



The Association of Design, Production, and Technology Professionals in the Performing Arts and Entertainment Industry

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# **USITT Lighting Design Commission Portfolio Guidelines for Designers**

A Project of the USITT Lighting Design Commission

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**United States Institute for Theatre Technology, Inc.**

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6443 Ridings Road • Syracuse, NY 13206-1111 USA  
800-93USITT • Fax: 866 FXUSITT  
info@office.usitt.org • www.usitt.org



# USITT

## Lighting Design Commission

### PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES for DESIGNERS

#### HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

In 1993, the USITT Lighting Design Commission set up a committee composed of Marc Riske, chair, Ellen E. Jones, Mark Zetterberg, Lee Thomas, and Robert Smith, with the goal of writing some guidelines for preparing a lighting design portfolio. This committee approached the project by drafting a guideline specifically for the exiting BA student, with the intention of drafting two more guidelines; one for the exiting MFA and one for use by faculty approaching tenure/promotion. Marc Riske authored an initial draft of a Student Portfolio Guideline.

In 1994 the Lighting Design Commission charged Ellen E. Jones with finalizing the committee's work in preparation for publication. She took over the portfolio guidelines project with two enlarged subcommittees. The new committee decided to develop the guidelines in two phases, one dealing with student designer portfolios and the other with portfolios created by designers for promotion and tenure in academic settings.

The Student Guidelines Subcommittee included Ellen E. Jones, Penny Remsen, Michael Baumgarten, Marc Riske, Vickie J. Scott, Lori Dawson, David R. Zemmels and Judy Wolcott.

Ellen E. Jones authored the final draft of both a Student Portfolio Guideline and a Guideline for Lighting Designers Seeking Tenure, with editorial input from Penny Remsen and Michael Baumgarten. Both guidelines were edited in 1994, but were not adopted nor published.

In 1997, a review of the 1987 USITT document, "Promotion and Tenure Evaluation of the Theatrical Design and Technology Faculty: Issues and Recommended Guidelines," authored by Lucy Terry Nowell, with Frank Silberstein, John Carr, Gary Gaiser, Leon Brauner, and Adel Migid, suggested that there was no need for another set of guidelines for lighting designers seeking tenure. However, that publication did not offer specific guidance for preparation of a lighting design portfolio, and the Lighting Design Commission proceeded with plans to publish its portfolio guidelines.

The following document represents the culmination of this project. It is based on the input of many individuals ranging from students to academicians to professional designers. In order to be as consistent as possible with existing guidelines and recommendations, committee members have examined the portfolio guidelines for University and Resident Theater Auditions as well as the materials relating to documentation of design that were part of the United Scenic Artists Local #829 Midwest Chapter's Track B Lighting Examination for 1992-1994.

This final draft was written by Ellen E. Jones, project chair, with Marc Riske, Penny Remsen, and Michael Baumgarten, and edited by Penny Remsen and Marc Riske.

#### GENERAL GUIDELINES

The portfolio presentation and all included material must be of the highest quality possible. Neatness counts in both drafting and paperwork. Photos or slides that do not accurately reflect the color or intensity of lighting levels should never be included in the portfolio. Material should be organized in a manner that allows for easy retrieval and a coherent review, particularly if this is a mailing portfolio that will be sent out prior to an interview.

The résumé is an important part of the presentation. It should include the job applicant's correct addresses (including e-mail if possible) and a list of references, with their addresses and phone numbers. The résumé should reflect the person's educational level and his or her range of design experience. Key production credits should be listed (be certain to indicate original scripts), as well as lighting design related work experiences. These activities may include special courses taken in CAD, participation in workshops offered at conferences such as Lighting Dimensions International or USITT Conference & Stage Expo, or even stage management experience.

In general, the portfolio should not contain original artwork; the risk of losing them is too great, especially if the portfolio is sent out prior to interviews. Bluelines or black and white photocopies of drafting are acceptable. Full-size drafting, folded and put in an easily accessible pocket, is preferable to reductions which are difficult to read. Good quality color photocopies should be used for renderings. Any slides or photographs should also be duplicates.

Label everything clearly with enough information so that the viewer can easily determine what the production is and for which element(s) the presenter was responsible.

A student who has assisted on major productions is encouraged to include a letter of recommendation from the designer, and perhaps examples of drafting or segments she or he cued as the assistant. However, clearly indicate that the design work is another's to avoid confusion.

Providing photographic documentation of lighting designs is tricky. Production videos are of no value unless they are an absolutely accurate presentation of the performance. Photographs are also only useful if they capture the actual design without adjusted light levels. If slides are included, some method of easily identifying each slide needs to be devised.

Reviews have no place in the portfolio unless they are rave notices from a critic of national reputation, and if that is the case a portfolio will probably not have a significant impact on winning contracts.

Letters of reference should be a part of a credential dossier that arrives under separate cover. It is ill advised to send copies of confidential letters out in a portfolio, since it may be available for public viewing.

A Lighting Design Portfolio should include all the materials itemized below for at least one realized production. For the graduating MFA student or the working professional it may be appropriate to fully document two or three disparate productions to indicate a range of styles and experiences. It is impractical to include all eleven items for every show, however there is an expectation that any realized productions included in the portfolio will be represented by a minimum of a light plot and a production photo or two.

## SPECIFIC SHOW DOCUMENTATION

1. SCRIPT ANALYSIS/CONCEPTUAL STATEMENT/LIGHTING ANALYSIS
2. SCENE BREAKDOWN/CUE SYNOPSIS
3. COMMUNICATION TOOLS
4. EVIDENCE OF RESEARCH
5. CENTERLINE SECTION
6. LIGHTPLOT OR LIGHTING LAYOUT
7. CHANNEL HOOKUP and DIMMER SCHEDULE
8. INSTRUMENT SCHEDULE
9. PATCH LIST
10. MAGIC SHEET and CHEAT SHEET
11. DOCUMENTATION OF DESIGN

### 1. SCRIPT ANALYSIS/CONCEPTUAL STATEMENT/LIGHTING ANALYSIS

The script analysis should discuss central ideas and themes as well as the overall environment for the production. Include information about all the design ideas and images. The conceptual statement is a written articulation of the ideas and principles which guide the interpretation and presentation of the piece to a performance before an audience. Based on careful script readings, it will concisely communicate the designer's lighting approach to the other members of the production team in a meaningful, non-technical manner. The lighting analysis should state the lighting designer's individual point of view by articulating a graphic image for the production. The image must be a metaphor for the lighting design. Be certain to discuss the relationship of the script to intensity, motion, and color. The lighting analysis should also include a discussion of the methodology that will be employed in creating this visual image. Communicate in terms of the qualities of

light, color, intensity, movement and the intended composition of visual elements on stage. This is a generalized version of the information that will be fully expressed in the scene breakdown.

Evidence of research (see number 4) may be provided, such as photographs, movies or other works of art, to justify the designer's conceptual approaches to the project. For instance, a specific painting can be the primary visualization tool used in the conceptualization process.

## 2. SCENE BREAKDOWN/CUE SYNOPSIS

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The scene breakdown/cue synopsis, also known as the lighting score, is a complete breakdown of the play, by act, scene and page number, indicating time of day, season, action, location, and so on. These notes should discuss the relationship of light source to object being lit (angle or point of distribution), color, isolation, washes, quality of light, key and fill, texture and so on.

## 3. COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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The lighting designer must be able to communicate abstract ideas about the quality of light envisioned for a piece and how that lighting will evolve over the course of the production. A commonly used communication tool is known as a "storyboard." It is a rendered presentation of how the project's lighting will appear in key moments during the performance. (Film and television directors and designers also use storyboards to map out camera shots.)

Painted renderings of the lighting design can be wonderful tools, however, there is no point in showing a rendering that does not accurately communicate your thoughts. Abstract graphics or nonpictorial collages about value, texture, color and pattern are far more effective in communicating ideas than poorly drawn stick figures.

Certain ideas may be effectively depicted by using high contrast, white-on-black sketches. (see example on page 5) Other possible communication tools include a series of photographs, a lit scenic scale model, or a computer simulation. (see examples of a computer-produced storyboard on page 5) Whatever communication tools are chosen, they must accurately represent to other members of the production team exactly how the designer visualizes the lighting for the project.

## 4. EVIDENCE OF RESEARCH

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Research for a lighting design may include inspirational research that focuses on photography, studio art work, or color in motion. It may also incorporate research that helps the designer establish realistic lighting by providing information ranging from a description of illumination from particular fixtures to how a sunset looks at the equator. A design may also require research about specific engineering or product information in order to create particular effects on the stage.

## 5. CENTERLINE SECTION

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The method of assigning paper lighting projects in the classroom may suggest that the plan view light plot is the most important drawing for a lighting designer. However, the centerline section is also important because it must be completed, at least in its rough form, before a light plot can be created. Smaller rough sections and rotated sections are also important for placing booms or determining instrumentation. It may be useful to have some rough sections in the portfolio that indicate beam angle calculations.

The centerline section is a graphic drawing in 1/2-inch or 1/4-inch scale showing the performance space, the scenery, the hanging positions and lighting angles for instruments along the centerline of the lightplot. The drawing shows a side view of the performance space on a plane perpendicular to the floor, resting on the centerline. All trims should be clearly indicated, including a specification of where trim is to be measured from. The sections should also show all sightlines from audience seats.

The centerline section is used to check sightlines and to measure throw distances and lighting angles. An accurate section can also anticipate complications which often arise when having to light around scenic units or on multi-level stages. It is essential for determining the placement

of masking, something that should be clearly indicated on the section, particularly if the lighting designer has been responsible for placing the masking. The final centerline section should also indicate lighting focus tracks. Remember that any fixtures at the centerline must be shaded or cross-hatched on the section.

#### 6. LIGHTPLOT or LIGHTING LAYOUT

The finished lightplot is a graphic drawing in 1/2-inch scale which shows as much of the theatre architecture as is needed, as well as the type of equipment, the hanging position, the color, the control channel and circuit for each lighting instrument. The plot should be drafted to USITT Lighting Graphic Standards and include a key for hanging and preparing the physical lighting layout up to the focus call.

There is some debate about whether the lighting fixture should be shown pointing to the actual area it focuses toward or whether the fixture should always be at a perpendicular or parallel placement. Most expect some standard placement increment, usually eighteen inches between instrument centers, but there is some debate about whether measurement must be indicated between all fixtures or if a scale on the drawing and some notation of typical placement is adequate. Some designers elect to show focus at the front of the lighting fixture, others think this unnecessarily clutters the drawing. The plot may be hand or computer-drafted, but by the end of an MFA program there should be some clear indication of skills with CAD.

Rough lightplots also have a place in the portfolio. It can help the viewer understand the designer's process by showing the development of the design. The rough plot is particularly helpful when reviewing the work of a younger designer, so the BA portfolio should definitely include some roughs.

#### 7. CHANNEL HOOKUP and DIMMER SCHEDULE

The channel hook-up is a listing of control channels for the lighting fixtures and contains the following information: Channel Number/Dimmer Number, Circuits/Dimmers, Instrument Types, Instrument Location(s), Color, Watts, Function/Use/Name, and Notes. The hook-up should be typed or computer-generated. The dimmer schedule would indicate the same information organized by dimmer assignment, which may differ from channel assignment.

#### 8. INSTRUMENT SCHEDULE

The instrument schedule is a listing of each lighting instrument in the lightplot by position. It contains the same information as the channel hook-up, but it is organized in a different fashion, indicating the following data for each unit: Lighting Position, Instrument Number, Instrument Type, Watts, Channel Assignment, Dimmer Assignment, Circuit Assignment, Color, Focus/Use, and Notes. Theoretically since this information is organized by hanging position, electricians could use it to hang a show. The instrument schedule should be typed or computer-generated. By the end of an MFA program there should be some indication of ability to use common lighting databases, such as Lightwright, MacLux, and Xenon.

#### 9. PATCH LIST

The patch list is a listing of patch cues that indicates the cue number, what changes, and placement on the particular page number of the text. If the system is not dimmer per circuit then a patch list for the entire show should be included as well.

#### 10. MAGIC SHEET and CHEAT SHEET

Sometimes referred to as a "cuing sheet," the magic sheet is a single sheet which aids the lighting designer in setting cues or adjusting light levels. The sheet is laid out visually to help the designer remember how the lightplot is laid out and controlled. It's function is to accelerate the cuing process during technical rehearsals in the theater.

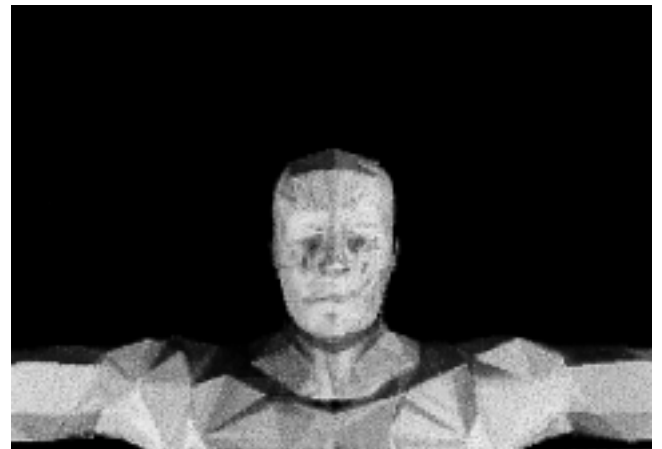
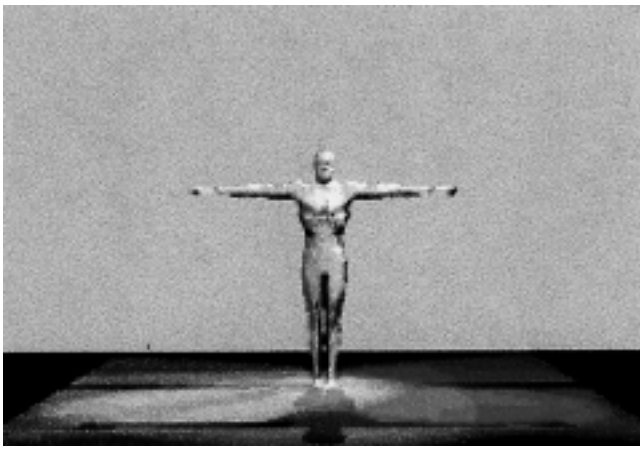
The cheat sheet is a listing by channel that indicates what mixtures are controlled by a particular control channel. Instead of being a graphic presentation the cheat sheet is alphanumeric. It serves the same function as the magic sheet.

11. DOCUMENTATION - reviews, photographs, videos, slides

For purposes of recording the process and artistic product of the lighting design, the following items may be included in the designer's portfolio for documentation: a production journal, a lighting budget record, a lighting calendar/lighting crew calls, focus charts, shop/rental orders, production photographs and color slides or color photocopies from slides.

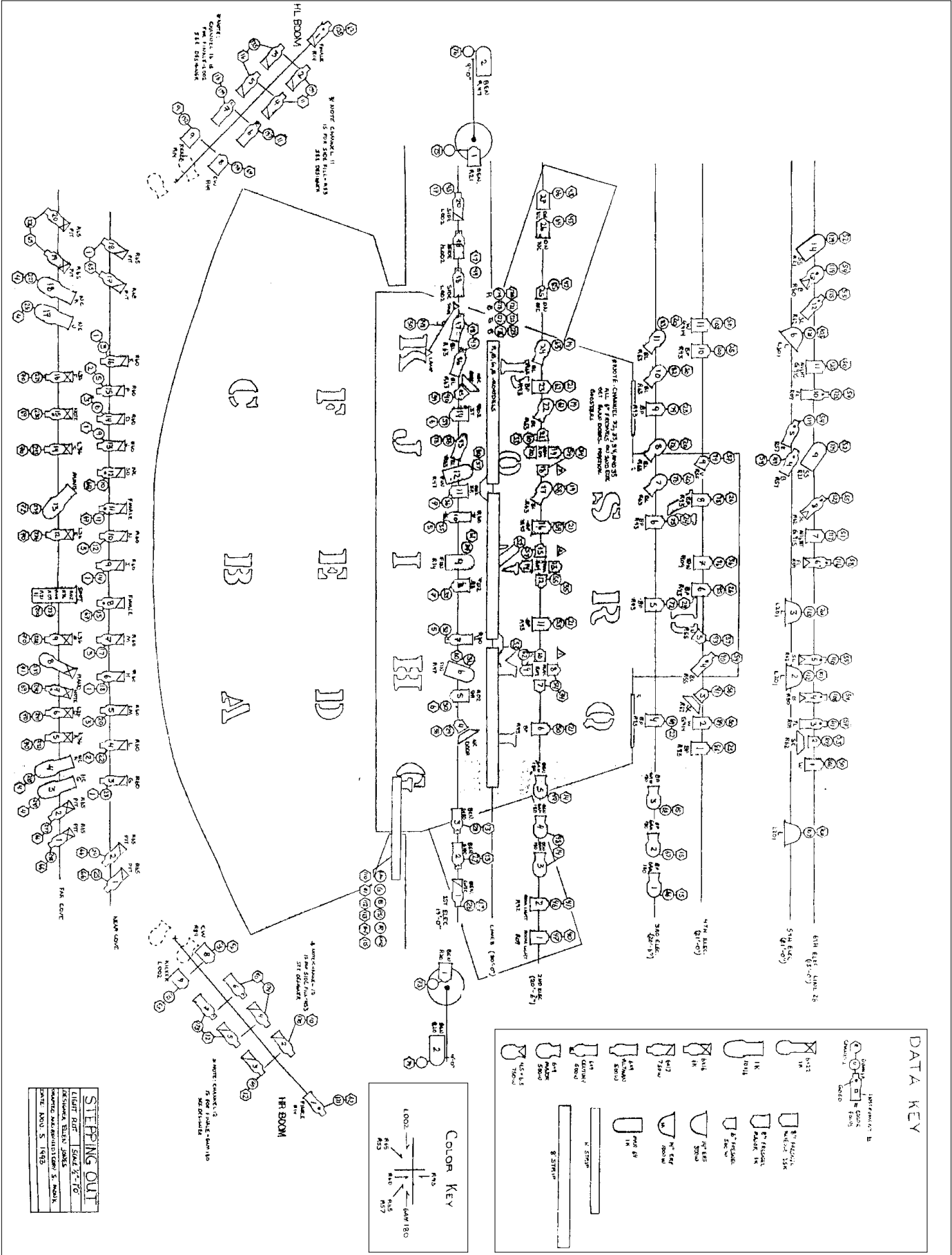
Items like budgets, shop orders, and call calendars are open to discussion as appropriate additional information for particular kinds of jobs. Most of those tasks should be handled by the master electrician or production manager. On the other hand, it may be advantageous for a job applicant to prove she or he understands all aspects of ordering rental equipment or efficiently organizing work details.

Whichever of these the designer elects to include should be neat and clear indications of the designer's abilities as well as be justified by the circumstances in order to document the design.



Storyboards can facilitate communication between the lighting designer and the director or other members of the creative team. The examples above (*Jesus Christ Superstar*—University of Florida, Gainesville) show a computer generated "look" (created with Virtual Light Lab) along with a corresponding production photo. The sketch on the right is another way to communicate, in visual terms, what the light will look like in a particular scene. (Storyboards and photos by Ellen E. Jones.)





CUE SHEET FOR SPOT OPERATORS – MEREDITH					
Q	COLOR	AREA	DESCRIPTION	LQ	FADE TIME
1	4	DSR	FULL BODY SHOT w/ ENTRANCE JUDAS	19	
2				24	5-sec. w/ end of song
3	2	CL	FULL BODY SHOT w/ BEG. OF SONG JESUS	25	
4				29	2-sec. w/ end of song
5	4	SR	JESUS–SR w/BEG OF SONG	29	
6				33	5-ct. w/ end of song
7	1	CS	MARY-FULL BODY SHOT w/ BEG OF SONG	34	
8	4	SL	JUDAS–W/BEG OF HER NUMBER FULL BODY SHOT	35	
9					2-ct. w/ end of song
10	2	C	UP ON JESUS FULL BODY SHOT	45.1	
11					2-ct. w/ end of song
11.5	1	C	PICK SHANNON UP w/ HER TUMBLING NUMBER		
12	4	DL	FULL BODY SHOT ON BABE w/ENTRANCE	47	
13				50	2-ct. w/ musical inter
14	2	CS	UP ON JC, FULL BODY SHOT w/SONG	51	
15					2-ct. w/ end of song
16	2	C	FULL BODY SHOT ON JC w/ENTRANCE	61	

**Light Plot**, opposite: Stepping Out—*Loyola University of Chicago*; *Ellen E. Jones, Lighting Designer; Corey S. Monk, Assistant LD (hand-drawn light plot by Mr. Monk)*

**Magic Sheet**, p. 66: *Jesus Christ Superstar—University of Florida, Gainesville; Ellen E. Jones, Lighting Designer*

Jesus Christ Superstar		CHANNEL HOOKUP			Page 1 of 12		
Lighting Designer: Ellen E. Jones							
Chn	Dim	Position	Unit	Type	Watts	Purpose	Color
(1)	2	37th Island	1	40-Deg Colortran	1kw	A	R305
(2)	18	28th Island	1	30-Deg Colortran	1kw	B	R05
(3)	17	28th Island	2	30-Deg Colortran	1kw	C	R05
(4)	19	27th Island	2	30-Deg Colortran	1kw	D	R05
(5)	20	27th Island	1	30-Deg Colortran	1kw	Steps	R05
(6)	6	35th Island	1	20-Deg Colortran	1kw	a	R05
	"	"	3	"	"	b	"
(7)	8	34th Island	1	20-Deg Colortran	1kw	C	R05
(8)	11	32nd Island	1	20-Deg Colortran	1kw	d	R05
	"	"	3	"	"	e	"
(9)	5	27th Island	3	30-Deg Colortran	1kw	f	R05
(10)	21	26th Island	2	30-Deg Colortran	1kw	g	R05

Examples of **lighting paperwork**: *Jesus Christ Superstar—University of Florida, Gainesville; Ellen E. Jones, Lighting Designer; Lauren Harton and Shamus McConney, Assistant LDs (follow spot cues were set by Ms. Harton; paperwork was done by Mr. McConney using Lightwright.)*

Jesus Christ Superstar CHEAT SHEET Pg 1 of 5			
LIGHTING DESIGNER: ELLEN E. JONES			
Chn	Purpose	Color	Chn
(1)	A	R305	(1)
(2)	B	R05	(2)
(3)	C	R05	(3)
(4)	D	R05	(4)
(5)	Steps	R05	(5)
(6)	a	R05	(6)
	c		
(7)	C	R05	(7)
(8)	d	R05	(8)
	e		
(9)	f	R05	(9)
(10)	g	R05	(10)
(11)	h	R05	(11)
(12)	J	R05	(12)
(13)	K	R05	(13)
(14)	L	R05	(14)
(15)	m	R05	(15)
(16)	n	R05	(16)
(17)	O	N/C	(17)
(18)	P	N/C	(18)
(19)	E	R05	(19)
(20)	F	R05	(20)
(21)	G	R05	(21)
(22)	BACK SL PLT	R05	(22)
(23)	FOH SL PLT Steps FOH SL UPPER PLT	R05	(23)
(24)	FOH SL TOP PLT	R05	(24)
(25)	FOH BRIDGE	R05	(25)
(26)	FOH SR PLT	R05	(26)
(27)	FOH SR PLT	R05	(27)
(28)	FOH SR MID PLT	R05	(28)
(29)	FOH SR PLT/BRIDGE	R05	(29)
(30)	FOH SR PLT	R05	(30)

Jesus Christ Superstar		INSTRUMENT SCHEDULE				Page 1 of 13	
Lighting Designer: Ellen E. Jones							
<b>First Electric</b>							
Unit	Chn	Dim	Type	Watts	Purpose	Color	
1	(22)	89	40-Deg Colortran	1kw	BACK DSL PLT	R05	
2	(75)	91	"	"	"	L142	
3	(120)	90	PAR 64 MFL	"	"	R17	
4	(75)	91	40-Deg Colortran	"	BACK DSL DECK	L142	
5	(53)	92	PAR 64 MFL	"	SIDE CS	R21	
6	(120)	90	"	"	BACK CS	R17	
7	(95)	94	8- Kliegl Fresnel	"	BACK DSL	R65	
8	(54)	96	PAR 64 MFL	"	SIDE SL	R21	
9	(76)	95	40-Deg Colortran	"	BACK DSC	L142	
10	(54)	96	PAR 64 MFL	"	SIDE SL	R21	
11	(96)	97	8- Kliegl Fresnel	"	BACK DSC	R65	
12	(77)	98	40-Deg Colortran	"	BACK DSR	L142	
13	(66)	99	PAR 64 MFL	"	SIDE SR	R50	
14	(26)	100	6X9 Altman 360Q	"	FOH SR PLT	R05	
15	(27)	101	"	"	"	"	
16	(96)	97	8- Kliegl Fresnel	"	BACK DSR	R65	
17	(28)	102	6X9 Altman 360Q	"	FOH SR MID PLT	R05	
18	(67)	93	PAR 64 MFL	"	SIDE	R50	
19	"	"	"	"	"	"	

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