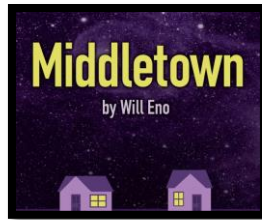


Concept Statement (Formal Visualization Paper)

American Theatre invites comparison to itself often. The works of Williams, Miller, O'Neil, and Simon have just in many ways been recycled and refreshed in modern theatre over and over, offering varied situations but tried and true themes. *Middletown* easily inspires comparison to the titular *Our Town* with its focus on small town America and its inhabitants, a preoccupation with life, death, and what's in between, and a small stylized approach to its presentation. However to view the two plays as sides of a coin does a disservice to both; where *Our Town* uses ordinary people in an ordinary place to exhibit the small and normal thoughts and actions of our everyday lives, *Middletown* invites the towngoers to think beyond their small existence and grandly question life as well as their place in it. The famous image of *Our Town*, Emily and George mirrored on ladders in the pale moonlight, is a scene of childish innocence with their younger siblings, struggling to understand the feelings of love and their scale in the world around them. The quintessential moments in *Middletown* are the quiet monologues when members of the small community expand beyond their bounds of understanding, waxing philosophic with beautiful soaring language, asking not only questions of the universe, but equally often giving answers. A reasonable connection between these two gentle plays can be drawn, but it would appear to be less like identical twins, but rather a young brother yearning for hope and future and his older wiser sibling, looking on the world with more perspective and breadth.

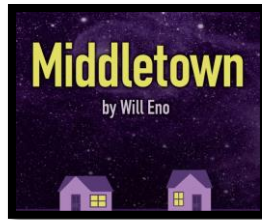
As the lighting designer for the piece, I am interested in exploring and emphasizing the difference between scenes and moments in the play which exist in the real, grounded world, and those which happen partially in the fantasy of the play and characters minds. This is a complex goal as no moment in the play outside of a few isolated speeches to the audience and the internal intermission are explicitly outside of the real story; however many moments and scenes contain fantastic elements and romantic theatrical images more than they do naturalistic tendencies. Moments such as the astronaut in space, the poetic wandering night policemen, drug induced Native American impersonation, and painful death onstage call for a lighting treatment which is more stylized, artistic, and bold than the realistic scenes which ask for traditional theatrical lighting imitating natural situations and images. Carefully showing the difference between these types of moments will serve a twofold purpose in the presentation of



the play. First, it will allow these powerful emotional moments to have an even greater impact upon the audience, as the soaring and beautiful text that is inherent in the more stylized moments will be matched by more saturated and dramatic lighting. Second it will help the audience easily identify the connecting story of the piece (which is told in the realistic moments) while not being confused by the occasional diversion into the dramatic moments. In other words, the main “story” of the piece between Mrs. Swanson and John Dodge and the characters speaking about things which will affect them is lit in more realistic lighting cues, while the scenes and monologues with fill out the townspeople and give larger context, as well as offer dramatic glimpses into these characters souls, will be lit to emphasize them as different moments.

This distinction will be achieved across all the controllable qualities of light as highlighted below.

- Intensity
 - o In the more realistic scenes, intensity will be bright and evenly distributed. The playing areas will be brightly lit with gradual fade to darkness at the edges of the stage. The world is large
 - o In the more stylized moments, Intensity will be tightly focused on the actor or actors, their actions will be starkly highlighted against darkness around them and in the space. The worlds are small
- Color
 - o In the more realistic scenes, color will be natural and tinted slightly to indicate realistic sources such as the sun, moon, and lightbulbs. Color will be used to indicate the difference between night and day or morning and evening. A naturalistic approach to color means it is relatively unsaturated. The world is like a photograph.
 - o In the more stylized scenes, color will be bold and deep to indicate mood, tone, and the inner feelings of the character. Color will be used to help take the audience along the journey the that actor is following, indicating both passion an intellect, irreverent of colors found in nature. The world is like a painting.



- Distribution

- In the realistic scenes, angle is used to provide equal visibility to all audience members. Each actor is lit from both sides and the front of the stage so that each audience member views a relatively consistent actor while being able to clearly see the sometimes long scenes clearly. Texture is used to provide additional information on the placement of the characters. When the action occurs outdoors, stippling patterns indicate tree shadow; when indoors, window patterns indicate that the actors stand close to large windows with beaming sunlight. The world is clear
- In the stylized scenes, both angle and texture are used to provide dramatic intensity and emotional power. Sharp angles which highlight the shape of characters, such as back diagonals and low scraping beams are used to heighten dramatic intrigue and increase emotional intensity. Actors are lit from the front when speaking but still with other powerful angles and additional highlights. The world is bold.

- Movement:

- In the realistic scenes, movement reflects the natural movement of light in nature, which is smooth and clean. Fades between scenes are soft changes and draw little attention. Internal changes within scenes are used very subtly and slowly to help draw focus, ideally with no audience members noticing their existence. The lighting shifts react to the progression of the play.
- In the stylized scenes, movement, when used, is more dramatic and as a result, quicker. Fades are quicker and have the purpose of driving the story forward. The lighting shifts push the progression of the play themselves.