BOOK REVIEWS

Digital Media, Projection Design & Technology for Theatre
By Alex Oliszewski and Daniel Fine with Daniel Roth
Routledge, 2018, 230 pages
Hardcover $160; paperback $48.95; eBook $48.95

Reviewed by Naoko Skala

Many theatre educators and practitioners update teaching materials or knowledge with technology constantly. Some are required to teach classes or incorporate newer technology on which they've never been formally trained for use in their productions. Without proper training, most of the knowledge is based on experience or gathering information from multiple resources; sometimes, it takes hours to find a simple solution. *Digital Media, Projection Design & Technology for Theatre* is an excellent resource in this regard.

Author Alex Oliszewski adapted articles from Daniel Fine's Howlround.com blog series, *Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Achieve the Best Practices for Collaboration in the Creative and Production Process of Incorporating Digital Media Into Live Performance*. The four contributors are also introduced at the beginning of the book: Boyd Branch, Sherée L. Greco, Matthew Ragan, and Ian Shelanskey. The book is structured into five chapters, from defining digital media in terms of theatrical performance to detailed introductions of the devices and systems for projection design.

This book is for the vast majority of people who are interested in telling stories with new digital technologies and approaches.

The book begins with the history of digital media in theatre and the role of digital media designers in the theatre industry. This chapter is perfect for people who have never taken formal theatre training or are interested in performing arts, TV, or film but not considering theatre as their primary career option. Atmospheric digital media and Interactive digital media sections also provided the foundational knowledge of digital media.

In the second chapter, the authors write precisely for theatre practitioners of various backgrounds and few opportunities for digital media design in realized productions. The authors clarify how other production team members work, how to incorporate digital media design, and how to integrate digital media design efficiently into their production process. The authors introduce producers, directors, stage managers, actors, and other areas of designers. I especially appreciate the scheduling section and summary of the responsibilities of digital media design personnel. Even though some are similar to scenic design or other design processes, it is beneficial to review other designers' practices and it is helpful in acknowledging concerns and how to collaborate with other designers successfully. The "Aside" sections show sample communications between a director and a digital media designer in letter format. These represent what questions might occur and how to communicate with other professionals effectively.

The third chapter covers the design process: from how to negotiate the salary to after opening the production. It includes a sample cue sheet, a system diagram, and sample projector placement drawings. Those are similar processes and paperwork with other theatrical designs, but I appreciate reading those to realize their specific requirements for an intelligent design workflow.

The following chapter provides the foundation for creating content successfully. It shows many examples of projection design with design elements and principles that communicate with readers universally. The chapter also mentions pixels, file formats, and some basics of color theory in pigments and lights. I appreciate that there are some tables of software applications for multiple purposes, such as still images, video editing, and 2D and 3D animations. The table categories are computer platform availability, the level of the learning curve, subscription license options, price, and some other beneficial comparison sections. This chapter helped to expand my knowledge and encouraged me to use digital media design in an unfamiliar way to tell stories effectively.

The final chapter discusses crucial equipment and responsibilities, and is helpful for people with intermediate or advanced knowledge of projection design. Once I read this chapter after designing a simple digital media design for a realized production, I realized how this chapter is convenient and full of rich information. It covers the type of signals, cables, projections, and other related equipment. The chapter also has a survey of media servers, which was extremely helpful for the theatre companies or academic departments that started using digital media design in their productions. In this final chapter, the authors also introduced brightness, throw distance, screen size, and how to use multiple projectors. These details were an intricate part of the process for me to figure out before reading this chapter because your choices depend on the projector and production. Searching random internet websites was also overwhelming. Now I know what kind of information I need to figure out, and I am in good hands.

Overall, this book is written with practicality in mind. I am grateful the authors mentioned that every theatre practitioner and production has different methods or preferences. That mindset applies to any area of theatrical practice, and I would like to come back to read this book repeatedly for future productions or classes.

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