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指導教授：蔡格爾老師

Prof. Hegel Tsai

Reflection on Participating in the 2018 Senior Play: *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*

學生：林郁絜 撰

Renn Yu-Chieh Lin

Renn Lin

404110299

Senior Play

Professor Hegel Tsai

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Reflection on Participation in Senior Play 2018: As the Leader of Lighting Team

Having participating in three theatrical productions in the department before this semester, I had been looking forward to contributing to the Senior Play of my class. Since I am more experienced in lighting group and I still hold much passion for the job, I got the chance to be the leader of Lighting Team thanks to the director. In this reflection, I will discuss about the lighting design and the practicing, my reflection on the designs, the teamwork, and my self-assessments.

Since the play is different from the ones I have read before in a humorous and imaginative way, there was much room for Lighting Team to come up with various ideas for creating the best visual effects; in the beginning it was difficult to grasp the exact direction of the whole play, but after discussions with the director, the stage managers, and Ms. Agatha, we decided to try some new effects to bring the imaginary world to live. In the first scene when Lisa is still in the real world, the lights focus on where there are people, while other space is left dark to make it feel like the space is between reality and imagination. For example, we gave only one set of lights when Lisa is alone in her room, and there were only two lights as a set in the lift scene. After the scene is switched to Dissocia, the tones were suddenly changed to a colourful and surreal style. In the different scenes when Lisa encounters with different characters and situations, the colours kept on changing, and the given colours also meant differently. During the design process, we try not to use the same tone for two or more scenes, but there is one set of lights, which was called “Dissocia lights”

in Lighting Team and when discussing with the director and the stage managers, we used a couple of times mixed with other sets of lights. This set of lights included five colours on the ground and two others on the cyclorama to make the whole stage look like in a fantasy. The purpose of making it repeated is to keep reminding the audience of the wonderfulness in the inner world Lisa creates. We selected the scenes of the entering of Dissocia, oath taking, Lisa playing with music and lights, the polar bear, the flying car, the final charge, and the ending to apply the set of lights. Although this set appeared for many times in this play, we did not always make it stay on the stage for a long time or use it as the only effect in a particular scene. We hope that with this design, a sense of coherence was brought out to give the play a vivid image.

Besides the major tone of the play, Lighting Team brought out many effects throughout the production, which were the result of the discussions among the team, with the director and the stage managers, with the instructor, and with Ms. Agatha. In Scene One, Victor, the lift, the Oathtaker's background light, siren effect, and the Black Dog King's purple side lights are the main effects that aimed to create a dynamic world. When Victor is standing outside talking to Lisa with a door between them, the instructor asked Lighting Team to crop out the light below the actor's waist to make the character unreal. This was an idea I had never thought of, and it turned out to be an important hint of the surreal style of the play to the audience. In the set of lights for the lift, we used one light from the top and the other from the front, and we cropped the shapes of the lights into rectangles to build up the space in a lift in front of the audience without using any set on the stage. Since we had two meetings with Ms. Agatha before the theatre week, she proposed that the computer lights could be applied to bring out the strong light beams we imagined for Oathtaker. Although we encountered with many technical problems such as illumination, colour choice, unexpected shutting down, and programming from the lighting console, we carried out the effect as we hoped. As to the

siren effect and the purple side lights for Black Dog King, they can be regarded as one set of design because the later usually followed the former. With this set of lights, we intended to create a sense of pressure which could take over the whole stage.

Scene Two and Scene Three covered most of the plot in this play, including a few climaxes, as a result, the lighting design was the most complicated in these two scenes. Since the visual effects usually represented the feelings, thoughts, or natures of the characters instead of the environment, we let them change with the shifting of the emotions and the movements. We did not make all the changes subtle to not be noticed by the audience; instead, we thought that it would be better if the audience can see transferring process of the tones, the atmosphere, and the sets. From playing with music and lights to the encounter with Scapegoat, the lights start to change dramatically from Dissocia lights separately on the cyclorama and the ground, the follow light, the side lights on the set, the green light on the cyclorama for Scapegoat, to the one-side red light during the violence. These lights change quickly but on strict timing when it is necessary for the plot and the acting. As to Polar Bear, we design a cold white light for this character with a little bit of Dissocia light to give a hint that Polar Bear represents the good in this world. Finally in Scene Two in the flying car scene, we tried using different shades of yellows and oranges and manually controlling the illumination to create the visual effect of explosion. In Scene Three, as the truth gradually being revealed and the threat getting close, the complication of the lighting was built up to the major climax in the end of the scene. Again we used the contrast between light and darkness to express the severe situation the characters are facing until the last moment of the battle. In Scene Four, we programmed the fluorescent light and a white cold stage light to make them being lit up at the same time to create the space of a cold hospital. We also used the translation room as an observation room to involve the spectator area into the

performance. In the final scene, we used Dissocia lights and the side lights on the set to bring the audience back to the fantasy world in Lisa's mind.

During the production, the stage managers and Ms. Agatha helped the team a lot. The stage managers provided many ideas for us to consider and to work on, and Ms. Agatha helped us to carry out the effects we wanted for this play. This year we faced a critical issue of a broken dimmer in the theatre. Although we had five days to work in the theatre, the working condition and results on the first two days were not ideal due to the unstable system. We spent extra time to fix the problem before seeing the full effects. During the five days, we made changes intensively to add on more effects or to change the original ideas. From my point of view, it was not easy to carry out something purely imaginary, but with a few advices the whole play had a more solid image in my mind. I appreciate the set of lights that determined the tone of Dissocia, the new computer lights we tried and successfully brought out, the colourful lights on the cyclorama, the side lights on the set, and the light set for the hospital. These are the most challenging parts of the design and practice, and they are also what we spent more time on to ensure the completion and the quality. What I feel somehow regret is that it could be more expressive in Scene Three although the plot might seem less meaningful to the audience. I did not make it to add on more effects to this scene because of the time limit and my understanding to the scene. Although the stage managers also thought it would be better to make it more expressive and delicate, we did not reach a conclusion on how to reach the goal. The other idea in my mind that turned out not workable is that I hoped there could be two sets of lights for the other side Dissocia other than the beautiful land wonderful one. However, due to the technical problem of the dimmer, we did not have enough light to use. These are the two points I think could have made the production better.

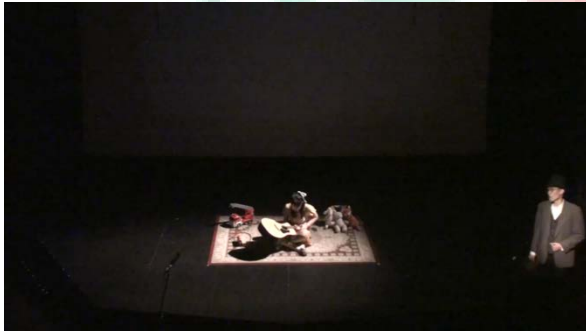
As to the cooperation in the team, I was lucky to have my teammates, who followed my work division and took their responsibilities very well. Ann, who is also a senior student,

joined Lighting Team for the first time. Although she was not as familiar to the technical equipment, she carefully recorded the details of the cues and notes for the team to have clues to follow in work. She did her best in carrying out the jobs assigned to her. Jackson, who is a junior student who joined Lighting Team for the second time, has also been my teammate for the second time. He was responsible and familiar with the lighting system. Many cues we set in the computer and some other effects that needed to be set from the console were programmed and edited by him. Yuhan, who is a sophomore student who joined Lighting Team for the first time, participated in the work actively. She was very diligent and creative, and she helped a lot during preparation and the performances. She also helped a lot in terms of the connection and relation in the team. I appreciate my teammates very much for their contribution to the team and the production.

Participating in this production was a precious experience from which I learnt more about play reading, theatrical techniques, and cooperation among Production Team and between production groups. The reading of the play was challenging for me due to the genre, but with the interpretation of the performers and the director, we managed to develop concrete concepts. In theatrical techniques, I had some new experience on the new equipment the theatre introduced, and I got more familiar with the programming techniques, which I expect to be an important part of the basic theatrical knowledge for my future career. Some of the methods of expression used in this production are inspiring to me since they were from different theatrical experiences from different people. The horizons and ways of thinking and imagining are truly priceless. As to the cooperation, I learnt to distribute the works according to the abilities and experiences of the members and to communicate under pressure. There were times when the communication did not work well, and the time pressure was serious. The pressure would affect not only the team members but also Production Team, but it was when I needed to be affected the least to keep making progresses and catching up with the

schedule. Despite of the times when some conflicts occurred when Production Team and Lighting Team had different opinions, I regarded my individual performance in this production as mature, stable, responsible, and of creativity and a generally good quality.

Attachments



1. Opening: In Lisa's room



2. The lift: two cropped lights on the screen

and the stage ground



3. Guards: Arrival in Dissocia



4. Computer lights for oathtaking



the cyclorama and the stage ground

5. Dissocia national anthem: Dissocia lights on



6. Siren (Two flashing red lights taking turns)



side lights)

7. Black Dog King attacks (LED blue and blue



8. Lisa playing with music and lights on the way before meeting Scapegoat



9. Scapegoat raping Jane (single side red side light form the direction Scapegoat and Jane exit)



10. Polar Bear singing to Lisa (white cold light on the downstage, Dissocia light on the upstage)



11. Bombing effect (shades of yellow and orange lights)



12. Revealing the truth (a sole ground light from the front)



13. The gathering before the final charge (a spotlight, Dissocia on the cyclorama, blue side lights for Black Dog King)



14. Black Dog Ling shows up (LED blue)



15. Hospital (fluorescent light and a white top light programmed in one cue)



16. Light from the observation room

(translation room)



17. The Final Scene (Dissocia lights on the

cyclorama and the stage ground, the white top light on the bed, two sets of spotlights on the characters on the set)

