successful not only in supporting multiple locations but also in establishing daytime from nighttime.

A significant part of the lighting’s role with this production was to ensure that the transitions could flow smoothly between scenes as directed. This meant that I had to really know the locations before and after the transition as well as time of day and couldn’t afford to be looking all through the script to track this. I completed a detailed scenic breakdown sheet and kept it with me during tech in order to keep on track. Sections of rehearsals were video recorded in order to help pre-cue the transitions. While there were certain depth perception issues related to using the video it helped develop the pre-programmed cueing.

There were moments in the show that would need specific and stylized lighting looks. Those would include the tango, which would need hot sexy lighting. This would translate into adding PAR cans and using saturated orange and red colors. This specific equipment was chosen because of its very intense output. With the tight space for sidelight, this meant the lighting could still have strong visual impact without large quantities of equipment having to be seen. The scene shifts would use down light specials inspired by the film Nine, to create a cabaret feel. The jail scenes would have
additional scenery and would need scene lighting that would not spill or project onto this scenery and by doing so desaturate the intentional coloring of the set with other lighting systems. Outside the house of Antipholus we would need to create the illusion that those onstage looking out at the audience would be looking into the windows at Luciana. This was achieved by having a tight special rectangle of light as if it were coming through her window onto them, and her being lit in the window. Separating the two with intentional darkness in-between, also helped to make this effect work. There was also the final scene leading up to the Abbess outside the nunnery where we aimed to create a white heavenly fog from which the Abbess steps out of.

![Figure 3.6: The Comedy of Errors Production Photo Outside the Home of Antipholus](image)

Due to the hang and focus not being complete until the night before tech due to unforeseen and yet completely unrelated circumstances. This was a significant challenge and left me with a limited amount of time in which to cue the show. Given my inexperiance with this complex type of a production, my initial cueing was not
particularly successful. The director was far from satisfied and from this point on I would no longer be able to recover his trust in me. While there were many lighting tools present in the design they were not tailored specifically enough to this production. It was necessary to reassign many design elements. Scenic accent lights were now repurposed as door backlights and door specials. The lights used to light through the set were cut. One of the weakest lighting systems was that for the cyclorama. Insufficient equipment had been assigned to lighting it and it was never able to be bright enough, or saturated enough to read well on stage. Unfortunately this was something that was never truly addressed, but in eliminating color choices, and options, the cyclorama was able to look acceptable.

Designing the different scenes would have been significantly easier had my research been more scene specific. My research had been very general and had not been completed with a specific set of images for each scene in mind. This resulted in the lighting design having a broad range of options, without any of them being truly tailored to the intent of each scene. Additionally I did not have a specific image in mind for what the lighting should achieve for each and every scene. As such my choices were unlimited and it was hard to create a look on stage with so many options available and no basic grounding for what the scene should be.

It was clear that the lighting was not vibrant or bright enough. The costumes looked dull and we were losing the comic feel we had intended with the show. As such much recuing was required and after much reworking the show did eventually come
together. The single biggest mistake I had made with the design process was in completing my research. I had not delved deeply into what it was I wanted each and every individual scene to look like. I had completed the research and done so early but hadn’t revisited and tailored the research as the design process progressed. I knew I had the flexibility to create many different looks but not necessarily the ones I needed.

After the show opened I went through and completed the research as I should have, not only titling scenes by name or with locational imagery, but also locating images that assisted in evoking the appropriate emotions. For example the tango scene was not simply a tango, it was a tango between two people who were passionately attracted to one another, and the girl is losing her innocence. It is very sensual and sexy and simply describing and imagining it as a sexy tango dance was not sufficient. Instead I imagined it as a rainy street in Paris in the summer, where its hot and humid, and romantic yet passionate. Neon lights and streetlamps illuminate the world and are reflected on the wet ground. This detailed imagery makes for a far more exciting lighting look than I had initially envisioned. Using the image below and the style of Tintin, it is easy to imagine just what this scene may look like and how to light it.
Another element I had overlooked was the idea of having followspots for the show. Although the scene leading up the Abbess would involve lots of actors in an intense chase scene, a followspot had not been placed onto the list of needs for the show. The idea had been initially that there might be a followspot backstage as part of the set to light characters onstage but the scenic design limited this and the next idea for a followspot was to place one to the side of the stage and have it run by the actor playing Dr. Pinch who would spend the majority of the show on stage. A followspot as part of the show might have been an interesting theatrical element. The idea of Pinch even using something that appeared to be an object in his cage would tie into the show, but it was not an idea that came to reality due to sightline issues. Eventually we did use a followspot but we didn’t incorporate it into the show as an element on stage. It was extremely successful and certainly tied directly into my research from *Nine*. It would
have been better if I had continued to research options earlier as two followspots would have worked better than one to cover all the action.

Certain ideas used to help myself get organized did help. Making a scene breakdown and labeling it with pages in the script, titling the scenes myself and noting details such as time of day and location were invaluable tools. This allowed me to know exactly what each scene would need at least at its most basic level. The next time I make such a sheet it will include research imagery allowing me to link ideas, design fragments and lay out exactly what scenes should look like ahead of time keeping all of that information in one easy to see location.

This was yet another production where my research had been insufficient. By completing the exercise of naming each scene with an evocative title I fully understand the artistic qualities that will need to be present in my future research. I now understand that my end product will fail unless I have fully developed artistic ideas about what every scene needs to look like. Another important and very practical lesson I learned was the importance of lighting all potential entrances and exits. Doorways are areas where directors will likely block an actor to stand, and as such having a special on every door is a must. Although this was not a musical, the production drew upon many elements present in musicals such as transitions into and out of a musical number, and how the lighting can be a tool in guiding the audience through the journey from one scene into the next. The problems in my process are becoming clear and will have to be resolved for me to have a smooth technical process.
Chapter 4: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Blurring Reality and Fantasy

Figure 4.1: Debra Hurd, *New Orleans Cityscape*

I don't want realism. I want magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell the truth, I tell what ought to be the truth. And it that's sinful, then let me be damned for it!"

-Blanche, *A Streetcar Named Desire*
This production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* would provide me another opportunity to work with guest director Chris Clavelli. The University of South Carolina’s Department of Theatre and Dance’s fall 2011 production in Drayton Theatre would delve into this American classic play. Set in the years after World War Two, Williams’ play makes a strong statement about the growing differences between the working and upper class. Stanley represents all that the emerging working class encompasses. The play also makes a strong statement about a woman’s need for a man. Women had grown to be a strong workforce in the absence of men during the war, and traditional gender roles were shifting. Even in this post war working class Stella is still completely reliant and trapped by Stanley. Blanche has come to the Kowalski household looking for protection from a modern world she does not understand. Blanche insists that her southern aristocratic way is the right way to live and the fact that this is based on a made up history only causes her further emotional turmoil. Blanche’s past is a troubled one from which she cannot escape. She therefore makes up her own version of reality and chooses to live in that. She cannot integrate into this new modern world as it rejects her southern belle ways. She still draws attention to the flaws in Stanley and Stella’s way of life, yet her sister does have a better life than her. She builds a fantasy world for herself, as she cannot accept these social shifts. The play is challenging in that we have sympathy for all of the characters none of which can clearly defined good or bad. Stella chooses to believe Stanley instead of her sister about his raping her and allows Blanche to be taken away to a mental institution. In these moments we look at her with great disdain and yet when Stella is the victim of Stanley’s domestic violence,
we have nothing but sympathy for her. Blanches dislike for Stanley is routed in not only her class snobbery, but in that Stanley is a strong male encompassing everything that her young husband was not. It was this sensitive man who had an affair on her with an older man and then shot himself out of sorrow at her last harsh words to him. She knows that a strong masculine man is what she wants yet her upbringing will not allow her to be with such a man. Stanley beats Stella, is disrespectful in front their friends and in these moments and most notably the morning when Stella returns to Stanley after a severe beating, it is Blanche who seems to be the sane one.

Not having grown up in the United States meant I was not familiar with certain aspects of this American classic play. It would therefore be of utmost importance that my research bring me up to the pace of my peers. My very first research aimed what New Orleans looks like, what its history is, and what makes it so different, and why Tennessee Williams would set the play there.

![Figure 4.2: Alan Flattman, Tujague’s at Night](image)

Paintings such as those by Alan Flattman helped me to grasp the evocation intended by New Orleans as a location for the play. The warm colors, the classic
building architecture and the jazzy frivolous and inviting atmosphere captured in these works of art inspires love for New Orleans. They tell of a life filled with joy and passion, a working class life where happiness is found in the simplicity of life. Images alone would not suffice and researching the history of New Orleans was a necessity. The French influences add a certain romantic flair, as does the vibrant jazz scene. Re-reading the play at this point increased my understanding of how Stella might feel coming into this town and why she would reject her upbringing. She would fell in passionate love with her simple life with Stanley. She is living a wonderfully warm and exciting life, where the fun of the moment is more important than what may come tomorrow. It is truly a romantic ideal. It is hard to imagine why Blanche wouldn’t want to fall in love with this lifestyle too. After researching her character it became clear that from her upbringing she finds this lackadaisical style of life is not something she can accept. She is entirely driven to live up to what she’s grown up being told she needs to be. She belongs to the upper class.

Vajra Enterprises has taken this evocative photograph of a deserted alleyway, it is cold, and there is destruction and broken wood. The concrete is cracked and there is no direct light reaching us. The feeling created here is one of constriction and it is as if this were a maze in which we could get lost. This image relates to how Blanche feels throughout the play. Inspired by this image, the lighting should reveal more of the rubble and imperfections and take on a stark harsh quality. On a purely practical level this led to picking cool color tones.
As the research broadened to the rest of the play, ideas about external influences of light, such as that cast from a streetlamp for example, started to play an important role.
The play requires that every once in a while the audience and Blanche be separated from the world of reality, to escape into the world inside of Blanche’s mind. I was very interested in how subtle we could make these moments and use external reasoning for shifts. I wanted the lighting changes to always be explainable by something real and in the main world of the play. For example a neon sign or the headlights from a passing bus. This way we would not be forcing the idea that Blanche is crazy onto the audience, but leave sufficient ambiguity about her character.

Another thread in the script is the story of Blanche and Mitch. The empty park bench photograph from my research creates a haunting and lonely scene that embodies the emotions of those two particular characters who are haunted by their past.

![Figure 4.5: Research Focused on the Emotional Content of the Play](image)

Working with guest director Chris Clavelli was a great experience. His passion for the play was exciting and striking to me, but his concern that the production do the
poetry justice was his strongest concern in addressing the design team. In design meetings we discussed ideas about what Blanche’s world might look like and how we might integrate it with the production. Chris said that the world inside of Blanche’s head was a very dark colorful and blurry world. Chris made it clear he wanted separation between the world inside of Blanche’s head and the rest of the production. It was clear that lighting and sound would need to coordinate in order to make this a more pronounced moment. At this point I knew that my initial instinct to make the transitions seamless wouldn’t work.

As we moved into technical rehearsals, we ran into challenges. The first involved the lighting console malfunctioning and losing all of the programmed data put into cueing the show thus far. It also quickly became clear that the lighting design was missing certain tools it needed. Specifically there was not sufficient texturing across the stage, to suggest motivated light sources. Also of concern was how the cool backlight was overpowered by the warm and the warm backlight was too warm. The overly warm backlight was a flaw I failed to recognize or accept at the time. I was preoccupied by the beautiful saturated color I could put on the set that and did not accept that the warm backlight would rarely be used as a result. There were also not enough instruments dedicated to motivated lighting such as table lamp support lights or lights through windows which meant that whenever more light was needed to highlight actor’s faces, the front light became the only option. This front light flattened the actors on stage and spilled all over the set causing scenes to look muddy, and removed variety based on time of day or emotional context. This would eventually become less of a problem as
additional equipment was added to texture the scenes and the front lighting could be reduced. The sidelight was too frontal in its angle and overpowered other lighting systems when it was turned on.

![Production Photo Showing a Motivated Shutter Gobo Lighting System](image)

Figure 4.6: Production Photo Showing a Motivated Shutter Gobo Lighting System

In the end, the production was successful, however the moments that drew the most success were the moments lit using motivated light sources such as table lamps and light through shutters created by using gobo’s. As such I know more about what to keep in mind when designing in the future. Not only using motivated light sources built into the scenic design but also creating a world based on motivated light sources that are suggested only in the lighting but inspired by the scenic design and research. Even if the source were not visible on stage, having a reason and design to how the world on stage could be lit, would give me tools to be more deliberate in my lighting.
One new tool I brought to this production was to make a cue list for the show in which I was able to reference any moment for which a lighting change might occur. This kept me more organized and directly led to being more expedient during tech without having to go back through a script. It became clear that the style of magic sheet I was using was not working for me and this would be something to have to work on in the next production. Having a list of channels alongside of the groundplan on the magic sheet led me to reference the channel list only. I attempted to force myself to use the graphical portion of the magic sheet by folding over the channel list section but this approach slowed my down further. Instead of thinking of the stage as having areas each with many different systems next time I will try a layout that is more systems based than stage direction based. My cue structure in the console was also confusing and not adequately prepared. This was a setback caused by the failed lighting console but documenting on paper what is programmed into the console is certainly something to keep in mind for future productions.
Chapter 5: *Polaroid Stories*

Playing with Shadows

Figure 5.1: Niki Feijen, *No Vacancy II*

“I catch the pieces with my hands, 

and hold them to the light and in my hands, 

the pieces turn into something else”

D, *Polaroid Stories*

When the University of South Carolina’s Department of Theatre and Dance announced they would be producing Iizuka’s *Polaroid Stories* in the fall of 2011, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to design the lighting. Having designed Iizuka’s
Language of Angels recently, I enjoyed the ways in which lighting can play a role in Iizuka’s stories. Reading Polaroid Stories was at first a challenge because Iizuka has a very abstract style to her storytelling. I have found her plays difficult to fully get to grips with initially, yet incredibly rewarding once due diligence has been observed. After my first read through, it was still hard to imagine exactly where everything was taking place, and what the characters were doing. At this point I researched prior productions for any clue as to how others had produced this play. I found that there was significant diversity in approaches yet the stories of the characters and a focus on their being homeless were the only consistency.

Meeting with the scenic designer, Professor Nic Ularu I was able to see what the set would look like. The idea of the setting as an abandoned destroyed overpass certainly appealed to me and allowed me a framework with which to re-read the play. The opportunities to light the bridge structure, and create evocative stage images seemed infinite, which was very exciting. Reading the play again I could imagine many locations and tight quarters where the characters might interact. I certainly had a feel for the style of production we would be creating. The next step was a design meeting with the director, Professor Steve Pearson, in which I felt on the same page. We both had agreed the show needed a series of tight specials and that the characters should move through the shadows in and out of the darkness. They like their lives all move into and out of great voids of darkness.
At this point in my process I had sufficient research that I believed might work for the production, and set about attempting to recreate my research with actual lights in the theatre. I experimented using water pans to create puddles reflecting moonlight effects, Christmas lights on the theatre’s lighting grid at a low level to create stars and playing with color and angle to achieve bold looks.

I was still not satisfied that I fully grasped the script and so I met with dramaturgy Professor Victor Holtcamp, who was able to stimulate some deep discussion as to who these characters are. He discussed why the script does not make the decision for us as to whether or not they truly are Gods and that we must make this decision for ourselves. This helped me to understand the play and its connections with the Greek mythology. Using this knowledge I furthered my pictorial research.

Efendi’s *Abandoned Town* is certainly one of the more evocative research images that I found. It shows the desolation, destruction and sheer hopelessness that many of the characters in the play feel. It is haunting, chilling and magnificent. There is such thorough destruction.
Herremann’s *Abandoned Industrial Building*, although an interior, still works well for the production. It has a bold green color that is representative of characters such as Narcissus or Persephone, and has a gutted out stripped, bare feel about it. There is trash and dirt all over the place, nothing is nice or clean or new. This image evokes despair, it is ugly, and it speaks to the play. It could, for example, be the bathroom in which we find Persephone.
Ford’s *Too Far Gone to Eat* could be the overpass. There’s a feeling of loneliness, loss and separation that captures the isolation of the characters, needed for the play.

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 5.4: John James Ford, Too Far Gone to Eat*

At this point the light plot was complete, with the idea in mind that we would be able to light all of the stage evenly, as the blocking was yet to be determined, and the systems would go everywhere. This would eventually become a significant mistake. After the focus, it became clear to me that the general area light approach would not remotely serve the show and I set about changing and customizing each light for a specific scene, using saturated colors to help differentiate location and emotion, as well as character traits. This was considerably more successful, and ought to have been the approach from the beginning. At this point I had detailed notes about the blocking for the show and was able to use that and my cue list to program the show. This was lighting design in a most raw form. Putting a light for a single purpose and designing scenes with only two or three lights per scene. This meant I had to think very hard
about the purpose of each light, the colors used and what type of angle and shadow to create.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 5.5: Production Photo Showing Persephone Lit Using Only Three Lights**

Particularly successful was that on my scene breakdown sheet I had either copied over the suggestions invoked by the script about location or I had allocated a location with the scene in mind. This saved significant time because not only had the decision already been about how to light the scene, but the information was organized in a manner that it could all be recalled quickly.

The drawback to the late refocus and redesign of the show was that all of my paperwork, especially my magic sheet was no longer current. I remade my magic sheet going into the first day of technicals incorporating a magic sheet for each scene. This was a fantastic solution until the scene needed to have something added that was used by a different scene and the relevant information was on a completely different page.
At the end of day one of technicals I redesigned my magic sheet to a very simple master magic sheet that carried me through day two of tech with surprising ease. This stripped down magic sheet style is the most effective for me and I will be using that in the future.

Overall I would say that this was my most successful process. Thorough research and a clear idea of what each moment of the play would look like, coupled with having my cue structure in the console and on paper made me more prepared. Although significant refocusing was required, because of how prepared I was in the beginning, this did not noticeably set me. From this production I have learned how to be as prepared as possible and have seen exactly how that helps you stay ahead, or at the very least keep afloat, no matter what unexpected challenges might occur. I have also now found a magic sheet style that works for me and keeps me very organized.

Figure 5.6: Production Photo Showing the Specificity of Different Scenes
Chapter 6: Professional Internship

Arc 3: Industrial Theatre

My internship was not a traditional theatrical lighting internship, however I feel I got exactly what I needed out of it. I interned under Al Crawford at Arc 3 Design. Arc 3 is a company that designs lighting for everything from concerts to theatre to dance, but the main focus is on industrials. Projects ranging from weddings to product reveals to conventions. Arc 3 approaches this from a theatrical lighting perspective. At Arc 3 my role was to be an assistant as well as an associate designer. The productions ranged from dance to conventions to weddings to concerts as well as theme parks. Based out of New York, I learned a huge amount about the level of dedication and professionalism the designer needs to bring to the process. I had to prepare paperwork for others and was learning not only several different styles of paperwork but also the importance of clarity. Having to create something that another designer could use in focus and tech, without having seen it before was a lot of pressure. Some of the productions I worked on included the Women of the World summit at Lincoln Center where I created all of the paperwork, focused the lighting and was able to watch the cueing process. Al taught me a lot about how to design quickly and yet maintain a high level of creatively.
I learned what to look for when conducting a site visit and learned what it was to manage as many as 42 projects at the same time. This was a truly unique experience that taught me everything about the business of lighting design and how to balance art with productivity. Al taught me that although you need to create quickly, efficiently, respectfully and on budget, that you must do all of these things while bringing a unique and creative style to your work. Al taught me that what separates the designer from the technician is the artistry with which they do everything. Everything from the first meeting, to the paperwork, to the finished product must be carefully thought out. It must be a reflection of your professionalism as well as your creativity. I learned to have far better attention to detail than I had in the past, and came away with a skillset and level of abilities I never had before.

In working in conjunction with four other designers on producing a 21 plate light plot for a production where the budget is $7,000,000 I learned how important attention to detail, good communication and standardized rules for drafting are invaluable.

I also learned new ways to develop imagery and develop creative ideas. Mood boards were not something I had seen before. The one I created for The Donkey Show was used as a tool to communicate with the producers that we were on the right track imagery-wise. This is a tool I will be able to use to create emotion and keep myself organized as I develop research for lighting scenes in the future. Having one image collaged together in a creative manner where the style of not just the images but the collage itself, helps me to connect further with each scene and in technicals allow me
one image to look at for each scene rather than several to remind myself of the emotion, setting, colors and elements I want to use as I light a scene will help me keep efficiently on track.

Figure 6.1: Mood Board for The Donkey Show
Chapter 7: Moving Beyond the University

Having taken all of the art and creativity and process that I learned through my productions and classes, and combining that with the newfound young professional attitude has made grow immensely as a designer. My research has been the area of furthest growth and is the one part of design that starts the whole process. I now have a process in place that can take a production from the first meeting all the way into opening night successfully. It all stems from research and how it is used. Researching everything about a production is the most important step in every project. Research must include the playwright, the locations in the show, the other members of the creative team, the history of other productions, related works and any historic significance associated with the play. This must be then used to form own ideas prior to any design meetings. Discussing with other members of the design team ahead of design meetings about what specifics of what may be unique to the specific production will lessen surprises later in the process. Any information gained at this point must be cross reference with prior research for cohesiveness. This point must be reached prior to any design meeting with other members of the production team. This gives the confidence necessary to express opinions and concerns with peers. From every meeting the new information must be researched if possible and cross referenced back to prior
research. Throughout the process as ideas develop further it will be necessary to reread the script with the new ideas in mind. It is worth write down any thoughts about each and every moment of the play. All of this information should be used to create a list of wants and needs for a show. It is important at every step to refer back to the research and only if the research supports the direction should the design process progress. Mood boards and pictorial research should be organized into a binder and coupled with a detailed scene breakdown. After this I the list of needs and wants need to be examined in conjunction with the equipment list in order to create a channel list. At this point it is critical to reread the play with the tools in the channel list in mind. If there are moments that cannot be imagined visually and how to achieve the visuals using the available tools, what they look like, this needs to be resolved. Only at this point should the channel list be turned into a plot. Once the plot is complete and turned in to the producing organization, there is time to place cues into the script. Again this will take refinement by means of rereading the script. It is helpful to take the channel list and plot and draw up in my case a systems driven magic sheet the week before technical rehearsals. Having multiple projects at the same time can become confusing and I have found that preparing the magic sheet close to technical is helpful in refreshing myself about ideas for the production. This leaves little to accomplish in technical rehearsals meaning that the focus can be solely on crafting an artistic and script supporting lighting design.
References


