

**Performance Lighting Design: How to light for the stage, concerts and live events**, second edition, by Nick Moran, London, Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2019, 270 pp., £25.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-350-01708-5

The second edition of Nick Moran's *Performance Lighting Design* is a timely addition to the canon of practical texts on lighting design for performance. It has been updated since its first edition in 2007 to include recent advances in technology, most notably LED, as well as some interesting provocations for both individual and collaborative practices and the industry more widely in the final chapter. Moran combines practical and technical instruction with aesthetic considerations, addressing both the art and the craft of lighting design. The book is geared primarily towards students but would also benefit other theatre practitioners looking to further their understanding of light's potential in performance.

In chapter 1 (An introduction to light in performance), Moran introduces not only light through an examination of its physical properties but also light's role in performance and meaning-making. He touches on audiences' changing attitudes towards light: the often-heard maxim that "Good lighting is when you don't notice it" (p.15) is, Moran maintains, "losing its once strong grip" (p.15). Here, he also introduces the idea of signs and signifiers through a brief mention of semiotics, and he returns to this several times throughout the book (for example, on pp.61–62 in reference to a visible lighting grid and on pp.48–49 in examining the deictic possibilities of light through the manipulation of intensity). He stops short, however, of a discussion of light's phenomenological, affective capabilities, which would provide another useful dimension for student lighting designers to consider, though there is a brief consideration of this in chapter 5 in reference to developing a "lighting score", in which Moran encourages lighting designers to "record their emotional response to a [lighting] unit, a step towards later decisions concerning what quality of light is right for each moment" (p.97).

Moran organises the rest of the chapters in a roughly chronological order, taking readers through the design process, into the performance space and beyond opening night. Chapter 2 (An introduction to the tools of lighting) is primarily concerned with the more technical aspects of light and lighting instruments, from tungsten to LED, static to moving fixtures. Chapter 3 (Describing performance lighting) continues in this vein with a look at the properties of light, with plenty of images to illustrate the effect of angle, distribution, colour and shadow. Likewise, the practical elements of plans, paperwork and patching are covered in chapter 7.

Having covered the tools and their use in chapters 2 and 3, Moran moves on to explore the ways in which a design concept is created in chapter 4 (From text to lighting concept). Here, Moran seems to focus primarily on text-based performance as he explores various methods of script analysis and research. Usefully, he includes in this chapter a section on forming collaborative relationships and working with directors and other designers, a skill that is often difficult to learn without practical experience. Moran frames most of this chapter within what might be termed a “traditional” hierarchy of theatre production, which places the director or choreographer at the top (p.82), and occasionally this unfortunately forces light and the lighting designer into a secondary (or even tertiary, after the set and costume designer) role, seen, for instance, in Moran’s claim that “[d]esign for performance [...] exists to support the performers” (p.91). Chapters 5 and 6 (Evolving the concept and From concept to lighting plan, respectively) cover the details of the design process itself: converting the artistic, aesthetic concepts that have been discussed and explored throughout rehearsals into the documentation required to implement it. There are useful discussions here of motivated light as well as Appia’s passive versus active light, and the detailed thinking required of this part of the process.

Chapters 8 and 9 (Working in the performance space, parts 1 and 2) deal with the production week and the move into the actual performance space. There is a wealth of useful information in these two chapters, from a detailed description of the lighting focus (including some troubleshooting) to the intricacies of the technical rehearsal, the latter of which tends to be neglected or only cursorily dealt with in similar texts. The importance of communication, maintaining collaborative relationships and light’s temporal possibilities are all under examination here. In chapter 10 (Finishing touches), this extends into a review of light’s role within the larger visual dramaturgy of the production and how this develops as opening night draws nearer.

Moran closes the book with the importance of reflection, on the design process as well as the end product of the design itself, in chapter 11 (Beyond opening night), encouraging lighting designers to ask questions of themselves and their working practices to further their own professional skills (detailed on p.241). Chapter 12 (Looking ahead) likewise includes some interesting provocations on the future of the industry, including on topics such as sustainability, the use of video and/or projection, and the potential for the lighting operator as performer (though a reference to the work of Nick Hunt would have been useful here).

Overall, Moran has written an up-to-date, engaging, clear and easy-to-follow text on performance lighting design that will be of use not only to lighting design students but also to practitioners from other disciplines. Moran's knowledge of and passion for light as a creative medium clearly comes through in his writing. *Performance Lighting Design* will hopefully inspire its readers to delve further into exploring light as a performative material in its own right.

**Kelli Zezulka**

*University of Leeds*

*School of Performance and Cultural Industries*

enklz@leeds.ac.uk

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Orcid ID: 0000-0003-2978-9204