

## Staging – Sound and Lighting

**Even silent movies had sound!** The movie created a vision, and the music behind the action made it more realistic to the viewer as they each became part of the development of the film.

**Old Time Radio had sound,** but was not visible to the listener. The sound effects and the voicing created an imagination in the listener's mind where the visual effect was created.

The lighting and sound designers are very important to telling the story on the stage. They work very closely with the set designer and director for the right effect - always keeping in mind what the playwright

intended. Before there were lights in theater, staged plays were held outdoors during the daytime; without light, the audience cannot see the set.

Without electronic sound and modern day techniques to create sound, the play could proceed, but not to the full impact required by the playwright. Actors could speak loud enough for the audience to hear, but how was the sound of the telephone ring, the doorbell, the wind outside, or the person walking up the walk heard by the audience? Sound effects would need to be made 'live' by stage crew or a sound person using different objects. This method of sound effect is called **Foley Sound**.

**Foley Sound** creates a dramatic effect – makes the viewer or listener more aware of the sound or the emotion being emitted. The sound adds drama and emphasis to the scene at hand.

**New Artists Productions** has produced several programs for the stage that give the actors a feel for how things were done prior to modern day inventions. It is a great learning experience for

everyone to figure out how to get the right sound for the given situation.

Lighting was designed in a similar manner. Before the lighting equipment came use of the sun in the outdoor theater. Once the play moved indoors, instruments of the day were used to create the effect. The emphasis on lighting came before that of sound because, again, the audience had to see what was taking place on the stage.

Portable lights were used in the direction of the action - flood lamps and table lamps were used wherever necessary to brighten up the stage. In today's theater there are banks of lights coming from all directions to light the stage and the actors. The advancements made to bring theater to the people have been marvelous and have enabled for the continuance of live stage plays.



**Sound and Lighting**

Essential to nearly every production are the technologies of Sound and Lighting. We seldom use microphones for productions because it is important for actors to learn to "project" their voices to be heard at the back of the theater. This is the way most plays are produced. However for some musicals voices must be amplified to preserve quality.

For most shows there are needs for sound effects or background music. In the photo right, Zeta is injecting sound effects to support a comedy play. Sounds are inserted in accordance with cues in the script. The dark panel at her right shoulder is a one way mirror through which she can follow the action. She inserts an effect through the use of prerecorded sounds. She also controls the volume of the sound.

New Artists has a complete sound system which we use for rehearsal and shows. We seldom use the sound equipment provided by the theater. We like to use one sound system for rehearsal and production. That makes for fewer errors and takes less time because we are dealing with one system rather than two. Some venues are also reluctant to let young people operate their big fancy gear.

We play recorded music and effects using a laptop computer, CD/DVD player, mixer, mic preamps, large power 15 inch speakers, feedback suppressors, and a host of our own cables and distribution systems. Acquired over many years, we have a very comprehensive system with redundancy. This equipment serves as a training platform for our interested students and parents.

Some of our venues have no sound or lighting equipment. An example would be a community center, outdoor amphitheater, or small theater. Therefore it has been advantageous for us to bring our own equipment. The photograph below illustrates some of our lighting equipment. In a major theater venue we use the house lighting system. Some houses require we use their lighting technician. But this requires we have this person rehearse with our group. We have a few parents trained on the use of many lighting systems.

We have recently purchased some of the new lighting standards based on LED technology. This is marvelous equipment. One "Par 64" lighting fixture, which draws in excess of 500 watts in the old incandescent style, consumes less than 100 watts in LED. The LED fixture also stays cool.

Another feature of LED lighting is that it produces a range of color, red, blue, green, and white. This eliminates the need for gels. Although the colors are good, the quality is not as good as gels. However, they will improve.

Dan

