

## Association of Lighting Designers

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## **STUDENT PLACEMENTS GUIDE**

With so many students approaching Lighting Designers for work placements we thought it would be sensible to clarify what is on offer and what to expect.

Be aware that observation placements are not trivial for the host LD or Lighting Manager and the core team e.g. an Associate LD or programmer. They are overwhelmingly done on a voluntary basis. Your host will have had to make a significant effort to arrange for you to be there, e.g. by obtaining clearance from the company or venue. You are there at the invitation of your host Lighting Designer so they will often feel responsible for your impact on others. They are aware that the observation is part of your development and may feel the obligation to make positive contribution to that, which is a compliment to you. They are allowing you to be a potential distraction during what are often stressful and fast moving periods of the production process. In that context therefore you should make the effort to value and use the time you have to absorb as much as you can and as effectively as possible in return for the effort and input of your host.

### **ADVICE TO THE STUDENT**

#### **APPROACH:**

- When approaching a Lighting Designer it is important to make sure you know why you are asking to be placed with them in particular. Make it personal.
- Before you make contact make sure you are acquainted with their lighting style, credits and if possible see some of their work. Consult your Tutor for information.
- Always arrange to meet a Lighting Designer before you both commit to a work placement. It is important that you get on!
- Set out to a lighting designer what you want to achieve from your time with them.
- Provide a contact to your course tutor or supervisor.

#### **WHAT TO EXPECT:**

- You are being invited to observe not necessarily to participate.
- It is important to be respectful; to be invisible and to not get in the way of the process of making a show.

- If you are on placement through a tech it is good to be on headsets to hear what is being done and how. Don't talk on cans unless directly asked! Be quiet....
- Ask the designer if there is a convenient time to discuss the ideas behind the show. This is often best done after the tech.
- Be respectful of the stress levels and demands being made on those around you.
- You should ask for schedule information to plan your time.

### **WHAT TO DO:**

- Make notes through the day. Keep a production diary. Even small details can be interesting.
- Be willing to help; to run errands; to be an extra pair of hands but don't expect to be busy. A huge amount of being on placement with a lighting designer is about absorbing information and technique. In general you will probably be able to offer more hands on help in a smaller building or production context.
- Be on time.
- Don't become needy or create a problem for the Lighting Designer – they have enough on their plate! Having someone who is clearly bored at the tech table can be a huge distraction.
- Note down questions – ask them in breaks.
- Always be willing to do the tea run!
- Offer to be an extra pair of eyes – we get very stuck at our tech table – you can always go and look from upstairs or from the sides if there is a specific issue to do with sightlines or masking.
- Don't expect to be part of creative dialogues. Wait to be asked to attend meetings. If a difficult conversation starts, be willing to disappear!

### **MAKE THE MOST OUT OF EXPERIENCES**

Often work placements can put you into buildings you don't know and amongst people you haven't met before. All these things are potentially useful. Use breaks to chat to other members of the team; there is more to Lighting than Lighting Design!

## **ADVICE TO THE LIGHTING DESIGNER**

### **APPROACH:**

- When you receive emails from students, try your best to reply – even to say no. It is very disheartening to get no response.
- If someone does seem suitable and keen and you have something to offer then arrange to meet. It is important that you get on!
- It is important that you assess the level of experience the student already has. Someone with too little experience may find the process too opaque and may need a lot of hand holding in a moment when you shouldn't be supporting them!

- Make contact through the student with one of their tutors; discuss and confirm their level of competence. Also ensure the aim of the time with you is clear.

### **WHAT THEY NEED:**

- Always make it clear what you are offering; that is experience of being in a professional lighting situation. You are not always asking them to come on board and to be drafting plans and calling follow spots! Manage their expectation.
- At the same time ask them about what they want to achieve from their time with you. Ensure they have clear learning goals.
- Don't feel obliged to have a placement with you at all times – you need to be allowed to do the show!
- If a student is with you for a particular period ensure that you give them schedule details and talk through what will be happening and when.
- Ensure that the building/management you are going to be working in is happy to have a student. There can be insurance issues. Ask the lighting department/production department. It is only polite and helps the student to be at ease if they are expected! Include them in rehearsal notes and production meetings if possible.
- If you ask them to fetch tea and coffee always give them the necessary cash. Beyond that whether you offer to pay for their tea, coffee or travel is down to you!

### **IN THE TECH:**

- Ask for an extra headset so they can listen in to the tech properly.
- See if they have any particular interests. Can they practise using techniques and software for the management of paperwork, focus groups or plan updating? They can always notate things for themselves. This is an opportunity for them practise.
- Include them in technical meetings.
- Ensure they are aware of when calls start and finish.
- It can be useful to share notes with them. Include them in email lists for tech notes so they can see what you are changing and how you are making decisions.
- Try to find moments to be available to them in breaks as possible. Make it clear when you can give them time.
- Arrange for them to see some previews if possible. It can be good to give a point of reference for a performance; perhaps watching from upstairs and seeing if they have comments as to the state of the floor or watching the rhythm of change and if anything doesn't feel right. It is all a question of taste but it encourages them to look at particular areas and think about different aspects of the way the lighting is working.
- Encourage them to write down questions to ask when you are available.
- Try to make time to de-brief at the end of the placement.