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Stage Production

## Reflection Paper

I came to college to study Theater and Mass Communication which I thought would simply be acting and movie making. I honestly didn't take into account how stretched my experience in theater would be, especially in the 2013 Fall Production called *The Waiting Room*. I am the Lighting Board Operator.

What is a lighting board operator? I remember asking myself that same question. "What do I know about controlling lights? I never would've imagined." I, in layman's terms, control all the lights in cues to adjust the mood of each scene with the characters. Like making a silhouette in the steam room, a starry night sky in the park, one spot light for a "serious" phone call, or a bright tanning sun in a Jamaican beach. Some of my other responsibilities would be checking all the lighting instruments in the theater to make sure they are in working order before the show and there were times we had to fix lights that burnt out. I made sure that the florescent lights were turned off 30 minutes before the show. I was also responsible to turn off the ghost light, make the UT stage go blue and hang lamp lights for everyone backstage so the actors and assistant stage manager can see.

Did I create the light cues? Good heavens no. The master mind is William "Bill" Marshall, Scene & Lighting Designer, who I would call my grandpa and Laura Dowling, the Lighting Director, my aunt. Bill would feed me instructions to create light cues in its early process. It was hard to understand his nomenclature at first so Laura served as liaison to help me better understand what Bill was saying. During its creation I would say small things like "It looks like a sunset to me," "Hey that does look nice," or "Why isn't there any dance lighting?"

Stacy, the Director, would say to me “No one asked you. That's not your job. Stay in your place.” I won't lie I had a hard time letting that go whereas Bill and Laura would explain to me why things the way they were. I'll explain challenges I had to overcome later in the paper.

Bill was the one who created the light cues I still reported to Laura for overall instructions. She was my supervisor. For immediate instructions I would report to Nicole Jovanovic the Stage Manager specifically for when to “GO” on lighting in each scene of the play. Then at shut down I would report to Laura and Nicole when my job was done for the night. With that being said even though being the Light Board Operator was one of the most essential positions of the team, the job was still fairly simple and there was no one that was under me to report to me for anything unless Dariane Mull, the assistant stage manager, had a problem with lights backstage.

The interaction between Nicole, Dariane, and myself at first was erratic. I didn't know Nicole all that well and with Dariane I already knew her but we just didn't speak much at first. Now? After spending 8 shows with them and many rehearsals I couldn't imagine working with anyone else. Nicole, Jeremy, (the sound operator) and I would sit in the upstairs booth together for each performance so the interaction between us was very direct compared to my interaction with Dariane who would be backstage the whole time. Honestly the only time it was Dariane, Nicole and I was working together as a team directly was when the panel was broken and we fixed it.

Speaking of incidents that required teamwork, on the day of the last show, not long after intermission a high pitch sound came from near my station out of nowhere. This was in the booth. It was enough to make our ears ring. The first thing we did was see if the audience reacted to it in anyway. Thankfully they couldn't hear but they didn't mean we wanted to live with it for the rest of the show. We all stayed calm in a fearful way.

I saw an off button to where the sound was coming from but I didn't want to push it. I said, "Oh my God what if I push that button off and all the lights go out." "If it's coming from the cooling system everything may overheat if we switch it off" said Nicole. Laura wasn't in her office at the time so I had to rush down to get her and let Nicole take control of the lighting board. The situation was handled and Laura told us not to worry.

That situation wasn't all that challenging to me. As long as the audience couldn't hear what we heard then it would be all good. I would consider this a minor production-related challenge. That didn't mean there weren't any personal challenges I had to overcome. To speak overall I had to learn that people are going to be who they are and how they want to be weather its offensive to you or not. I've learned to adapt to all of it with Marissa's help. Marissa Harris played the character of Brenda in the play and we had a short conversation on how people are just like that and its nothing I did to make them like that.

There were many satisfying moments to even out the negativity like when Stacy gave me a nice encouraging note on opening night, but personally my most satisfying moment was developing the relationships I have with the crew, particularly with Nicole, Jeremy and Dariane. The moral between us was high each night and we'll always keep in touch.

That wasn't something I would expect out of this experience in crew. What surprised me the most was the extent of how much I would be able to control the lighting with the different colors, shapes and direction angles. "OMG look at this Tinkerbelle shit I'm doing!" I said to Laura. I was very fascinated by the entire process and I'm glad I had "Grandpa" Bill and "Aunt" Laura to help me every step of the way.

If there was a personal opinion that was altered as a result in this class it would be how satisfied I was being the Light Board Operator. I was nervous, scared, and unsure of myself but I've gotten pass all

of that. Originally I auditioned for the part of Douglas but after watching the play a number of times from a high stand point I'm very much glad I didn't get the part because Douglas has anger management problems and no patience for anything whatsoever. Marquis was perfect for that part. So yes I am very much glad I was light board operator. The experience was interesting and even now I wonder on what my next occupation will be in the next performance. Who knows? We'll find out.