

Technology of Seeing

Light your stage for free

Technology and Dance



L3

**The art of
lighting the
stage consists
of putting light
where you
want it and
taking it away
from where you
don't want it.**

Max Reinhardt

So you want to put on a show for parents and caregivers? Perhaps you have taken your students through the ‘Dancing to Change Ourselves’ resource and the kids want to show their work off?!

Nothing adds a bit of oomph to a performance and sends the message of ‘professionalism’ like organised and coordinated lighting.

But lighting hire and operation from professionals is prohibitively expensive even for whole school productions where you might recoup some of the costs with ticket sales.

So why not make a virtue out of necessity and have the students design lighting for the performance with freely available (and free-ish) resources!?

There are a lot of students who really want to be involved in presenting performances but who aren’t stage-ready individuals. Having lighting development/design/operation as an option allows these students to have a positive experience in a way which honours them as people.

Method

1 Why lighting?

Talk to the students about the purpose of stage lighting

2 Call out

Send out a call to parents and caregivers regarding needing to borrow lights.

3 Gather torches

Gather as many torches and lamps as you need. Better to have more than you need than less.

Lean into torches for most of the lighting but use Lamps for general washes of colour.

4 Consider each moment

Lighting crew views the performance and considers each moment through the purposes of lighting

5 Consider logistics of lighting

- What space do you need to light?
- Think about when you will be performing — if during the day, then light exclusion (when you black out the performance space so that the lighting is more visible) will need to be considered.

- The time of year is important when planning. If you are performing in the summer light exclusion will be needed before 9.30pm.

6 Technicalities

Let the students know that the lights will be either 'on or off' as opposed to having the ability to fade up and down.

- There may be other ways to slowly increase and decrease the lighting states that may come up during experimentation. The more creative the better.

7 Look at the resources (lamps and torches)

Tell them that they can have five separate lighting states so they need to consider what they want to say very carefully.

The reasons for this are both artistic and pragmatic:

- The impact of fewer states is greater.
- Less states means less confusion and complication.
- Less states means less tripping hazards.

8 Choose coloured cellophane to show the mood.

- ⑨ Consider fairy lights for background effect.
- ⑩ Rehearse with the dancers.
- ⑪ Run lights for the performance.
- ⑫ Reflect on the process and planning aspects at the end of the show.

An important safety note.

Of course we want the students to be mostly autonomous in this process. There always needs to be oversight from a responsible (both in the educational and legal sense of that word) adult making sure that all considerations regarding electrical safety are taken into account.

Also the mitigation of tripping hazards from electrical cords being present is an important thing to consider.

We want the kids to say ‘Remember that cool show where we got to do the lights?!’ rather than ‘Remember that time when I twisted my ankle on that cord?’

Stage lighting

Talk to the students about the purpose of stage lighting

- (A) Illuminates the stage**
The most important thing lighting does is let the audience see what is going on. Actors and dancers also need to be able to see what they are doing..
- (B) Draws the audience's attention to certain parts of the stage**
Stage lighting can also help you direct audience members' eyes where they should go. Washes of light show that there is a general focus required from the viewer whereas a spotlight shows a specific area, performer or action that needs attention.
- (C) Messages the mood**
Certain colours are associated with different moods (have a look at the 'What Colour do I Feel' resource for ideas). For example, blue is often associated with sadness, and red is associated with intense feelings, like love or aggression. Colour is an important way of letting the audience know how you want them to feel!

Like all art, lighting has to be conscious. The artist or operator needs to be thinking at all times "What do I want my audience to think or feel by the time they have finished consuming the art?"

Materials

**Sourced from home —
No purchase required**

**High candle-power torches (old
style Dolphin torches are ideal)**

Standard lamps

Fairy lights

**Power boards (up to 4 plugs —
one per electrical outlet)**

Purchased (low cost)

**Coloured cellophane (important
to check with the person who you
buy this off that it isn't going to
melt at low temperatures)**

Purchased (higher cost)

**Ahead of time, have the lamps
that you might use tested for
safety**



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Curriculum links

Technological Practice

Planning for practice

Undertake planning to identify the key stages and resources required to develop an outcome. Revisit planning to include reviews of progress and identify implications for subsequent decision making.

Dance

Communicating and interpreting

Prepare and share dance movement individually and in pairs or groups.