



### **Stagecraft Fundamentals: Third Edition**

By Rita Kogler Carver

Routledge, 2019, 545 pages

Hardcover, \$160; Paperback, \$62.95; eBook \$62.95

Reviewed by Naoko I. Skala

Educators assigned to teach a stagecraft class may wonder where to start or how much they should cover in 16 weeks. Rita Kogler Carver's *Stagecraft Fundamentals 3rd Edition* is one of the few textbooks that reduces that headache for theatre educators, especially if the department offers the class for non-theatre majors. Carver is an award-nominated lighting designer who has worked for Broadway, regional theatre, dance, and opera in the U.S. and Europe.

The book has 20 chapters categorized into six parts: History and Art, Safety and Scenery, Rigging and Lighting, Costume and Makeup, Projections and Special Effects, and Stage Management and Careers. In this third edition, Sound Design is in the Rigging and Lighting section. Projections are included in the Special Effects section. Many current educational theatre productions accept projection design and technology as that area plays an increasingly significant role in telling a story today.

This edition includes Student Learning Outcomes at the beginning of each chapter, which helps readers quickly understand the chapter's goals, and some instructors might use it to develop their syllabi. At the end of each chapter are Emerging Trends and Discussion Questions

based on Carver's discussions with current professionals in each area. The Discussion Questions may be a helpful resource for readers to review the chapters constructively, and might be helpful for actual class discussions, quizzes, or exam questions.

Many images in this third edition are more practical than in previous editions. For instance, in the earlier editions are examples of work clothing where a person poses wearing only two types of clothing as good or bad examples. In the third edition are images of multiple good examples, and the person is also presented working on a project, with detailed explanations of why people are advised to wear certain clothes for specific tasks. These pictures give students a better understanding of what to wear and why when working in the scene shop, which is usually a challenging part of teaching college students who are not interested in working in a scene shop as their career.

In most theatre history classes, theatre architecture and technologies are mentioned briefly, but it is usually not the main topic of the course. In part one of this book, Carver addresses theatre history from the perspective of architecture and technologies, which may help readers understand how these areas were developed throughout history. Each chapter also has "Theatre Traditions" and comparative quotations that encourage readers' curiosity; those fun facts or quotations were usually passed along orally, providing insights into the production side of theatre cultures.

Carver uses a conversational writing style, which may give some readers pause. However, most theatre design and technology classes usually provide hands-on experience, and the students learn from reading and writing while working in a shop on a theatre production. Carver's writing style is an efficient way to introduce stagecraft without alienating readers and to encourage theatre practitioners in early-career or people who have no idea what stagecraft is to learn further.

The chapters are edited thoughtfully and seem more accessible and easier to

follow in this third edition than in previous editions. For instance, earlier editions have one highly detailed table of contents. The third edition also includes a more generalized table of contents, which may help readers find big picture topics more easily. It may also help theatre educators who use this book to structure and create their class presentation content and course organization.

The tone of this book is very welcoming to anyone interested in the production side of theatre. Many of today's theatre educators are required to teach a class for non-theatre students with an interdisciplinary approach. *Stagecraft Fundamentals* is a resourceful and practical book for stagecraft class, and this third edition is the excellent introductory book for theatre learners and practitioners.

*Naoko Skala is a scenic designer, scenic artist, props artisan, and educator raised in Japan. She joined The College of Wooster as an assistant professor of scenic design in Fall 2020. Skala earned her MFA in scenic design from Minnesota State University, Mankato, after earning her BFA in theatre from Emporia State University in Kansas and her BA in Japanese literature from Sagami Women's University in Japan. Learn more at [naokoskala.com](http://naokoskala.com)*

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