

Shedding a Little Light on the Dark Side of Theater.

Contributed by Laura Salvaggio
Saturday, 30 December 2006
Last Updated Tuesday, 09 January 2007

Welcome to Theater Helper. This site is dedicated to providing advice and instruction in some of the areas of tech theater in which I feel more advice and instruction are needed. It was born when I was building a model one day and thinking back to the early days when the same tasks took me much longer to perform. So many times I have done something only to realize later that there was a faster and easier way to do the same thing. I am hoping the knowledge I share on this site will save others from some of my more frustrating experiences.

I knew I wanted to go into scenic design somewhere in the middle of high school, and I never wavered in that goal. I went through the BFA Production Design program at SUNY Fredonia, and then the MFA program in Scenic Design at Temple University. Since then, I have had the opportunity to experience the "real" world of freelance theater for a few years. I have come to realize recently that many of the things that took me hours upon hours to do at first now take me only a few minutes. The difference isn't that I'm tons faster. I do have increased speed with experience, but that's not the majority of my improvement. The majority is in knowledge of how to work more effectively. I've learned there is a time to do things right and a time to do things down and dirty. I've also learned the hows of doing things right and the hows of doing things down and dirty. (It's one thing to decide it's time for a shortcut and completely another to know what that shortcut is.) There are tricks that come from hard lessons or advice. One of my goals with this site is to pass on as many of my tricks as possible through the advice avenue, in hope that someone out there benefits and gets to skip some of my harder experiences. There are also processes I learned in school that I didn't use for a few years. By the time I did use them, I had to do significant amounts of research or trial and error to remember the details of the process. A good example of this was the first time I muslin covered a hard covered flat outside of school. It took me a couple flats before I was again confident that I was doing things the right way. This site will include guidance in some basic theatrical processes, like that, that are helpful to have handy. For the infancy of this website, I will be concentrating primarily on scenery, because this is where the bulk of my expertise lays. As this grows, however, I hope to enlist the help of some other theater experts in making TheaterHelper.com a more well rounded place.