

ALPD[#]

Professional
Process for
Lighting
Designers

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The ALPD
07817 061089
office@thealpd.org.uk
www.thealpd.org.uk

To join the ALPD:
<https://www.thealpd.org.uk/join>

The ALPD Professional Process for Lighting Designers

The Lighting Designer is responsible for the creative vision and the artistic realisation of the lighting design through collaboration with the creative team and close liaison with the lighting, production and technical departments. With the growth and complexity of lighting rigs, control systems and show control links with other creative departments, lighting designers are now at the forefront of managing this, bridging art through ever advancing technology.

This document is intended to explain some of the processes required to fulfil this role, set out at each stage of the production process.

Engagement

Contract

A contract is essential to specify the level of work, the fees, payment dates, the working conditions and other details pertinent to the production. A clear grasp of what is needed to deliver the lighting design from both sides, ensures that the negotiation is effective and appropriate for the engagement. (add link to checklists?)

Pre-production

Background research

The lighting designer's job begins when the lighting designer receives the script, score or concept outline, research will be necessary to gather knowledge about the production style or design themes and will involve meetings with the other creatives in the team. The amount of research varies on each project. The lighting designer should be involved from the beginning before any creative decisions are finalised to ensure the most integrated and effective designs possible.

Budgetary and Schedule Negotiations

Once the contract is signed the budget and schedule for the production needs to be discussed and agreed with the creative team, production manager and producers. The technical specifications of the venue, the equipment, the staffing personnel, the schedule and

any other budget constraints or limitations needing consideration and input from the lighting designer. This will involve time for site visits and meetings.

Assembling the lighting team

As the lighting designer is a manager and motivator of the whole lighting team they should have final approval on the selection.

Availability checks are vital some months ahead so that an effective team can be assembled.

For touring productions and commercial theatre, the entire lighting department will need to be engaged. If there are resident technical teams it may still be necessary for the lighting designer to find additional staff including an associate, production electrician and programmer.

The Creative Design Process involves

- Meetings, research and development with the director, designer and other creatives
- Meetings with the producers and production manager.
- Developing lighting design ideas and agreeing the visual concepts of the production.
- Attend the 'white card' model presentation, present lighting concepts and engage with feedback.
- Mutually collaborate to establish how the lighting design will physically fit with the set design and in the venue.
- Attend the final model presentation, present lighting proposals and engage with any feedback
- More collaborative pieces require more rehearsal time and extended involvement which should be discussed at contract stage.

Technical design process involves

- Meeting with the production electrician to discuss any built-in set electrics and to establish the best method of rig construction and the desired lighting effects.
- To establish the budget and available equipment.
- Draw a draft lighting plan.
- Continue creative and technical meetings and discussions.
- Agree the flying plot for the production.
- Draw up an equipment hires list and discuss with production electrician.
- Negotiate with hire companies to establish equipment availability and price.
- Draw Final Lighting Plan and submit to production electrician and production manager for approval.

- Liaise with the production electrician and production manager who will finalize and sign off with hirers and suppliers for any equipment, rigging and infrastructure.

Scheduling

To ensure that adequate time is available for the rig, conventional focus, moving light focus preset and cue plotting sessions it is essential to involve the lighting designer as well as the production electrician in the scheduling process.

Production Rehearsal

Rehearsal Period

- The lighting designer will be invited to the first day of rehearsals, Meet & Greet, model showing and production meetings.
- The lighting designer will attend production meetings in person or remotely.
- The lighting designer will attend rehearsals and run throughs as necessary and respond and develop the Lighting plan accordingly.
- Video recordings of the final run may be made for later reference. Permission for this should be obtained in advance.
- Once the fit up commences the lighting designer will need to divide their time between the rehearsal room and the venue.

Pre-Programming and Console Preparation

- The programmer and lighting designer will need time to set up the lighting console before the first focus session.
- A production may require pre-visualisation sessions which will need to be included in schedules and budgets in advance.
- A meeting with the DSM (or show caller) may be called to mark draft positions for the cues into the prompt copy before technical rehearsals begin.

Fit up, Focus and Lighting

- Prior to the start of focus a lighting designer needs to be present to set the height of the lighting bars and the borders as agreed with the production manager.
- Stage teams and flymen need to be called to set the correct set pieces and props for all focus and lighting sessions
- All focus sessions of conventional and moving lights will take place in subdued lighting and quiet.
- There should be sufficient lighting sessions to plot lighting cues prior to the start of technical rehearsals or Stage and Pianos.
- The DSM, director and designer should attend plotting sessions along with stage staff and 'walkers' to stand in for the performers.

Technical Rehearsals

Onstage Rehearsals

A dry tech maybe necessary to prepare any complex technical cues and ensure safety before the cast arrives on stage. These sessions may require working lights and are therefore not effective lighting sessions.

While the process of stage rehearsals vary for Drama, Dance, Musical and Opera the lighting designer will be in attendance during all technical rehearsals.

The lighting designer will often work at high speed with the programmer creating live lighting cues over the rehearsal. In between the stage calls and technical rehearsals with the cast it's very important that there is adequate lighting time available to prepare for the forthcoming sessions.

Previews

During any preview period technical work continues every morning and the cast join in the afternoon for further rehearsals to refine the production. The lighting designer attends the entire day to develop and adapt the lighting until the technical lock off or press night.

Photo Calls

The lighting designer may have to attend Electronic Press Kit recording and photo calls to provide tailored lighting. If the production is being broadcast for TV, DVD or cinema then lighting adjustments will be needed. The lighting designers will need to see the production on a broadcast standard monitor to make the best assessment of what modifications are required. This extra work should be discussed and remuneration agreed in advance.

Post-Production after press night

Documentation

Once the production has been locked off time must be scheduled for the appropriate staff to create the necessary documentation required for touring, repertoire, revival and for proper maintenance of a run. This is essential because lights fail and need to be replaced. With adequate records of all conventional focus and moving light presets the show crew will be able to maintain the integrity of the lighting design.

Touring

An associate lighting designer or re-lighter and a programmer will be contracted to recreate the lighting in each venue. The lighting designer may need to respond to feedback in show reports or from the director or re-lighter once the show is on tour. Any additional attendance or work needs to be remunerated.

Cast changes and show checks

The show needs to be checked by the lighting designer or associate on a regular basis to ensure the integrity of the design is maintained.

It is essential the lighting is checked whenever there are cast, costume or blocking changes.