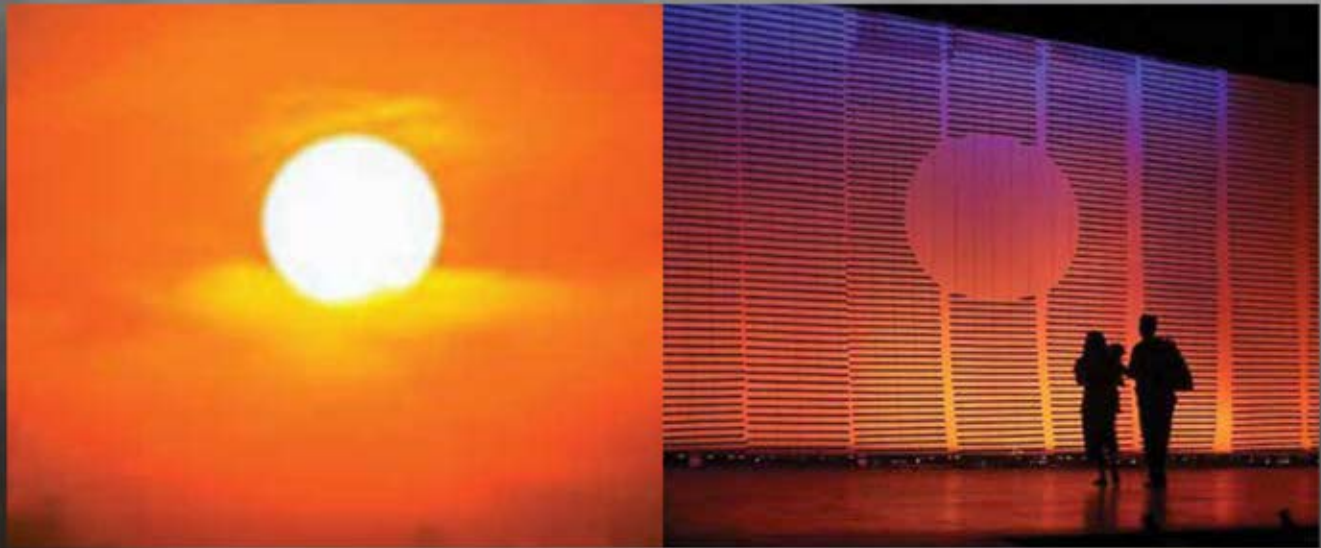


STUDIES OF LIGHT

In the World and on the Stage



JOSEPH P. OSHRY



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on the Stage

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Designed Lighting, LLC



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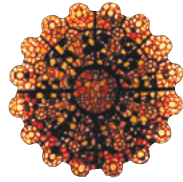
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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to everyone who works with light as well as to those who want a greater understanding of how it can impact their life. Whether you are an experienced lighting designer or a homeowner who wishes to improve their environment, this book has something for you.

Throughout the four decades I've spent working with this medium, I've had the good fortune to meet many people who have taken an active interest in how light works. To all of you, this book is my way of saying thank you for your participation and interest.

This book is also dedicated to the memory of my brother, Michael A. Oshry — March 25, 1955 to October 28, 2020.



Fireworks (Photo courtesy of Amy Oshry)



Gaspar Ballet, Straz Center, Ferguson Hall, Tampa, FL,
January 2012

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Alma Mater (Photo courtesy of Illinois State University)

FOREWORD

It's so much darker when a light goes out than it would have been if it had never shone.

—John Steinbeck, *The Winter of Our Discontent*

As a university professor, I enjoy special satisfaction when I encounter resounding echoes of the principles and practices that are the core of my instruction. This volume reflects and illustrates those principles and design practices.

Joe Oshry was a student in my lighting design courses. He showed considerable promise at that time, and his successful career as a lighting designer is no surprise. His work is special in that he has made those fundamental principles and practices his own and articulates them in his design work and thus this book.

Training the eye to notice, see clearly, and then document light is at the heart of designing a living light. How does the light originate at the source? How does the light get into the space? How does the light shape the space? How does light reflect from surfaces? How do the objects in the space absorb the light? How do we perceive color as revealed by absorbed and reflected light? The answers are imperative to managing light in all areas of design and in our lives.

I am honored to recommend the visual journey that awaits you. You will appreciate light anew as it is illustrated here. This volume entreats us to see and enjoy the qualities of light and realize how we respond to the properties of light. To do so with a renewed awakening can bring new meaning to the perception of our existence.

J. William Ruyle

Professor of Design, Emeritus

School of Theatre, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois

September 25, 2020

Grand Central
Station, New
York City



*Madama
Butterfly*, Opera
Tampa, Straz
Center, Carol
Morsani Hall,
Tampa, FL,
November 2004
(Photo cour-
tesy of Opera
Tampa/Straz
Center)



INTRODUCTION

A day without light is, well, night. — George Oshry 1945–2016

This book began as a series of images I periodically posted on Facebook under #StudiesofLight. As more friends and associates commented favorably on them, I felt encouraged to transfer the photos I had taken into a coffee table book. Through the help of many friends and their excellent ideas, it has evolved into an interesting way to see how light performs in a variety of environments and how it can be transferred to the stage.

Many friends suggested this is worth sharing by way of a literary effort. Writing this has been a labor of love. Through this process, I have revisited fond memories of the productions as well as use the design skills with which I have been gratefully gifted in authoring this book. I wrote it at a time when the world was in the grip of Covid-19. The project kept my design skills sharp and, more important, gave me something to do. May it be as enjoyable for you to read as it was for me to write.

Light is all around us. It permeates our lives. It affects our perceptions, outlooks, dispositions, and moods. Consider your mood on a sunny day versus a rainy one. Imagine a bright, delightful day at the beach juxtaposed against an intimate evening in front of a cozy fire. How does each one make you feel?

Part of my job as a freelance theatrical-lighting designer is to observe how light works in a multitude of scenarios. While doing so, I am

researching how to represent it accurately on stage, thus making light an invaluable aid to my designs, to advance meaning and evoke emotions.

The purpose of this book is to demonstrate through images how light works in its many manifestations. Most of us take light for granted. Greater awareness of what light contributes to humankind's needs is a helpful conduit toward the betterment of our existence.

Enjoy this magical journey through the medium of light!

Introduction to Lighting Types

Light inspires me. I study it. I research it. I want to understand how it appears in natural and in artificial environments, so I can create the same effect on a stage. Light emphasizes emotion and evokes mood. It can clarify the actors' performance and further the playwright's meaning for the benefit and pleasure of the audience.

In the section that follows, you will see photographs of light in a variety of places, and then you can compare how I transferred that visual impact to a place and situation for an audience.

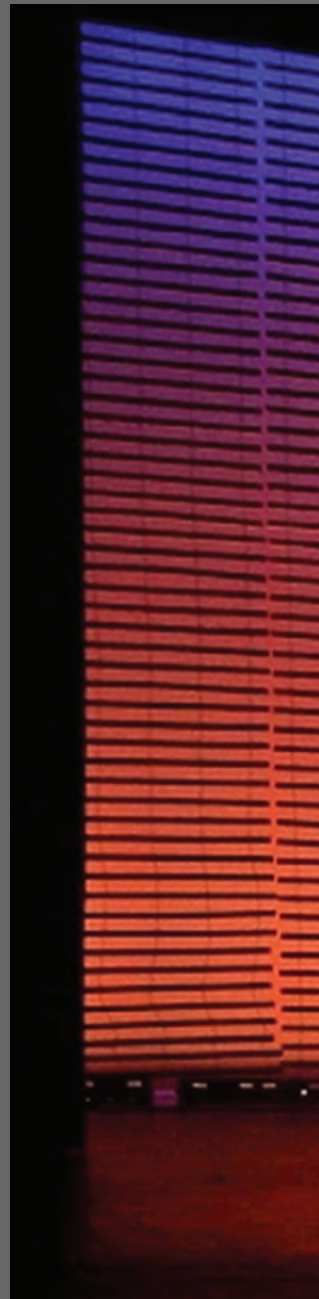
Natural Sources

A blazing sun, a blue-kissed moon, a calming candle, a crackling fire — all are natural sources of light. Portraying, or implying, natural sources of light in the theater can often lend itself to exciting abstractions.



Sunset

Miss Saigon, Manatee Performing Arts Center, Bradenton, FL, August 2014







Sunlight



Tarzan, Manatee Performing Arts Center, Bradenton, FL, August 2014



Sunlight and shadow

As with the previous two pages, these images demonstrate the power of silhouette and, in the theater image, shadow.



Sunset

Into the Woods, Orlando Shakespeare Theater, Orlando, FL, September 2006
(Photo courtesy of Rob Jones)



Moonlight



Tarzan, Manatee Performing Arts Center, Bradenton, FL, August 2014



Moonlight

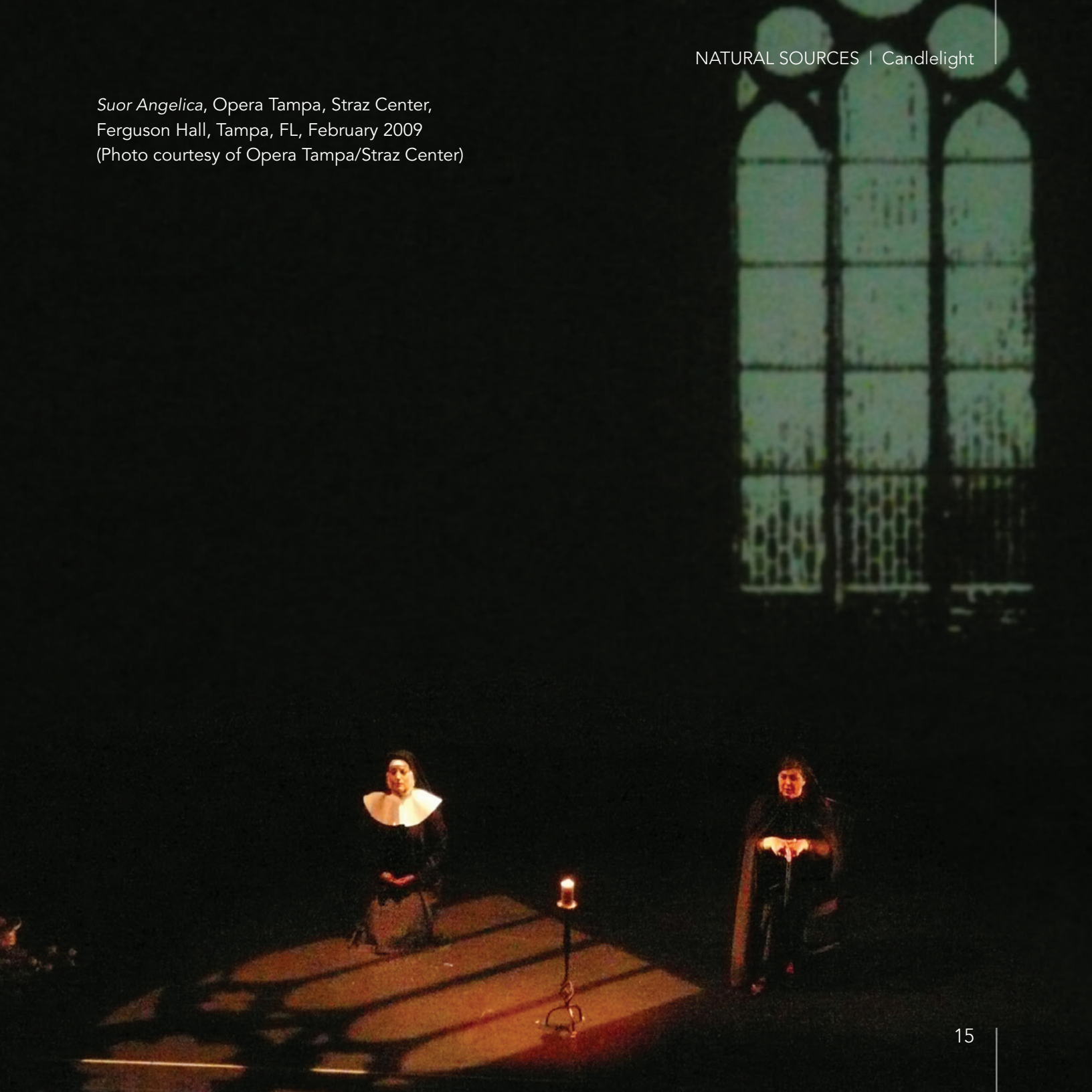


A Little Night Music, Manatee Performing Arts Center, Bradenton, FL, October 2017



Candlelight

Suor Angelica, Opera Tampa, Straz Center,
Ferguson Hall, Tampa, FL, February 2009
(Photo courtesy of Opera Tampa/Straz Center)





Candlelight



A Little Night Music, Manatee Performing Arts Center, Bradenton, FL, October 2017



39 Steps, American Stage Theater Company, St. Petersburg, FL, November 2015 (Photo courtesy of American Stage Theatre Company)

An example of the abstraction of natural light—in this instance, firelight. Note the red lighting to simulate the illumination generated by flames.



Firelight



Campfire (iStock by Getty Images)



Hunchback of Notre Dame, Manatee Performing Arts Center, Bradenton, FL, February 2018



Joseph P. Oshry | United Scenic Artists Local USA-829 | IATSE Local 412

Studies of Light in the World and on the Stage

Light impacts our environment, adjusts our mood, and affects our quality of life. Art imitates life, and light exerts the same power over us in the theatre.

Studies of Light bridges the Every Day to the On Stage, "enlightening" the casual observer, the audience member, and the theatre professional.

Once sensitized to observing light in the home and inside businesses, in nature and on the street, readers can brighten their own existence and control their surroundings.

The next step is empowering themselves inside the theater. *Studies of Light* shows how light magnifies emotions within suspended disbelief. Light both heightens the playwright's meaning and deepens the actor's message. That is the full spectrum; a wealth of connections exist for the reader between these points.

Joseph Oshry has designed lighting for 600 professional productions with such organizations as the Asolo Repertory Theater, American Stage Theatre Company, Atlanta Lyric Theatre, Wick Theatre, Palm Beach Dramaworks, Gainesville Theatre Alliance, Orlando-UCF Shakespeare Theatre, New Orleans Opera, Opera Tampa, Sarasota Opera, and Sarasota International Dance Company. He has provided lighting for Wynton Marsalis, Madeleine Sherwood, Michael Franks, and other celebrity performers. He was the recipient of Individual Artist Fellowships in 1997 and 2007 and won four Theatre Tampa Bay Awards for Outstanding Lighting Design.

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