

ALPD[#]

Professional
Process for
Lighting
Programmers

The ALPD
078117 061089
office@thealpd.org.uk
www.thealpd.org.uk

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The ALPD Professional Process for Lighting Programmers

The Lighting Programmer works closely with the lighting designer to realise and achieve the lighting design by setting up and programming the lighting console, so that the show can be accurately played back for every performance. They are at the forefront of managing the ever-growing volume of data and intricate control networks. This document is intended to explain some of the processes required to fulfil this role at each stage of the production process.

Engagement

Getting a job

The lighting programmer would be availability checked by either the production manager, the producer or the lighting designer. Until there is a deal memo agreed by the management, the programmer will not be fully signed up to the project, so it is essential this is done as early as possible.

Contract / Deal memo

- A deal memo or contract should be agreed stating the terms and include the dates, day rates and payment schedules in order to protect both the programmer and the producer.
- The programmer will be booked until press night, or an agreed technical freeze date.
- Travel and accommodation requirements, as well as a per diem allowance will be agreed at this stage.

For further information please refer to the ALPD Lighting Programmers Contract Checklist

Pre-production

The lighting programmer needs to do a substantial amount of work prior to arriving on site - this work needs to be budgeted and paid for.

Planning and Design

- Work with the production electrician on the design of the lighting control system which will need to be specified for hire.
- On delivery of the lighting plan from the lighting designer to undertake research into fixture types and control modes to ensure the correct functionality of the lighting equipment.
- Engage and contribute to the bid list to ensure adequate control and production desk equipment is included.
- Keep up to date with changes to the rig as the plan evolves and final hire deals are agreed with rental companies and input where needed.

Preparation Work

All the programming for a production is stored in a show file, and this needs to be prepared in advance of the load in.

- Program the Patch into the show file - this may be need in advance of hire shop prep week.
- Adequate time needs to be allocated in order to create a bespoke working show file prior to arrival on site.
- Have discussions with other departments about show control triggers and ensure the relevant equipment to achieve this is available.

Pre-visualisation

It is common for bigger scale productions to achieve some pre-plotting of lighting cues in a pre-visualisation suite. This process will require a specialist draughts-person to create the 3D model that the lighting designer and programmer will use. The creation of a complex show in advance of time in the venue, will allow the technical rehearsal process to be more efficient.

Rehearsals

The programmer should attend a rehearsal room run through, so they have a good understanding of the show and what the lighting designer and the creative teams vision for the show.

Production Load In

Load In

The lighting programmer needs to arrive in the venue during the load in, a day or two before the focus is scheduled. It is essential for the programmer to check the prepared systems ensure they have control of everything before the arrival of the lighting designer.

- Check and Lock down the control system
- Flash out the rig, and ensure everything is working correctly.
- Prepare and set moving light attributes
- Colour mix pre-requested colours for quicker programming during plotting
- Create some focus positions for faster programming during technicals
- Check and adjust any pre-visualised moving light focus position
- Set up and establish show control triggers with other departments

Production desk setup - the production desk should be easily accessible, at a safe working height with a comfortable, lumbar supporting chair. There should be enough space for the lighting console and additional monitors, as well as laptops, personal effects, comms and paperwork. Theatre seats usually need to be removed to achieve this.

Technical Rehearsals

The lighting programmer acts as a key link between the creative and technical sides of the lighting team and plays a crucial role in interacting with all the other departments.

- ▢ Complex data programming of the lighting control system.
- ▢ Programming the show - understanding the lighting designer's creative ideas and converting that into data to store in the console as lighting cues.
- ▢ Liaise with other departments; stage management, sound, video, and automation, to sync the cueing of the lighting with the other elements of the production.
- ▢ Maintain a constant dialogue with production electrician as elements are added and require maintenance or need to be moved to better serve the production
- ▢ Daily rig checks with show and venue staff prior to the start of rehearsals.

(Write something here about lighting team always need / expect someone at the console)

Previews

The programmer's intimate knowledge of the show comes into its own here - what may seem like the smallest of changes to the show on stage during an afternoon notes session, can sometimes have a big knock on effect to the lighting show file.

- ▢ Morning production desk set up and strike before the preview performance.
- ▢ Plotting sessions with LD, and tech sessions with full company on stage.
- ▢ Attend previews and post preview notes sessions.
- ▢ Take notes during the previews and action any programming issues that need attending to.
- ▢ The programmer must handover and train the desk operator and show running team
- ▢ In order for the show staff to maintain the production to a high standard the programmer must Create paperwork, a show operating manual, a control system layout, a document of addresses and settings, and details of fixture modes
- ▢ Rationalise the show file, deleting any unused presets, channels and cues to ensure the show file is clean and ready to be left.

Press Night

On press night the lighting programmer will be on hand in case anything goes wrong during the rig checks, or the performance itself. If the programmer is not present, any issues discovered cannot be rectified for the press night performance.

Post Production

Documentation

It is essential to document the show immediately after the production is frozen. This involves programmer and the show lighting team

- To ensure there is a photographic reference of every light, in every position it is used in throughout the show is essential for the team running and maintaining the show
- The equipment used to document the show is specialist cameras and software, and will need to be hired.
- It is necessary to have stage management, flies and automation staff available for these documentation sessions in order to have all the scenery in the correct positions for the documentation sessions.
- If there is no documentation for the show staff, the production can look messy very quickly and affect the performance as moving lights can 'drift' and lose their focus information over the duration of the run.

Touring

There is additional programming work required to set up a production to tour to enable the touring show staff to efficiently relight the show under the time pressures of a tour fit up. The programmer would need additional time in advance of the first venue and should attend the first move of any tour to ensure the detailed knowledge of the show file is passed on and the lighting design is adapted as required.

EPK / filming

Lighting states for a live performance need to be adjusted for camera and therefore it is essential to engage the programmer for any filming that is to be undertaken to ensure the day runs smoothly. The programmer has an in depth understanding of the lighting design and can ensure the lighting translates to camera especially in the absence of the lighting designer at the EPK. When possible, these dates should be booked with the programmer as early as possible to ensure their availability.

Remount of an existing show

For the remount of an existing show the programmer will need preparation time to re-acquaint themselves with the show file, and to prepare for any lighting rig adjustments. Depending on the scale of the changes to the lighting rig, the amount of work required on this can expand.

If there are equipment changes, it is advantageous for the programmer to spend time at the hire shop, so they can compare the physical output of the old and new fixture types side by side and do the colour balancing and other adjustments. Not budgeting for this process is a false economy and will lead to a much slower technical rehearsal process.