

Scene Breakdown and Initial Lighting Thoughts

23 May 2017

I wanted to first write some of the general thoughts that I have had and general lighting conclusions I have found in my analysis. Think of this as large points that apply show wide to be specifically worked out scene by scene below. The attached research packet is my first version with some large scale images that are not specific to any one moment but give the feelings which I want to help inspire. Further research next week and the following will sink into further scene by scene images.

- I am really interested, now that I have a set to imagine, in the contrast between the stage space we see and what is outside of it. We have these giant gaping holes in the stage on both sides between our walls and it begs the questions in my mind of what kind of light comes from outside the space and intrudes it, and what kind of light resides inside of the space. The direction I have been heading with much of this first analysis is based on two large principles.
 - o Light which occurs or is intended to replicate light from INSIDE of the onstage space is driven by the idea of early incandescent bulbs and firelight. In other words, if light is meant to appear to be coming from inside the castle, it will be diffused, warm, brighter at its source and fade toward the edges, and seem to be nonspecific in its origin. (the first two pages of the images are some brief examples of this idea)
 - o Light which comes from the sides of the stage, though the gaps between scenic walls, are always indicating what is occurring outside of the space. I am thinking of them as giant windows to the outside world that pour in light, color, shape, and brightness from the outside. Using beams of light with shapes of windows, washes of nighttime cools, and other variations on this theme, this "outside world" will be always present and teasing those inside the castle at their metaphorical captivity. (The second two pages of the research have some brief examples of this idea)
 - o The contrast of these two "worlds of light" will allow me to have dynamic combinations of cool and warm as well as texture and smoothness. It allows for dynamic angles of light to strike characters from the outside world while also giving the flexibility to make spaces small and cramped with light from within the world. The specifics of all this, how much to rely on practical's, how many lights have gobo's of windows vs being just color washes....etc. are all nowhere near fleshed out in my brain. But I am curious on your thoughts about my ideas here. As well as the images packet. The images after the first two pages are a bit all over the place but offer some strong images I am interested in. Let me know if anything strikes you as particularly right or wrong!
- We spoke at one point about using light to "crack" the back wall over the course of the show to indicate cracks in the glass, and to do something similar to the floor. Are you interested in continuing that conversation and how that might work or has that moved from your mind?

Act I Scene I – *Guards of Elsinore Castle and Horatio encounter the ghost of dead King Hamlet; fearful and amazed, unable to make the ghost speak, the compatriots determine young Hamlet will be able to speak to the apparition.*

- Takes place in the deep night, travels from midnight to 6am over the course of the scene.
- Outdoors, exposed to the elements.
- Too dark to see faces from only a short distance away
- Ghost is a self-source of light, shape and figure is immediately identified as that of the dead King.
- Equal parts fear and wonder are offered to the spirit.





Direction by Susan Felder
Lighting Design by Oliver Littleton

- Practical's in the hands of guards? Specifically period Flashlights, offering beams of definition, guards light each other with minimal reinforcement of stage lighting.
- Any reinforcement should be sodium vapor colored, street lamp style.
- Thoughts on ghost in this first scene.
 - He arrives quickly and within 1 line it is recognized.
 - "Peace, break thee off: Look where it comes again. / In the same figure, like the King that's dead"
 - It seems essential that the ghost is in a recognizable form almost immediately, unless you want to break this convention and rely on the audience understanding the theatricality of it? We spoke about a mysterious small presence in the corners of the room; in my estimation the only way for that to work while making the ghost recognizable quick enough, would be to have the ghost present *From the beginning of the scene*. If a small terrifying presence was always somewhere onstage, moving around slowly, on the edges of the vision of the actors, never there and always present, it would offer the sense of dread and terror to the 4 characters while never being able to identify why they are so scared; then on the actual arrival of the ghost, we transfer that to the physical form of an actor. Thoughts?
- How would you like to address the compression of time in the scene, we fly from 12am to 6am within two pages. Obviously a lighting change, a brightening will accompany the cock crow and sunlight will creep in slowly at the end of the scene, but did you have any thoughts on this rapid time shift? The real question is whether or not its more appealing to you to see a constant change over the course of the scene, a 4 or 5 minute shift from deep night to early morning, or whether it should happen suddenly. Personally I am a little more interested in the idea that we are in the deep night fully right up until the **MOMENT** the cock crows, and then suddenly day is breaking and there is a rapid growth of early morning light. It embraces the shocking passage of time and makes us question things like – "were the characters in a trance? Does this ghost have power over time? Is magic involved here? Ect." This wouldn't express itself as a sudden flash of bright light obviously! It would just be a more rapid change from dark to light than a slow scene long growth.



Act I Scene II – New King Claudius flexes his power publically while manipulating Hamlet to stay close at hand; Horatio and friends convince the young prince to come and see the ghost with them that evening.

- It's a large and crowded atmosphere
- Opens up the space for contrast to the first scene
- Indoors but bright and cheery – a party
- Claudius is a presenter, he flourishes and uses tone, speech, and verbal force to be the center of attention, a showman.
- Afternoon, if we see light from the outside its fading but still strong.
- After mass exeunt, Hamlet is left alone, suddenly space is cavernous and open with small man left in it, same space that felt stuffed now feels empty.





Direction by Susan Felder
Lighting Design by Oliver Littleton

- Shrinks to become warmer and friendlier with entrance of others. Reflects Hamlets comfort with the world.
- I was captured by this idea of Claudius being on a stage, or in a way the center, and found myself why the party stops for his pronouncements, as in what physical actions show that he stops things. His whole speech reads as much like a press conference as anything. I thought it might be interesting to actually treat him as if he were on a stage, hit him with a bright spotlight like thing, have a period microphone shoved in his face, maybe even have a live radio broadcast being operated while he spoke – the whole show he ALWAYS feels as if he is speaking to a crowd, or for a performance, even his Church scene feels to me to be somewhat, contrived. I got this image of two or three radio broadcasters following him around the ENTIRE show, always holding a microphone to his mouth, every single thing he says broadcast to the public, as a deep reference to the culture now of politicians having every moment tweeted, recorded, monitored. It's just an idea, not something I actually expect to be pursued, but a way to think of his function in the world of the play.
- On a separate note, is Hamlet directly addressing the audience, or speaking to himself. This is just a general question about the show as a whole that we never talked about, but since you are never placing actors in the audience, is the fourth wall intact and Hamlet is, as lots of people do, constantly talking out loud to himself? Or is it traditional direct address involving us the audience? Or a combination?

Act I Scene III – Noble Laertes bids goodbye to his sister and father while advice is offered to departing boy and patient sister. Polonius demands to be obeyed.

- Occurs at the train station where Laertes will depart from
- Huge expanse intended, but the scene is small and intimate. The feeling of standing in grand central station, both connected to those around and isolated in everyone's disconnected objectives.
- Contrast between Laertes being there and being gone is needed
- People moving in background of scene? Busy hustle of life stopped by this quiet moment of family.
- Fog – I have a method I think might work for quickly getting some atmospherics into the space for this scene that also dissipate relatively quickly. It would be most effective if actors and crew entered quickly from SR and SL in any of the entrance bays during transition, the fog would also come from here quickly and the idea would be that the actors entrance would drag the atmospherics in with them quickly filling the space with thick steam-like fog. I can describe this in more detail to you if you are interested in pursuing it.
- Before Laertes leaves the small carved out family space should feel warmer and more pleasant, on his leaving, the world becomes subtly colder with just Ophelia and Polonius, sub textually it's the leaving of hope that will later return. Subtle – not a snap change or anything so overt.
- Using the back wall here in a beautiful and dynamic way would give the grandness of the space without having to add any major pieces. The way stained glass or large windows makes a space feel grand and classical.





- Are you going to have performers in the background of the scene continuously exiting and entering to imply the busy scene that exists around them? Or establish this at the beginning and then let it drop away slowly?

Act I Scene IV – *Hamlet meets the ghost of his father, and much to the terror of his friends, follows the apparition into the castle and away from the others.*

- It is cold and just after midnight, once again, outdoors, the same look and feeling from scene I
- See notes on ghost in Scene 1 – if the ghost is present from the beginning then that would apply again here.
- Practical's again would be appropriate. In the same way as Scene I.
- Ghost appears and is clearly visible in shape and to beckon.
- Ghost does not leave until Hamlet chases it.
- Just some questions here to be addressed in blocking about where the shape is located and where it exits, I think using the practical flashlights again here would be a good choice to help control the amount of light in the room.

Act I Scene V – *Young Hamlet is told by the Ghost how father was slain and the prince swears to take revenge upon villainous Claudius while not punishing his mother, Gertrude. Hamlet and Ghost force Horatio and Marcellus to swear to silence about the whole sequence of events.*

- An interior at night, Hamlet still carries his flashlight, opportunity for “magical” turning on of lights in the room. Hamlet runs into dark space, calls out for the ghost, practical's turn on of their own volition.
- Space feels shadowy and dark, mysterious – until Ghost becomes corporeal, suddenly comfort emanates from the form and makes the space safer.
- Process of becoming corporeal should be huge and dramatic, see research image of beams of light. Probably initiates from back wall. Would be super effective to place actor CS at top of set and have him revealed by blinding beam from back, which absorbs into him as he strides down stairs to embrace his son.
- Shadows from outside are still nighttime cold, the same compression of time from the 1st scene occurs again however with morning coming suddenly, trope which is established in scene 1 (either slow fade or sudden appearance of warmth) should be followed here.
- When does the ghost become corporeal?
- We never discussed your stance on the “realness” of the ghost, the likelihood that his is all actually occurring versus it occurring in Hamlet's mind/some combination. I am not sure if it actually alters any of the lighting choices I make because either way it is equally real to the protagonist, but I am curious to wrap my head around your interpretation of the story. Is the answer ultimately not important?
- The cries of the ghost at the end of the scene, do you see these as powerful combinations of sound and light (i.e. David Tenant Hamlet, screen shaking violent earthquake like size) or small whispers of haunting reminders?





Act II Scene I – *Ophelia, fearing for Hamlet's sanity in the wake of his crazed appearance in her chambers, begs her father's help. Polonius, believing he has cracked the code to Hamlet's strange behavior in his affection for Ophelia, rushes to the king.*

- A small room inside the castle, Polonius's personal chambers
- Shape of light needs to tell quick story about room, light should be sharply cut and CLEARLY define space – offers subtle indication that Polonius keeps his chambers structured and straight.
- Outside light, if any, is midday and non-specific. Largely, light should be innocuous and focus on revealing scene with no overt message.
- Do you desire a specificity to the space? Or an intentional blandness to it, is it personal, as in, a beam of light from a window like one that might shine on Polonius's desk; something that makes this a specific spot in the castle, or is it a hallway which could be anywhere. Do you want any attention to the space other than making the actors clearly lit is another way of asking that. I can see an advantage to both directions.

Act II Scene II– *King and Queen welcome Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to Elsinore, summoned in order to ascertain the reason for Hamlet's foul mood and strange behavior. Polonius posits his theory of excessive teenage love to be the cause, and speaks to Hamlet to determine the accuracy of his hypothesis. Hamlet reveals he knows his friends real reason for coming to Elsinore, and a distraction in the form of traveling players leads Hamlet to feel guilty for not having yet acted in revenge for his father's death. He demands a performance of the players to reveal whether or not the ghost was telling the truth about Hamlet's uncle.*

- A receiving area for the king, but somewhere public enough to accept visitors. In the vein of a throne room or a sitting area. Should feel large and bright, windows show the outside and height of the space embraced.
- Dynamic and large, works best to embrace idea the it is midday.
- I think this scene will work best with a single static look of lighting that traverses through all the various beats. An enormous amount of information is passed during this long scene, and I believe it contains some of the most layered and difficult to understand metaphors of the whole show, specifically the interaction between Polonius and Hamlet as well as the subtle notes in the player kings speech and Hamlets reaction. I feel that moving the lighting around the space to shrink and expand it isn't supported by the text and would distract more than it would help. Working to build a clean, and balanced full stage look from the opening moments that sustains throughout is the way I see this scene working best. The look should be dynamic and intentional, with key light coming from implied windows SL and SR, perhaps light texture of muttons and mullions giving a shape and dynamism to the space.

Act III Scene I– *King and Queen urge Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to continue their search for Hamlet's actions, Polonius and Claudius spy upon Hamlets musing on life and his awkward exchange with Ophelia. They are unable to determine whether Hamlet's ravings against Ophelia are a symptom of madness or the root cause.*





Direction by Susan Felder
Lighting Design by Oliver Littleton

- Evening, not deep night, but after supper. A different place than the previous scene, more private and contained, the size of the space is reduced.
- Might work well to still use the full width of the space but constrain the height of it to DS of the Platforms or only up to the first level, gives US space for Claudius and Polonius to “hide” while also making the scene feel more intimate.
- Exterior light should be dark and implied nighttime, interior practical's and reinforcement light the space. Leaving corners of the stage darker, as a castle like space would appear at night, would give the scene a different tone than the previous interior scenes.
- Again a static look throughout with actors entering and exiting the lit space to “hide” and “appear” feels like the right approach here.
- Where the previous nights have felt dark, foreboding, and leaning a more traditional deep blue, I am interested in approaching a cleaner, whiter moonlight coming from the side of the space for this scene.

Act III Scene II– Hamlet instructs the players on performing his new text and the play as a whole. A prologue and scene designed to draw out Claudius’s guilt ruffles feathers in the court and, in Hamlet’s view, proves that the ghost told the truth and Claudius is guilty. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern cannot ascertain the intent behind these actions and Hamlet plans to go accost his mother.

- The world of the play vs the world of the play within a play. Helps best to clearly define the two.
- It is nighttime, in a main court area, a large full stage space.
- Curtains have dropped in from scenic.
- Scene is small at first, or at least dim, when King enters space brightens.
- For Play within a play space darkens and “specials for staging area come up.
- At end, on the King’s call for more light, the practical’s lighten up and the space is rendered in powerful light from everywhere.
- Dark foreboding nighttime
- For “stage” lighting – would be interesting to have lighting fixtures rolled onstage that are period, and used to point at stage area. Something like the picture. If not interested in having things onstage, I would just bring intensity to the playing area and dim the rest of the space.
- Once details on curtains from grid are decided I would love to do vertical scrapes on those to accent the height of the space and have their tearing down at the end of the scene be even more dramatic.
- After brightening, lights are slowly turned off and reduced as more people leave the space, until only Polonius and Hamlet are left in a very dark room, low and dimly lit, only enough light for our two actors to be seen, a gradual decline.
- How long of an intermission are we taking? And do you want to have the front scrim up or down during the intermission? I.e. would you like an onstage look during the break.





Direction by Susan Felder
Lighting Design by Oliver Littleton

Act III Scene III— *Claudius, fearing Hamlet's knowledge of the evil deeds the king has committed, plans to send the boy away to England, meanwhile he prays for forgiveness and release from the guilt he feels for slaying his brother to attain the crown. Hamlet cannot force himself to take revenge even when the opportunity lies kneeling before him.*

- Primarily takes place in a “holy area”
- 2 Parts –
 - P1 is quick and between king, hamlet's friends, and Polonius. Seems to take place outside of a chapel or quiet place – at the doorway to the area of prayer kind of thing. Small, a soft introduction to the act. Only as much space as needed.
 - P2 is the opposite, the space opens up fully in a new way.
 - I would like to propose an idea that, though not necessarily original I think would work well here. I think it would be interesting for the first part of the scene to take place USC on the upper platform in a small tight area, and as Polonius leaves, Claudius begins to come DSC straight, as a hallway of white light only a few feet wide but the full depth of the stage is formed. Claudius comes to its very front and kneels. When Hamlet enters he does so from either SL or SR on floor level and a horizontal hallway of light, perpendicular to the first, forms the full length of the stage. This creates the shape of a white cross on the floor, Claudius kneeling at the top, Hamlet pacing along the horizontal. A strong, if not terribly subtle image to sustain through the scene. I can describe this in more detail if you are interested.

Act III Scene IV— *Hamlet confronts Gertrude with her marrying a far inferior man to her previous husband, Polonius is slain by the Prince, mistaking the old fool for a lecherous uncle, the ghost returns and reminds Hamlet of his purpose. Hamlet demands his mother not sleep with Claudius anymore and determines to circumvent his uncle's attempts to send him away to England.*

- The private chambers of Gertrude, soft edged and contained, a small space makes the interaction of the two more tense.
- I think a practical lamp or nearby wall lamp would work best as the key light for the scene, a warm glow that reads as private space and help shrinks the large walls to a more human size.
- How Polonius is disguised and killed will effect angles and direction for this scene (cant have side light if he is hiding SR of the scene etc)
- Full disclosure, this scene is one I have less of a clear image of at this moment as to how it should feel, I am unsure of how to handle the ghosts return, though this somewhat relies on how he is established in the first act and whether his return should feel, magical, or somehow normal.

Act IV Scene I— *Gertrude tells Claudius of Hamlet's murder, and the king commands Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to seek out the body to be brought to the chapel.*

- Very early in the morning, the sun is just peeping up through the windows and bleeding into the space, the early haze of day before light is proper.





- This scene moves quickly into the next and shares characters so they must flow freely, I would expect this scene to take place either SL or SR and the next to transition to the other smoothly, or the same method with US and DS. Whatever section is lit will share the same motif of early morning light with the next scene in another section via smooth crossfade.

Act IV Scene II— *Gertrude tells Claudius of Hamlet's murder, and the king commands Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to seek out the body to be brought to the chapel.*

- Very early in the morning, the sun is just peeping up through the windows and bleeding into the space, the early haze of day before light is proper.
- The two scenes should share a common look. Pale colors, Side beams through windows,

Act IV Scene III— *Hamlet divulges to Claudius where he has hidden the body of Polonius; the king tells the prince that he will be sent to England for this offense, secretly planning for Hamlet to meet his end on the seas.*

Same as Act II Scene II

- A receiving area for the king, but somewhere public enough to accept visitors. In the vein of a throne room or a sitting area. Should feel large and bright, windows show the outside and height of the space embraced.
- Dynamic and large, works best to embrace idea the it is midday.

Act IV Scene IV— *Traveling to the coast for his trip to England, Hamlet encounters the army of Fortinbras, marching on a meaningless patch of polish land. The scope and waste of the army spurs Hamlet to again chide himself on his own indecision and unwillingness to act against his uncle. He promises that no more delay will be made on his revenge.*

- A complete diversion from every previous scene, takes place outdoors, separate from Elsinore.
- Use powerful backlights and Cool colors from the top to distinguish this as unique space, Light haze from top could do this additionally. Single system of unified wash.
- I have a clear image of this scene as a full stage cold wash that doesn't incorporate the walls, hopefully drawing our eyes away from them and encouraging the idea that this scene is outdoors and away from the castle. However if you feel this should operate as a small or quiet moment versus a highlight of size, then I can take my images in a different direction.

Act IV Scene V— *Ophelia presents Gertrude and Claudius with a soul of betrayed madness. The people clamor for Laertes to be king and the young man demands penance for his father's death. Ophelia arrives and to the horror of all fully embraces her fears and insanity.*

- A private place that the King and the Queen receive visitors, it is simultaneously appropriate for Ophelia to visit them there but also a violation when Laertes bursts in.
- It is of medium size that uses the space but does not revel in it.





Direction by Susan Felder
Lighting Design by Oliver Littleton

- Strong afternoon beams of light from the outdoors contrast the cold despair of the inside. Madness and chaos presented in harsh beauty.
- Consistent indoor tones, strong sidelights through windows, deep angles from all sides.

Act IV Scene VI— *A brief aside as Horatio reads a letter from Hamlet describing recent events on the trip to England.*

- A small corner of the space that is lit simply to provide illumination for this quick moment of exposition.

Act IV Scene VII— *Claudius tries to calm Laertes grief by pointing it at a returning Hamlet to blame. They hatch a plot to punish the young Prince. Gertrude arrives to tell them Ophelia has drowned herself in the river.*

- A quiet corner of the castle, the mood is hushed and conspiratorial.
- A small area of the stage lit dimly and with ill intent. Should reflect the inner Claudius.
- Practical driven warm soft area, the idea that the two have found a quiet corner to huddle in.

Act V Scene I— *Hamlet stumbles upon too clownish gravediggers preparing to bury Ophelia, old teacher Yorick's skull causes Hamlet to wax philosophical. The burial party arrives, Laertes and Hamlet exchange blows.*

- Grey outdoors – rain effects in combination need to be worked out still.
- Area DSR is tomb and will be focal point until party enters, however rain occurs on back wall and whole space should be addressed with grey neutral sadness.
- When party opens, preserve bleakness but open up space.
- Contrast strong emotions and energy of scene with calm stillness.
- Top lights of L03 – all straight down and diffused. Unclear directionally to encourage haziness.

Act IV Scene II Part 1— *Horatio fears foul play and urges Hamlet to not take part in the duel, Hamlet embraces his fate whether it come for him now or later; Osric informs them of the wager set by the King on Hamlet. Aka. Hamlet finally gets the guts up to actually do something. About time.*

- The room where the battle will take place. But it is small now, intimate and open all at once.
- There is a delicate nature to this scene, true friendship and care shown between the two and maturity expressed by Hamlet is revolutionary in its freshness. The lighting should hold up this moment between the two as a careful and beautiful moment.
- Outdoor light is strong and cool streaming in. A beautiful afternoon, the feeling of the last warm day in the fall. Out of nowhere clarity and cleanliness. More thought on how to achieve this technically.





HAMLET
PRINCE OF DENMARK

Direction by Susan Felder
Lighting Design by Oliver Littleton

- Key is to make upcoming transition to larger, realistic scene, believable.

Act V Scene II Part 2– *It's the end of Hamlet, everyone dies, Fortinbras appears out of nowhere. Horatio's life is terrible.*

- The light from outside fades naturally over the course of the scene.
- We begin with bright beams of cool light and fade during the course of the madness to being only internally present, the prison fully shuts out the outdoors and becomes a locked in space of warm prison.
- Start with sides and tops even, scene long crossfade into night and gently into only internal lights. When Fortinbras enters, white light beams in.
- The focus must always remain on Hamlet, specifically after his death, everyone else is just there to fill time for his exit
- Beautiful crackling moment on the back wall. Still TBD
- I am not very clear on this last scene at the moment, but I find that as I work through the rest of the show, the end will fall into place in my mind naturally so I am not stressing about working any of these specifics out right now.