

Design Concept Statement—Silent Sky

—Amelia Li

As a lighting designer I believe the most important thing is to figure out how the lighting can support the function and help express the emotion. This is my first time that doing this kind of collaboration project, before starting the project, I did many research on how should a lighting designer contribute to the team, what the most important thing that should always keep in mind, etc. There are two general ideas that I strongly endorse: Whatever the scale of a production - amateur or professional - lighting like other design processes is based on a sequence of logical decisions plus a good measure of creative inspiration. And good stage lighting helps the audience to see the ACTORS, SET, COSTUMES and PROPS clearly, helps to convey the emotion.

My design process is starting with the script, including the basics—time of day, indoor or outdoor, locale, reality vs. letter vs. dream—but also meaning, emotion, the motif. After finish reading the script, we discussed about our individual first impressions on this story, and the core spirit we as a team want to share. We all felt that “Who are we, why are we- where are we?!” is part of what makes us human, making this story of numbers anything but numb. I keep thinking about what I can do to help the audience feel and understand what the team want to share during the rest production process. And ideally, I think the audience shouldn't notice the lighting design as a separate element as it enhances the story we're all trying to tell.

After first group discussion, we began to work on the specific design elements. Our director and dramaturgy shared with us the list of Silent Sky production elements for each scene, and I added more elements to complete the lighting scene analysis chart. At this moment, I was clear that this show spans over 10 years, there are also several locations in the script, so representing and differentiating them, showing the passage of time in a matter of seconds, was an important part of the lighting design process.

That's when a whole list of questions must be answered. We discussed many specific questions during the second meeting, like What will be at the back of the stage: the sky, a projection surface, or an abstract scenic element? Do we

need the projection? How to demonstrate ocean liner, the letter scene? And one thing I learnt is that every design must have a reason, follow the set of the history background, for example I wasn't sure about the work lights in that time period, only when the dramaturgy provides me some history research can I have a better sense. Meanwhile I began to work on the lighting visual research, my process is picking relevant photographs of the nature scenery, then collecting pictures that help to show the lighting effects I'd like to have. For example in terms of the sky scene, I select the photographs of the universe full of stars, which give you a sense of limitless promise. I prepared a presentation of visual research images for each scene, and discussed it with the team.

As the design took shape, I began to think about the specific cue in terms of how each scene, or moments within scenes, should look. What about the transition between scenes? And discussed more details about the setting, the ground plan with the set designer. we made decision on having warm light bulbs, hanging from the ceiling. One side is that we can use this to show individual light bulbs pop in with the music when in the scene that Henrietta makes the discovery. Also with this set we're able use gentle twinkling of the bulbs to show the great comfort her friends provide. You can feel the romantic enthusiasm when all lights coming up like stars shining everywhere. For preparing the final class presentation, we picked some favorite moments in the show and I got to think deeper about the color choice, and how to use lighting to draw the audience into the character's imagination, and then back to reality.

In conclusion, I did learn a lot during this collaborative process experience, looking forward to more opportunities as a lighting designer in the future.