



De's Dazzles – The Magic of Lighting

From an early age of watching westerns with my father, I knew instantly when the bad guy entered because of the music. The same is true for stage lighting. The last several years I have learned that stage lighting is an art form, that influences & impacts the experience. For a production such as Madagascar Jr. the lighting design, & planning takes many hours to implement. At every rehearsal, I sit with a script in hand, jotting down notes. Such as when the director tells a child where to stand for a solo, I write that in my script – *soloist down stage right*. Other times I determine the mood of the scene, such as a dream scene versus the villains. I compiled a list of all these notes. From there I determine how many lights repeat, for example there are 7 scenes, so we need seven black outs. Then I met with the lighting programmer, Brad Heaton. We discuss light positions, colors, angles, effects & so on. Then the real work begins with aiming lights, installing gobos, creating special effects, & programming all the cues into the lightboard. This process averages about 20 hours for a one-hour production with over 100 different lighting cues. For our youth musical productions, we train a former actor to run the light board at shows.

Here's a brief description of what lighting a show entails:

1. The lighting objective is to see what is happening on stage & guide the audience's attention to important action. There are intentional placements of shadows & silhouettes for dramatic effect.
2. Lighting Design is storytelling. Sometimes a projection such as trees helps the audience understand we are on the Madagascar beach. Lighting can also tell the time of day or the season. Be on the lookout for the sunrise.
3. Color design takes us back to elementary art class of mixing colors that determine the mood, happy or sad? Is it a cheerful sunrise or an ominous thunderstorm? In Madagascar you will notice moving colors adding to our humorous penguins' waddling entrances.
4. The lighting effect magic comes into play when we use gobos. A gobo is a thin metal disc with a pattern cut out like a stencil which is placed in a holder in front of a light to create a pattern. For this musical note the palm trees.
5. Lighting Positions are a big part of this! Whether the light comes from the front, side, top or bottom. See the examples below.
6. Cyclorama or "cyc" for short is a large cloth backdrop to project light or images onto. We are grateful to John Lenz whose donation helped to pay for our new cyc!

I am thankful we have moved on from ancient Greek amphitheaters that relied on the sun for the source of their light. Or the mixing of gases to create colored flames (the cause of many theater fires.) The theater is so endlessly fascinating because it is so much like life! Even a small amount of light completely changes the darkness! Shine your light!

Sincerely,

De Heaton, Executive Director

6/1/24



Top Left – front light
Top Right – side light
Bottom Left – top light
Bottom Right – up light