

National Theatre Collection



Careers Insights: Lighting and Sound Design

The Boy with Two Hearts

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Introduction

This guide contains Careers Insights; allowing students to understand more about the role of lighting and sound designers. Students can:

- Read an interview with lighting designer Amy Mae to discover more about her journey into this career
- Explore the role of a lighting designer through activities written by Amy Mae
- Learn more about the role of a sound designer and explore it practically through a specific activity linked to the production.

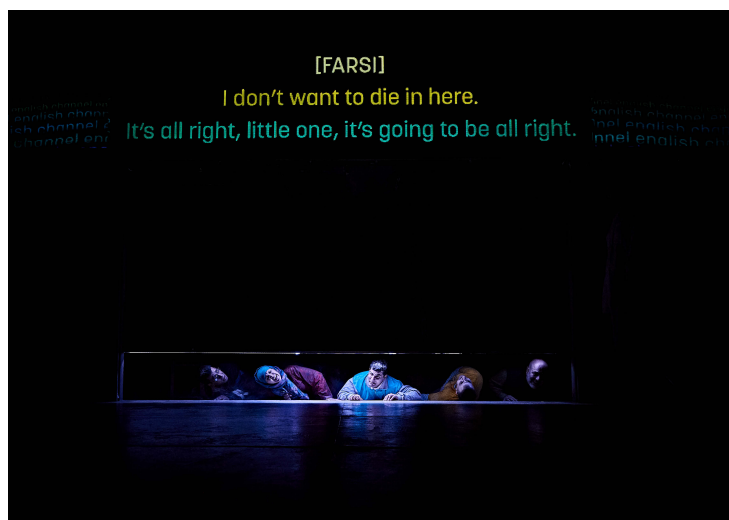
We recommend your students watch this video before tackling the activities in this resource pack.

[How we made it: The Boys with Two Hearts](#)

In the film, lighting designer Amy Mae talks about how she approached lighting the show and her use of lighting design to create the different locations of the story.

Read on to find out more about Amy Mae's journey into lighting design and her top tips for budding designers. She has also developed an activity so you can try out some of her techniques and step into the role of lighting designer.

Please see 'The Boy with Two Hearts Learning Guide' on the National Theatre Collection and National Theatre Learning Hub for more information on this production, including; contextual information, synopsis, themes, and further teaching activities. For example, students will explore storytelling through movement and connect it to the theme of migration.



Interview with Amy Mae

Lighting Designer for The Boy with Two Hearts

Please can you tell us more about your journey into lighting design?

My journey began with choosing GCSE and then A level drama, as I wanted a creative subject to go alongside art and design. I always enjoyed going to the theatre on school trips and as a shy person I thought drama would help me develop my confidence.

During my time learning about acting, I found I wasn't comfortable on the stage after all – I got too nervous. I did not see myself continuing it as a career, but I loved learning about the theory and the different types of acting. I remember sitting in a technical rehearsal and looking up at the lighting rig and thinking 'that looks like much more fun' so I asked to shadow and help the schools theatre technician and thankfully, he said yes.

The rig was very basic at my school, there couldn't have been more than ten lights, all tungsten and all old. But I really enjoyed the process of learning how each light could be focused differently, how brightness and dimming affected the colour of the gels you chose. I also loved how quick it was to paint a picture on stage. After hours of trying to fill out a sketchbook as part of A level art, this was very refreshing. I did not like climbing the high ladder to focus the lights though – and this has not changed after ten years of working with lights.

When starting to look at universities I knew I would like to explore lighting design further, but I worried I was limiting myself as I did not know much about the other areas of technical theatre like sound design, set design or stage management. So I applied for a Stage Management and Performing Arts course at the University of Winchester. I also applied for a lighting design course at Central School of Speech and Drama but I did not get in. I had a very awkward interview!

Luckily Winchester allowed me to explore all the different areas and made me see it really was lighting design I was passionate about. During my time there I volunteered to light as many students shows as possible and got a part-time job as a technician in a local theatre. The shows I lit were not my best work, but they allowed me to learn, make mistakes and try ideas, which were so useful. I felt like I needed to learn more after my time at Winchester had finished, so after the three years there I applied to a drama school called RADA, as they had a postgraduate Stage Electrics and Lighting Design course.

Thankfully I got in and although it was challenging, I learnt a lot.

What did you want to achieve with your lighting designs for The Boy with Two Hearts and what did you want the audience to take from it?

The show has many locations, but the set design stays the same throughout the show. So, I knew lighting needed to support these location changes as much as possible. Locations change very quickly, sometimes we go into surreal states like a moment of a heart issue or a movement sequence. So, there were lots of locations to play with and support.

There are rows of clothes hanging overhead and I wanted to make these look as sculptural as possible, not too flat, these also had to have the ability to change colour as I did not know the colour of these clothes before we got into the theatre, I also knew we would use these to link to the effect of thunder and lightning so they needed to be very bright and strobe if possible.

I wanted to achieve harmony with lighting, video and sound design, so at no point would the audience be distracted by a lighting effect and they would feel immersed in the world of the story.

I wanted to have the option during the technical rehearsals to play with colour and texture, so I chose lights that could change colour and produce different gobos if needed. Having spoken to Hayley Egan, the video designer, during rehearsals, I knew that she would be experimenting with colour too, so I needed to have that flexibility with the rig.

There is a singer who moves around a lot during the show, I knew I would need moving lights in places that were useful to catch her, as during rehearsal these positions were not set, they would be set in the theatre and I did not want to waste time adding lights and focusing them as we went through the technical rehearsals.

So, flexibility was the key when designing the lighting rig. When designing the rig I tried to think 'How would I feel if I was in tech right now and needed to light someone over there?' 'What colour would be right for this location?' 'Who is the focus in this scene?'

Do you have any advice for an aspiring lighting designer?

Go out to nature as much as you can and look at the light around you for inspiration. When you are sitting, look around you and think 'how would I light this area if it was a scene in a play? What if it was a music video? What if a song I like right now is playing in the background and I have lots of moving lights to play with?' Just to get your creative brain thinking about possibilities, not worrying about budget or time, just thinking about what you would create.

Head to the Association of Lighting Designers website and look through the list of designers, google their work and have a look at their portfolio. If you like the look of their work email them, ask to shadow them. If they say yes, make sure you bring them snacks or coffee or tea to the lighting desk to say thank you. There will always be a green room in the theatre to make them a tea or coffee so don't worry if the money is low, there is always a way. You could always look up the creative team online of a show you have seen if you liked it and go from there, but don't just email asking to shadow. Mention a show, why you liked it, why it interests you and go from there.

You can also reach out to directors you admire, and get your name known to them.

Read lighting design books, listen to podcasts, look at lighting hire websites like Sparks, Stage Electrics, White Light to see what kind of equipment is out there. You don't need to know everything about every light; you just need to be aware of what is available.

Ask to light shows, at school or for local youth theatre or amateur theatre productions, giving up your time to learn if possible. Or earn money while you learn working as a technician, follow-spot operator or an usher at your local theatre, seeing shows for free. Seeing other people's lighting design is so useful, you can always ask yourself, what would I do differently? What do I like? Enjoy the learning process, because being a lighting designer is a constant learning process; learning to work with new people, equipment, stories and ways of working.

Activities: Exploring Lighting and Sound Design

These activities will invite to put on a lighting or sound designer's hat and approach the story from a different perspective.

Learning outcomes include:

- learn how to design and realise lighting that contributes positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicates intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise lighting capable of establishing the location, time and/or to enhance mood or atmosphere
- develop interpretative skills, creativity and inventiveness.

These activities are suitable for KS3 – KS5 students studying drama.



Activity 1: Lighting Design

Recommended group size: two to eight

What you will need:

- Two copies of a scene from the play (this could be one page or a few pages depending on the length of the scene. Please see an example scene at the end of this resource pack)
- Pencils, rubber, paper to write notes on
- Access to google images/Pinterest (optional extra)
- The ground plan for The Boy with Two Hearts (optional extra for A level extension exercise). See on next page.

In this exercise we will be taking our first steps with the script to approach lighting a scene. This is usually done before or during rehearsals, once the model box has been seen and a conversation with the director has been had about the style in which they will direct the show.

A model box is a scaled down representation of a stage and the set design. It allows designers and directors to physicalise their ideas and try out different constructions or combinations of designs.

For this exercise we will keep the set as it was at the National Theatre (see image below).



- Split your group into two, with each half taking a copy of the same scene from The Boy with Two Hearts (see example scene at the end of this resource pack). Work out the following information from the script: Location (outside? Inside? A small space? A forest? An airport? As much detail as you can give. Is this scene naturalistic? Is it set in a memory? Somewhere else?)
- Time of day (If not noted on the script what time do you think this is, and would this impact the lighting in any way? Direction of the sun? Would lights be on inside a room?)
- Mood of the scene (for example do you get the feeling of happiness, sadness, confusion etc. with how the characters are speaking to each other?)
- Who is the focus of the scene/who do you want the audience to be paying attention to? Is this always the same person or does it move between different people? You will have to get your director head on here too and think about what characters that are not talking are doing here.

This information is helpful to a lighting designer when they are working out how to light a scene. The two groups will compare the results later, so should work separately for now.

Now you have this information look back over it to get an overall idea of the scene before moving to the next part of the task.

Start to mark through on the script any moments where a lighting change is mentioned or seems obvious (for example, if the script mentions the time of day, the weather, is anyone using torches?)

Read the script again and now mark on where you feel like there is a mood shift.

These are your lighting cues. Label them from 1,2,3 etc and see how many cues you have.

Compare your results with the other half of the group, explaining your choices. This is useful as talking to your artistic team about light is a skill, it is different with everyone and a really hard thing to do, so the more you practise the better. You don't need to convince each other one idea is better than the other, this is to see how differently or similarly people see the same scene. Rework your initial idea following this conversation, how has it changed?

Extension exercise (group work)

Search Google Images or Pinterest and find three images that link to how you would like the scene to look. Think about the information you found while reading the script, think about colour and brightness. Go to the Lee Filters website and pick a coloured gel to link with each image.

Extension exercise (individual work)

Pick a light or lights to add to the scene, imagine the general cover of the scene is already done, the actors are lit. The extra light or lights are to add interest to the scene or to add some colour. Maybe it is a light that helps direct focus to a particular area of the stage, to a performer or to a moment. Search Google Images for an example and make sure you give reasons why you have picked this kind of light. It could be a light that uses a gobo to create a pattern, a practical light like a torch or a lamp that an actor uses, maybe it is a spotlight to pick someone out. Write down why you have chosen this for the scene and mark on your script where it would appear in the scene.

Extension exercise (for Key Stage 5)

Draw a lighting rig for this scene. You can use the ground plan for The Boy with Two Hearts or imagine the show is being performed in a black box theatre. The lighting bars are set at 7m high from the stage floor.

Choosing the equipment and positions for the scene:

- Front light (How many areas of front light will you have/what areas of the stage do you need to light?)
- Side light (how high should these be rigged from the floor for best effect?)
- Back light (what colour/colours will you use for the scene with these?)
- Specials (eg spotlights, key lighting, gobos, etc.)
- Any practical lights (e.g. lamps, torches, etc.)

Explore Google Images and find examples of these different types of lighting being used. What is the impact on the audience of each of these types of light? How might different types of lighting work with the other design elements to convey meaning for an audience? Think about how to light your scene in the most interesting and engaging way.

Activity 2: Sound Design

Tic Ashfield was the co-composer and sound designer for The Boy with Two Hearts. Tic Ashfield is an award-winning composer, sound designer and teacher, who works in theatre, television and film. She played the guitar as a teenager and wrote her own songs. Her interest in music and sound design developed from there. She studied at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, first studying music technology, before gaining a Masters in Composition. She is keen to act as a positive role model for other women and girls entering what is often a male-dominated profession and enjoys the collaborative process of working on a piece of theatre.

You can find out more about Tic Ashfield by reading this interview with her and by visiting her website.

Sound designers come from a range of different backgrounds. Some may have a technical background, with knowledge of sound engineering, whilst others, like Tic Ashfield, might come from a musical background.

If you are interested in becoming a sound designer, you may find it useful to:

- Develop a critical ear for sound design by watching theatre, film and television and working out what you like. Think about the impact of the music and sound on the audience. Watch other productions on the National Theatre Collection and compare the sound design, or study the work of a particular designer
- Develop your knowledge of sound designers and their work. Visit the Association of Sound Designers website, where you can find lots of useful information and resources, including sound designers talking about their routes into the profession
- Familiarise yourself with basic sound equipment (including mixers, speakers, playback software and microphones). The sound software QLab, which is often used in theatre, is free to download
- Find opportunities to develop your own sound design skills. Create the sound design for performances at school or for local youth theatre groups. You can also experiment with creating and recording your own sound effects.

Sound in the play

The Boy with Two Hearts features lots of different locations and the action moves very quickly between them. To facilitate this, the set design is very simple and the artistic team use other design elements to enhance the storytelling and help the audience to quickly understand where we are. Sound design is used both to inform the audience of shifts in location (for example a beeping sound that tells us we are in a hospital) and to help us understand shifts in mood or atmosphere.

There is a live singer on stage throughout the play, whose songs reflect the mood of each scene. This is an example of non-diegetic sound – something that the audience can hear, but the characters cannot. There is also a series of recorded sound effects which are used at various points throughout the performance, these are diegetic sounds – sounds that the characters can hear, like a plane taking off or the sound of a bird.

Classroom exercise – creating a soundscape

Recommended group size: two to six

This exercise is suitable for students in KS3 – KS5

What you will need:

- Paper and pens
- Access to the recording of The Boy with Two Hearts on the National Theatre Collection
- Access to the short film [How we Made it: The Boy with Two Hearts](#)
- Access to a computer or iPad, for finding music and sound effects (optional).

First watch the short film Creative Choices in The Boy with Two Hearts and listen to Tic Ashfield and other members of the artistic team talk about how they created the jungle scene.

Now watch the scene from the play. You can find it at 00.26.40 in the recording. As you watch, note down all of the different sound effects and music that you can hear.

In small groups, discuss the sounds that you heard and how they contribute to the storytelling or help us understand the mood of the scene.

Now choose one of the other settings from the play, for example, you could choose:

- A hospital
- An airport
- A market

Work in your group to create a soundscape for the scene. To begin with, you can only use sounds that you can make using your own voice and body.

- Think about the different sounds that you will need to create to bring your chosen location to life. These might include sounds of people, animals, vehicles, machines and weather
- Now think about how you can create these sounds using your voices and bodies. Be creative – you can make lots of different sounds!
- As you begin to put your sounds together to create your soundscape, think about the following:
 - **Mixing** – layering different sounds together
 - **Volume and intensity** – the strength or level of sound
 - **Motif** – recurring sound or musical idea used to create a sense of unity or to convey meaning to an audience
 - **Underscore** – music or singing performed or played underneath dialogue to create mood or atmosphere
 - **Mood/atmosphere** – the tone or feeling created by the sound and other production elements
- Experiment with these things and bring them together in a final version of your soundscape which you can perform for the rest of your group. Ask them if they, as your audience, can understand what the sounds are and how the soundscape makes them feel.

Extension exercises

You can continue to build upon this activity by adding in sounds that you can make with found objects (for example, shaking a bag of rice to create the effect of rain, or banging on an upturned bin to make the sound of a heart beating).

For students exploring sound design for GCSE or A Level drama, you might like to experiment with recording the sounds you make and playing them back in different ways or mixing sound effects you have found online. You can find free recorded sound effects on lots of websites including the BBC Sound Archive and FreeSound.

HESSAM: Where some 4x4 shows up, takes us crashing through bushes and trees to a clearing full of families just like us!

HUSSEIN: Plus some mean-looking guys with machetes.

14. JUNGLE HIKE

A SHOUT FROM UP AHEAD SIGNALS THE START OF A TREK THROUGH THE JUNGLE. MACHETES SLICE THROUGH VEGETATION...

HAMED: Don't sweat, bro. They ain't going to hurt us.

HUSSEIN: Course not. They seems like such nice guys!

DAD: Down!

MOSQUITOS BUZZ ABOUT.

HESSAM: Argh, stupid mosquitoes!

DAD: It's all right, Hessam.

HESSAM: All right for you. You're not the one they want for dinner!

DAD: This way!

MUM: That's because you're the tastiest, little one, they're paying you a compliment!

HESSAM: It's going to get dark soon, then what?!

MUM: We'll get there before then, I'm sure.

HESSAM: Get where though? And what if we don't? We'll be lion food!

HUSSEIN: Lions live in Kenya, dummy.

HAMED: Dummy!

MUM: All right, boys, don't pick on your brother.

HESSAM: All I want is my own bed in my own bedroom.

HAMED: I don't miss my bed, I miss the sofra.

MUM: That's what I miss too.

HAMED: Coming home from football to the smell of mum's cooking.

MUM: Eating together, Knowing you're all safe.

DAD: What about you, Hussein?

HUSSEIN: The old football pitch. Stood between the goalposts saving shots.

HAMED: You never saved any of my shots.

HUSSEIN: Oh, those were shots? I thought you were just passing the ball to me.

MUM: Mohammed, what about you?

DAD: I have everything I need right here.

HAMED: Must be something, Dad.

DAD: Joking round with my brothers? That's something I miss.

HESSAM: Mum says when you're with your brothers I should play outside because the jokes are too rude.

MUM: It's true, your father's a bad influence!

DAD: Now, this is what your mother refuses to understand. A rude joke is one of life's great pleasures!

HAMED: I know one! So there's this mullah, right, and he's got these three ugly daughters...

MUM: Hamed!

A SHOUT FROM AHEAD; THE TREK RESUMES; MACHETES RESUME. A GIRL, ZARA, WALKS ALONGSIDE HAMED.

MUM/ZARA: Hello, what's your name?

HAMED: Hamed.

MUM/ZARA: Hi Hamed, I'm Zara.

HAMED: Hi, Zara.

THEY WALK.

MUM/ZARA: Your brother's funny.

HAMED: Yeah, which one?

MUM/ZARA: The older one.

HAMED: Hussein. Yeah, he's like that. Makes people laugh so they don't feel nervous.

THEY WALK.

HAMED: What about you? Have you got brothers and sisters?

MUM/ZARA: I have a sister.

HAMED: That's nice.

MUM/ZARA: But we don't know where she is.

HAMED: How come?

MUM/ZARA: The traffickers say they lost her.

HAMED: How can you lose a person?

MUM/ZARA: It happens sometimes with girls. Dad tried to stop them but they beat him up. And said to keep quiet or they'd take me and mum.

HAMED: God give you patience.

HUSSEIN: God give you patience.

HESSAM: God give you patience.

DAD: God give you patience.

ZARA AND HAMED DRIFT APART.

HUSSEIN: And so we continue. Hour after hour in fading light.

HESSAM: Tripping over tree roots. Snagged in stupid branches.

MUM: Until finally...

THEY SUCCUMB TO EXHAUSTION...

15. EVEN MORE SARDINES

HAMED: Hungry.

HUSSEIN: Exhausted.

HESSAM: Bitten to shreds.

DAD: We climb into another boot of yet another car.

MUM: Driven by yet another stranger.

HAMED: To some cow-shit-smelling farm where we stay for a week.

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The lighting design activities in this pack were written by Amy Mae (Lighting Designer on A Boy with Two Hearts).

The sound design activities were written by education specialist Jane Ball.

All images in this guide are by Jorge Lizdale.

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Thank you