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Prof. Wilson
Culmination Project
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Culmination Reflection

For my culmination project, I was the lighting designer and programmer for the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus shows for the Spring of '23. There was a show in February, March, April, and May. In the Fall semester of '22, I was the head electrician for this show as well so, going into my culmination project, I was very familiar with the lighting plot and how the show was run. I laid out a plan to have my version of the rep plot complete to be installed in time for the second show of the semester. Throughout the course of my project, I experienced a lot of learning moments from having proper paperwork, working with a crew and giving instruction, to working with performers to make sure their lighting cues were what was best suited for them.

While I have had previous experience on the show, I was intimidated going into my design process. Most of the equipment that the Entertainment Technology Department has was already hung in the theater, so there was not much for me to add. A lot of my design changes ended up coming from color. I wanted my front light to be softer, so I ended up going with a pale gold and lavender gel. I had done some reading online to find this combination. This color combination creates a soft look that also adds depth. Looking back on this color combination, I am happy with the choice but I also think I should have tried new color combinations to see what change it would make. When choosing my onstage light gels, I wanted to have saturated, deep, bright colors. I decided to go with primary blue and primary red. I was really happy with this decision especially since the show was a circus, I think it was fitting. Playing with these color changes was a really enjoyable process for me as I began my project.

A part of the design process that I was nervous going into was focusing my lights. This was something that I have never done myself, I have always been the one receiving direction from a lighting designer on how they would like the lights focused. I was unsure of what to look for while focusing the lights, but with the guidance of professors Ellie Mallardi and John Robinson, I figured out what I needed to look for. It also took some getting used to with directing the technical production screw students. Being someone that has to direct my peers along with figuring out how to properly guide them towards what I want was a learning experience for everyone involved. I had to remember to be patient and detailed in my instructions. I have had a hard time in the past letting people take control since I am a very hands on person, especially in my work. This opportunity allowed me to really let go and just direct. Looking back on my

lighting focus, I think it would have been helpful to seek out more guidance from professors. Most situations where I had a professor help is because they were already in the theater and noticed that I was struggling. I think it would have been helpful and useful to really get some feedback during my focus.

Working around scenery was a challenge I faced throughout the course of the project, mainly during the last show. There was certain scenery that I was planning on adding new lights for, but ultimately were put into places where lighting them would actually look worse than not lighting them. Leading up to the last show, I was expecting for two posters to be added to the walls in the house of the theater, so in preparation of these posters being added, I had lights installs and focused these lights to panels in the wall and labeled them for the scenery crew to know where to place the posters. When I came in to program for the May show, I noticed the posters were put into a different panel than what I had focused my light on, so I ended up having to refocus these lights myself. While I was doing this, I noticed the scenery crew was adding new scenic elements that I was not made aware of, two large flats being put close to the ceiling very close to my lighting fixtures. I came to know that this was a last minute add that the scenery crew decided to add without consulting anyone. A day before the show gave me no time to make any adjustments to my plot, so I did my best to make sure the scenery obstructed my lights as little as possible. From this experience, I would have made more of an effort to have stronger communication with scenery. Throughout the run of *Bindlestiff*, communication between scenery and the rest of the crews was not as much as it should have been and I believe that many problems could have been resolved if there had been.

Programming was probably the most fun I had on this project. I would receive a list of the performers a day before the show and go into the theater to go through each act and figure out what lighting would be best suited for it. This would take me anywhere from three hours to five hours, but I enjoyed every bit of it. I got to take my time and really play with different features, effects, colors and the moving lights. I found out about features and how to manipulate them into something that worked best for me. Then, on the day of the shows, I would go in and run tech with all the performers to make sure they liked what I had programmed for them and make any changes necessary or wanted for their performance. This was a great learning opportunity as I had to work on the fly with the console and software. I am really happy with how everything came out while I programmed, I don't think I would change a thing about it.

Overall, I am very thankful to have had this opportunity. Even with all of the challenges and things I would change looking back, this allowed me to really grow and learn throughout the semester. If everything had gone perfectly, what would I have gained from the experience? I have become a better programmer, designer, communicator, and leader due to this project and I will carry that with me throughout my career.