G. Lighting Designer

The Lighting Designer is an artist/scholar who designs the theatrical lighting for productions. Theatrical lighting should express the Lighting Designer’s visual interpretation of the production and at the same time support, reinforce, and enhance the artistic statements of the other members of the production team. Lighting is a combination of artistic work and technical knowledge and ability. Traits exhibited by individual Lighting Designers usually include both of these areas, but in wide variance. Many excellent Lighting Designers know or attribute little importance to technical details, leaving that work to electricians. Other Lighting Designers have a highly technical background and organize many or all of the technical details themselves, considering that to be an important part of the lighting design process.

When evaluating documentation in a tenure dossier, external reviewers, administrators, and the tenure and promotion committee may ask themselves whether the candidate’s tenure portfolio demonstrates the ability to teach and use their practice to explore:

Production Expertise

- Ability to communicate design intent verbally and visually using methods such as storyboards, overlays to renderings, sketches, lighting lab demonstrations, and/or computer renderings
- Knowledge of the theories and behavior of light (e.g., optics, reflection, refraction, etc.)
- Knowledge of color theory in both light and pigment, including in relation to various skin tones
- Technical knowledge of current lighting equipment and the ability to apply this technology to a given production
- Knowledge of theories on the psychological perception of light
- Ability to interpret theatrical movement, speech, and music in terms of light
- Knowledge of the techniques and skills of directing as they relate to lighting design
- Knowledge of safety codes and regulations pertaining to lighting and electricity
- Knowledge of energy conservation methods appropriate to lighting and electricity
- Basic knowledge of the use of light as a design element in other media, such as film, television, and architecture
- Abilities in hand and/or computerized drafting
- Understanding of the related production design areas—scenery, scenic painting, costumes, makeup, projections, and sound
- Knowledge of relevant standard safety procedures and regulations, as well as those prescribed by related professional organizations such as Actors’ Equity Association (AEA), United Scenic Artists #829 (USAA), the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDCS), Society of Fight Directors (SAFD), and the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), as appropriate
- In-depth understanding of equitable practices in the theatre through a display of cultural competency and the techniques necessary (consent based and trauma-informed practices) for honoring the professional and personal boundaries of students
- Training in Mental Health First Aid, Bystander Intervention, Anti-Racism, LGBTQ+ support, and DEIJE work
Historical Context

- Knowledge of dramatic literature across the globe from classic to contemporary genres
- Knowledge of the history of theatrical production, with emphasis on the visual elements of scenery, projections, lighting, and costumes
- Knowledge of art history (artists, historic styles, and genres), especially with regard to the use of light
- Knowledge of music and music history.

Collaborative Skills

- Excellence in oral and written communication skills to secure sensitive translation of the design ideas into a theatrical reality
- Ability to work and collaborate with various artists and technicians with various levels of experience
- Ability to oversee the technical execution and operation of lighting in production
- Excellence in the development and management of budgets for lighting equipment and personnel
- Knowledge of lighting personnel management and scheduling
- Excellence in the higher-level planning required in seasonal or repertory contexts.
- An understanding of ethical practices associated with the field of professional and academic theatre and performance
- An understanding of how DEIJ is considered when selecting research projects for students
- An understanding of how DEIJ informs the recruitment of students, in cases where that is part of the candidate’s labor
- An understanding of how DEIJ issues impact their life at the university and an ability to think about their own implicit biases

Overall excellence in lighting design requires the ability to consistently integrate knowledge in the areas noted above with an understanding of the conceptual aspects of a given production. The results should be a design that is artistically and technically sound, and within the limitations of budget, available labor, and equipment of the producing organization. The Lighting Designer is best evaluated by attending a live performance of a production for which the designer is responsible. Whereas the inclusion of a drafted light plot & associated paperwork is essential as support material detailing the process of the designer and examining a light plot may reveal drafting skills and a sense of the organizational arrangement of lighting in relation to designated acting areas, it does little to evaluate true ability in lighting design. Plots, color charts, and other paperwork should be evaluated but they cannot substitute for the viewing of an actual production. Still or video photography might add some useful information to an evaluation but, again, are inferior to a live production because light affects film and video differently than it does the human eye. If recorded media are used for evaluation of a candidate, the circumstances of the recordings must be clearly stated.