



STAGE LIGHTS: AN EXPRESSION

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Stage Lighting is an important stagecraft element and has to play a very significant role in creating mood and atmosphere on given stage space, as the audience will associate different qualities of light with different moods. This can be achieved through the colour of the light used. The moods and atmospheres can also be creating through the intensity of the light, angle and direction of light. The art of stage lighting is having its own language of expression which is delivered through the various objectives as a tool.

Visibility: The visibility is primary objective of stage lighting. The audience can see the created local, sets, stage properties, actors, movements on given stage space. The Light is primarily used to establish the time or location of a performance, or to create and enhance mood and atmosphere in view of social, historical and cultural context of the play. In short, what the director of play and light designer wants to show them in whole or in selective parts. During the ancient period before the concept of drama the tribal used to perform around the fire and in moon light. As we know the concept of drama became staple in Greece, the Drama festivals in ancient Greece, used to play from dawn to until dusk and performances used to take place outside in stadium like natural amphitheatres, in natural light i.e. sunlight. Later fire also used for visibility. During the renaissance period, objective of visibility was not selective, the entire stage space used to get illuminated; as the Light equipments were traditional flame based light sources. The part or property kept purposefully on stage to show in the last scene of a play also uses to get illuminated in first scene itself. The crude oil lamps, torches and hanging lamps use to illuminate for the entirety of play including audience.

With the invention of spot light (Fresnel/ plano-convex lenses) the era of revolution began and the art of stage lighting got new dimensions and purposeful use of lights with the pre-planned thinking initiated. The spot light gave a way for selective lights, area lights, three dimension lights, and special effects also. By playing an important role, spot light helped, light designers to create intentional illusions on the stage and succeed to get

attention to audience on particular place, character to get desired effect and concentration towards. Further, the selective visibility creates unity and harmony in all elements of drama. The objective visibility means not only to see but what to show, how to show, and how much to show. Adolf Appiyya once uttered that, one who know the use of darkness on the stage is the best light designer.

“ The technical term of chiaroscuro made more effective against the proportion of visibility through intensity of light, which plays the use of strong contrasts to light and dark, usually bold contrasts affecting a whole composition of stage space.”

(Edward Nye is Mime, Music and Drama on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: The Ballet d’ Action (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Realistic effects: With a proper and balanced use of colours, intensity, and appropriate angles of light, one can create a atmosphere of a particular scene which is happening in play. The use of source light to create an effect i. e. dawn, sunrise, dusk, sunset, full moon night, dark night, etc... The selection of colour, combination of colour, angle of light, can give an impact on realistic effect. For outdoor light, the use of cyclorama makes realistic effect more meaningful. The depth of a sky can be opted with combination of 25% of orange light from the down corner of 100% blue light to create realistic effect of sunrise or sunset. While working on indoor light, one should have not only the knowledge of direct light and its reflection but, a difference between colour and intensity of a day light and night light also. The angle of foot light is not a natural source of light but real atmospheric effect can be achieved through it, i. e. for a character standing on height or mountain. Further, an effect of ghost faces can be opted if the direction of light is from front foot whereas, the back foot light can give a huge figure effect or silhouette.

Creative light for composition and design : as all the elements of drama co-related with each other, the scenic design and light is having closet relationship. The impact of scenic design can be made more meaningful with the help of creative light through its composition and design. By using foco attachment or by using slides, fire disk, water roller, a specific creative effect can be created on cyclorama. A painted burning coal or stage property can be given alive effect by projecting sharp red colour light on it. An effect of river, flame, floating clouds, sea waves, can be opted on cyclorama by using running slides.

Plastic or Three dimensional effects: Every substance in nature is having three dimensional shapes. During the period of curtain set, different painted curtains with shadows and false perspective were used to give the illusion of particular local like road, buildings, etc. But the two dimensional curtains or cut outs and three dimensional characters always found miss

matched to create desired effect and the entire scene use to feel artificial. At the same time the use of flood light was main reason for the lost of natural chiaroscuro effect. All the three dimensional effects use to become flat and made entire scene artificial. In later period, spot lights are used to create a moods and emotions. The use of two different spot light with the angle of 45 degrees focused on to acting area in co-ordination with cut lights, back lights with different intensity to create a three dimensional effect. The different angle and intensity of light creates a natural chiaroscuro effect.

Psychological effect : To create a psychological effect through the light, the source of light, need of scene, direction of light, use of colours, and their effect or relation with the emotions of human being are very important factors.

These all above objectives, functions as stage light altogether or alone cannot create a mood without colours, or appropriate direction, angle for light, intensity, fade in and fade out.

The placing of light equipments , angle, colour is very much important to get desired effect. Although lights can place almost anywhere to illuminate , but to get the effect there are five main positions/directions.

Front light from batten : the primary source of lighting for most scenes. The distinction between warm, cool and neutral front light establishes mood, time and place. The colours used should enhance the scenery and complement an actor's skin tone.

Side lights : a fully illumination of side light directed from bottom, middle on stand and top position. It is primarily used to highlight the side of the face, arms, mid-torso and legs. A light hung at an over-head angles for 30 and 60 degrees accentuates the top side of an actor's head, neck and shoulders. The high side lighting draws special attention to the facial expressions.

Back lights : it creates depth and makes the performer appear multi-dimensional by separating them from the stage's background scenery.

Top (overhead) lights: it highlights the top of actor's head and shoulders. It is mainly used to create suspense of character.

Every colour is having a psychological meaning and an emotional impact on the mind of human being. As a drama is a story of human conflict and emotions in various situations, the light is very useful stagecraft element to showcase the psychological status or condition of the character. Also indicates different emotions of the characters.

The Colours convey emotions, and this is basic concept of the psychology of colour. Although the way we all react to colours is unique, three psychological factors define these responses aesthetic, emotional, culture, religious faith.

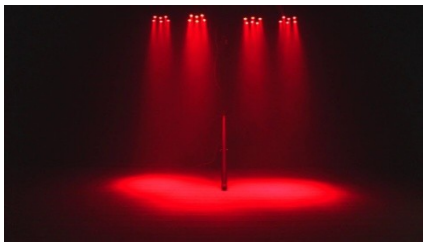
As the playwright expresses himself/herself through the written words and the director through the direction along with actors and stagecraft elements. Every stagecraft element is having own characteristic to express themselves.

The art of light design to create a mood needs the study of humanity, humanistic values and emotions to create various emotions and moods in stage space.

“The subject of colour seems to have almost endless ramifications and to touch upon life in almost every quarter, for colour is rich in lore, rich in meaning and purpose.” – Faber Birren (Color Psychology and Color Therapy (1950). New York: McGraw-Hill)

Red colour : It is related to colour of blood which shows emotions of fear and the red shows anger, conflict , Warmth, , crudity, excitement, power, strength, love, passion, fire, blood, extreme emotions, battle and gives feeling of Hot, fire, heat, blood

The character is in scared or feared condition can be brought out with the use of a top red light.



Example:

A character of prisoner in torture room.

Projection of fire disk on cyclorama with silhouette of cross sword, spear to show the war, conflict, anger.

Orange / umber colour: The Orange colour is associated with joy, sunshine and represents enthusiasm, fascination, happiness, creativity, determination, attraction, success, encouragement and stimulation .It combines the energy of red and the happiness of yellow. At the dawn the rising sun of orange colour brings a new hope, enthusiasm, holiness, happiness, after the fear of dark night and scary uncertainty. Therefore



a warm orange light use to indicate the optimism.

Example :

When a character under depression state gets a new hope to lead his life, a single light with filter from the first baton, and the upward look of the character of a slow motion followed by still position indicates the mood of optimism, beginning of new hopeful life, as a source light given to him from the top.

Green colour: the light green colour of nature gives the joy of recreation where as the dark green colour indicates poison or poisonous features. In Indian mythology a pregnant woman gifted with orange green sari and bangles as related with natural recreation. Whereas dark green colour absorbs the colour of face and made it dull and dead.

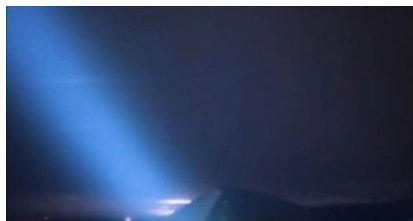
Example :



The only foot lights with dark green colour and low intensity focused on character affected with poison. The source of light from down indicates the end of life.

Blue colour: Blue is usually associated with knowledge and serenity. Coolness, ethereality, the infinite,

significance, repose, formality. sky, the ocean and ice. It has of truth and purity. Loyalty, **blue** is associated with health, understanding, and softness.



It is associated with the always been the symbol compassion, **Light** healing, tranquillity, **Dark blue** represents

mystery, knowledge, power, integrity, and seriousness. The dark blue colour is a colour which shows mysterious happening. This colour is a colour of night. The night is a symbol of silence emptiness and treated as a neutral colour on stage space. The use of this colour at low intensity can be used against the blackout between two scenes. This is the one of expression of a stage light used in symbolism. In a fantasy play 'graduate' the light designer used this light to indicate the blackout. The colour of light was merged with the dark blue colour of wings and backdrop. The audience could not understand up to first 2-3 black out, but after they accept the stage with blue colour as neutral. A light expression forced to audience to change their perception.

The colours which are having psychological effect with mood can be change through the projection and expression.

The use of Light blue colour on cyclorama gives a grand and splendid look of Sky. Mixing of red and orange with suggest sunrise and sunset. But it can also give an expression of beginning of something and something is at round the corner or moving towards end.

An interpretation of expression of lights is depending on the style of production and demand of story. Now- a- days, the use of LED spots and multimedia on stage is changing the traditional expression of lights through the colour and even through the angle.

The cinematic volume of highly sophisticated equipments in shadow plays are trying to establish new theory of colour light which is not convincing in terms of stage lighting. At the same time, some designers are using lights in traditional style for purposeful expression in co-ordination with other stagecraft elements which is closet to psychic of audience.

As, no one can separate the emotions from the characters, it is not possible to change the basic mood of colour. The tints or shades can carry different mood, but the entire interpretation, expression will find its own place in each and every corner of the stage space and that is the strength of expression of stage lighting.

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