

This document is meant to outline how lighting will be treated in a production of *Hands on a Hardbody* on the UCI Claire Trevor Stage. This document will touch on the overall lighting concept and how each scene and song will be treated with lighting. This document is meant to be a living document and is open to comment and questions from anyone.

Overall Design Concept

Before I speak on the team's overall concept for the show, I feel it is important to observe that this show is based on a real-life event and real people. This is important as this story is not just a collection of words that an author created, but the story of what people have had to go through, for just a glimpse at the possibility to get ahead in life. With that noted, as a team we have discussed the idea of mixing a *classic* used car dealership look with the modern world. Our truck is a 2000 Ford Ranger, which sets us around the year 2000, this is a little later than these events actually happened, but the economics and commercialization of Eastern Texas would still have been a major issue. The show exists in between two worlds; one is the real world of the competition and the other is the hopeful world of the contestant's inner selves.

The Set

The set for this production, will consist of our truck, a set of bleachers, some fencing, and billboard like signs staggered upstage. The truck will have the ability to move anywhere on stage and will be a burgundy-maroon color. The billboards will be stationary and sepia tones to help give a rustic and aged look to support the idea that the commercialization of America has killed all the uniqueness of Smalltown, USA. Lighting will change their color to replicate the emotions of the individual characters. There will also be string lights running from points downstage to a single point upstage, creating an atmosphere of an old small-town used car lot.



Initial Scenic Rendering

Lighting Concept

The lighting for our production of *Hands on a Hardbody* will revolve around creating a realist world of the competition that is influenced by the social and economic issues at the beginning of the 21st century. Lighting will create emotion packed worlds for songs about the individual contestants, heightened versions of the real world for songs about the group or the competition itself while maintaining an anchor in the realistic world.

Act 1

“A Human Drama Kind of Thing”

The show opens with “A Human Drama Kind of Thing,” this song lays the groundwork for the rest of the show. It tells us that all the contestants got there on luck, and maybe some “skill.” It

also outlines the rules of the competition, and the fact that everyone here has next to nothing, setting us up for the next scene and song. The lighting for this song will be a more intense version of the scene looks that will follow. As we don't really get any one particular story from this song, I will light all the performers equally, highlighting the lead vocalist as needed. With the final beat of the song as everyone places their hand on the truck, I will bump to just the truck before restoring to our general morning look, to further enhance the start of the competition.

'Why I am going to win'

Once we are out of the song, this first scene is about why each character is going to win. In this first scene we really start to see each of the characters for who they are, it is meant to give us just enough to like or dislike them. The lighting for this scene will be set as an early/mid-morning, abrasively bright sunny day, that will wear down the characters endurance. From this bright early/mid-morning look we will move into our next song.

"If I Had This Truck"



"If I Had This Truck," is the second song of the show, and during this song each of the characters start to reveal a little more about their personal story. As each character sings, I will highlight each of them in follow spots and adjust the general atmosphere to fit their story more (*Image 1*), because even though this song is the whole company, it is very much about the individuals singing. An example of this is when Heather is talking about how her dad would teach her

how to drive. The fades in this song will be slow, to match the flow of the music. During this song we also are transported about six hours, from early/mid-morning to about midday. To reflect this, each time we go back to a group look I will adjust where the source of the lighting will come from, giving the feeling that time is passing.

'Old guys got to stick together'

Coming out of "If I Had This Truck" we get a brief snippet about Longview, TX and the surrounding area then take the first fifteen-minute break. The first couple of pages in this break is all about J.D. and Virginia, specifically about how she feels he should not be in the competition do to his current physical condition. To direct the audience's attention lighting will isolate slightly on J.D. and Virginia during this while maintaining a general early afternoon feel to it. Virginia eventually exits, at which point the lighting will open back up more as Benny starts his conversation with J.D. While J.D. and Benny converse lighting will stay fairly open, allowing other competitors to potentially "listen in" on the conversation. With the end of the break I will shift the focus of the lighting back to the truck, as Don uses some reverse psychology on Janis, to get us into our next song.

“If She Don’t Sleep”

This song is the first time we fully pull out of the “real world” in terms of lighting. As this song is a love song between Janis and Don, lighting will pull into the characters more than what we have seen previously. The colors will also soften to embrace the feel of love, allowing us to pull away from the truck and enter a different world. While utilizing isolation in this song, it is still a very high energy song and the lighting will reflect that in intensity.

‘This just might work out.’*Image 2*

Our next scene is the first time we enter the office of the dealership. Mike and Cindy are discussing how the competition is going thus far and the fact that, although nothing has really happened yet, the advertising campaign around it might just work. This scene, like all the office scenes, will have a fluorescent feel to it, *image 2*, the exterior of the office will shift slightly to a more midafternoon feeling during this scene, then after Cindy exits will do a drastic shift into our first night time world. Our night world is a warm muggy east Texas Summer night, that drains the competitors as much as the day. We will stay in this night world through the bit of dialogue we have leading up to the night song.

“My Problem Right There”

This song is Ronald’s last hurrah. Just before this song he ate his sixteenth snickers in sixteen hours. He is not feeling too hot and is trying to convince the other contestants, and himself, that he has a plan and has just one problem. The jazzier and more gospely nature of this song calls for a more stylized lighting, in conjunction with the spotlight for Roland (*Image 3*), He will be haloed in light. This will give him a preacher-esque feel. Alongside Roland, we also have Kelli, Heather, and Norma. In this song they are utilized as if they were Grecian Muses, and because of this I will use silhouette as well as side lighting to highlight their form. During the “thunderstorm” in the song, some lights will strobe to give the effect of lighting. As we get near the end of the song, I will isolate down on Ronald giving the feeling that the light of his world is dying as he is about to faint. Then as he collapses, I will restore us back to the world of the competition, fairly rapidly.

*Image 3***‘Don’t kick a horse when he’s down.’**

Having restored to our warm night look, at the end of the song. We have a very brief scene mostly of Benny showing how much of an idiot he is. Entering into our second break, I will once again shift lighting’s focus off the truck and on to Virginia as she pushes J.D. over the edge.

“Alone With Me”

This song tells the heart crushing story of how Virginia and J.D. have drifted apart since his accident. All though they both love each other deeply still, J.D. feels overwhelmed by everything and has taken out on Virginia, who is just trying to help. This song, like “If She Don’t Sleep,” is very tender and kind and will be lit in a less realistic world, but I will also create further breaks between J.D. and Virginia by using a warmer spot for here and a cooler spot for him. This allows for lighting to show the divide that has now come between them.

‘Is it a fix?’

We are still on break as we enter back into dialogue, the focus has now shifted to Heather and Mike. Heather is waiting to use the Port-A-Potty and Mike offers for her to use the executive washroom inside. Once inside Mike makes check to see if Heather is still in or if she is out, which leads us into “Burn That Bridge.”

“Burn That Bridge”

This is the song that fully tells us that Heather is in cahoots with Mike. Showing that Mike has managed to rig this competition, at least for the time being. The high energy of the music in this song will be shown in the lighting. I will use warmer pink tones for this song, contrasting the yellow fluorescent world that is the office of the dealership, as well as keeping the overall brightness fairly high. The end of this song brings us out of break and back into the “competition look.”

“I’m Gone”

There are only a few lines before “I’m Gone,” that sets us up for this song about Greg and Kelli’s dreams of getting out of their current situation. This song will allow us to take a step out of the world of the show and transport our audience to sunny, L.A. This song also lays the groundwork for the relationship between the two of them, which ultimately is their undoing in the competition. With the last notes of the song morning is starting to break, as we officially start day two of the competition.

‘It’s not working.’

Our next moment in the show is Cindy and Mike talking about how the competition is not actually bring in any more sales. This high-tension scene takes place in the office and will live in office world of fluorescent yellow.

“The Joy of the Lord”

Entering our next song Norma starts laughing seemingly out of nowhere. Her joy in the lord has now spilled out of her music and we see it in this song. This song embodies the classic church song and shows how strong the lord is in Norma. This joy quickly spreads to many of the other contestants and even leads to them using the car as an instrument within the song.



Image 4

For this reason, the lighting for this song will be a heightened version of our morning look for the show (*Image 4*). Lighting will push the performers with bright lighting from behind (*Image 4*), I will bring the energy of the lighting up to match the energy of this song. The joy of this song does not reach everyone though, Chris is actually affected in the opposite way. As the song goes on, he gets more agitated and ends up yelling to end it.

‘What is brought back.’

With Chris’ yell at the end of the previous song, lighting will quickly shift back into the world of the competition. This abrupt lighting shift will help to show Chris’ rage in the joy of the song, and the blind trust that Norma is putting in God. The Joy and trust he used to and still wants to find in God that he can’t, not after the war.

“Stronger”

This song is Chris’ chance to really tell his story, which is one of the most relatable to me. He tells the story of him as he gets recruited out of High School, he was already married with a kid on the way. He tells the soldier’s story. This is a huge contrast to the last song, and I will light it using heavy isolation, and soft colors to help reveal Chris’ heart. Like many songs in this show the end of the song is the end of Chris.

“If You Can’t Hunt With The Big Dogs”

After another brief dialogue segment, we are into the final song of the act. This song belongs to Benny, he thinks that he is the big dog in the game, since he has been through it before. This song will be more shadowy than the rest of the show. I will use heavy isolation and high angles to match the bad dog vibes that Benny is giving off. We end the act with Mike calling the next fifteen-minute break.

Act II

“Hands on a Hardbody”

We start the second act by jumping right into this song. It is meant to be a way to reinvigorate the crowd and was “written” by the radio host that has been covering the contest. This song is country through and through and as it is being performed out of the bed of the truck I will treat as if it were a big-name country singer performing at some arena (*Image 5*). I feel that this contrast to the reality of this song will add a certain comedic element that will enhance the contestant’s lack luster attempt to line dance halfway through the song. After this song is complete, we are right back into the competition having completed the fifteen-minute break.



“Born In Laredo”

Right after “Hands on a Hardbody,” Cindy approaches Jesus and tells him he will have to show them his green card if he were to win. Jesus, a citizen, then sings about how he is constantly oppressed by people because of the color of his skin. This song, while explaining the inherent racism in our culture, speaks of hope and the dreams Jesus has. This song is deeply rooted in passion and the lighting will utilize shadows and deep color to, enhance the passion as well as the style of the music.

“It’s a Fix”

After “Born in Laredo,” Janis sees Heather take her hand off the truck to put on her lipstick and calls it out, when Mike comes and does nothing Janis gets upset and we are into, “It’s a Fix.” This song is sung from Janis’ anger that the competition is fixed. To highlight this anger, I will increase the isolation, and brightness of this song. Through this song Janis is also commenting the fact that society laughs at the poor and when the poor ask for help, they give them crumbs. Crumbs that they expect them to live off of and thrive. To mirror the idea of the crumbs of society I will utilize minimal to no color in a warmer tone as well as texture, to make the world feel dirtier. With the end of this song Janis storms off and is out of the competition.

‘The Crack Down’

After Janis catches on to Mike’s scheme, Mike and Cindy say they are going to get a lot harder about the rules going forward in the competition, all this takes place in our morning competition look, with the oppressive sun beating down. They return to the office and Cindy hounds into Mike for letting anyone catch on that the competition is rigged. We have a time jump to mid-day, and they get a doctor to talk about sleep deprivation. After another, longer, time jump, in which lighting will give the illusion of fourteen-ish hours passing, shifting cyc color from dusk to night and back to early morning as well as shifting the look on the stage in a similar manor. We are

now in the early hours of day four, J.D. and Benny start to get nostalgic as we slide into our next song.

“Used to Be”

This song is a commentary on the commercialization of America. By commenting on the fact that every town is getting a Wal-Mart, Starbucks, Applebee’s, etcetera the image of Smalltown, USA is going away, and the newer generation is not realizing it. Every town used to have its own thumbprint and that thumbprint helped to form individuals and create community. I will light this song very softly; I want the characters to start out with a unified feel and as we go through the song, and then will slowly separate them from each other. This separation through lighting will create a feeling that they are each alone in the world. For the final moments of the song I will bring them all back together and highlight both the contestants and the truck before restoring us to our world of the competition. As the concept for this song, is reliant on how the staging ends up, Myrona, can we discuss how you are seeing this?

‘I have to feed my dog’

With the end of the song, Jesus starts to hallucinate about his dog, he ends up removing his hand from the tuck and walks away. Kelli then starts singing “Gone” and gets caught up in the song and drifts away. Benny, with a little help from Norma, then convinces Greg to go after her and help her home. Time passes to noon the same day, and now we are in the yellow fluorescent world of the office, Mike is on the phone. We shift to outside and Heather starts to show signs of the drugs that Mike gave her, she is also complaining heavily about the gloves. Cindy will not let her switch the glove as it would be favoritism and Mike reluctantly agrees.

“It’s a Fix” (Reprise)

This song is not marked in the script, but it is noted that she is singing. Heather tells everyone, that is left, about how Mike tried to fix the competition. Although this is just about Heather, I will light this song in a more realistic manner only giving Heather a slight highlight.

‘Ronald’s return’

The end of the song is the end of Heather, and the 20-minute warning for the next break. We are still in a midday oppressive sunlight as Cindy returns to the office, and a refreshed Ronald shows up. Norma is feeling drained and gets Ronald to converse with her. During this conversation Benny starts in with his normal prodding, but the now rested Ronald just sends it right back at him. J.D. returns and it is Norma’s turn for a drug test.

“God Answered My Prayers”

This song is Benny’s story. In it we finally see the heart in a character that has been nothing but an ass the whole show. We find out that his son took his own life when he was about to come home from the war. This is a tender song and will be treated with soft lights and warmer tones, that complement the release coming from Benny. Like many of the other songs, lighting will isolate down on Benny, while staying in the soft world.

‘The Final Two’

Norma returns at the end of the song, and as Benny tries to walk, he collapses, knocking him out of the competition. We shift to night and Frank interviews the final two, as he gets to Norma her mp3 player dies. This the realization of this Norma starts to spiral out of control, emotionally, to help portray this lighting will create a cold isolation world around her.

“The Joy of The Lord” (Reprise)

In an attempt to rejuvenate Norma, Roland starts to sing. This song helped once before, and it does it again. The lighting will start in the book look and build in intensity with the tempo and confidence of the song, while building I will still keep us in the world of the competition, because when we reach the climax of the song, Norma starts clapping along. Clapping along when she isn’t on break, knocking her out and making J.D. the winner.

“Keep Your Hands On It”

After a brief dialogue and the return of Virginia, we get into our final song. This song starts as a tribute to Virginia, with the overall idea that is you really want something don’t let it go. This love song will have some isolation, but the overall tone is the peace that comes from having what/who you love with you. To compliment the tenderness and peace, I will light this song with softer tones. This is also where we learn where all the contestants are “now,” as these are revealed I will highlight each person/couple, for them to tell their story.