

DESIGNERS ARE POETS
MASQUERADING AS MECHANICS

A UNIQUE PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY
OF DESIGN FOR THE STAGE

“*Standby* is nothing short of groundbreaking.”

— AMANDA GRONICH, dramaturg, *The Laramie Project*

“A valuable tool for young designers.”

— BEOWULF BORITT, Tony Award-winning
Broadway scenic designer

“A fascinating, insightful look at theatrical design ... An excellent read for anyone aspiring to be or currently working as a theatrical designer.”

— K. WAGNER, Michigan State University,
for *Choice* (rated “highly recommended”)

“Any literary arsenal of texts on design will greatly benefit from its inclusion.”

— CORY PATTAK, award-winning lighting designer
and creator of *in 1: the podcast*

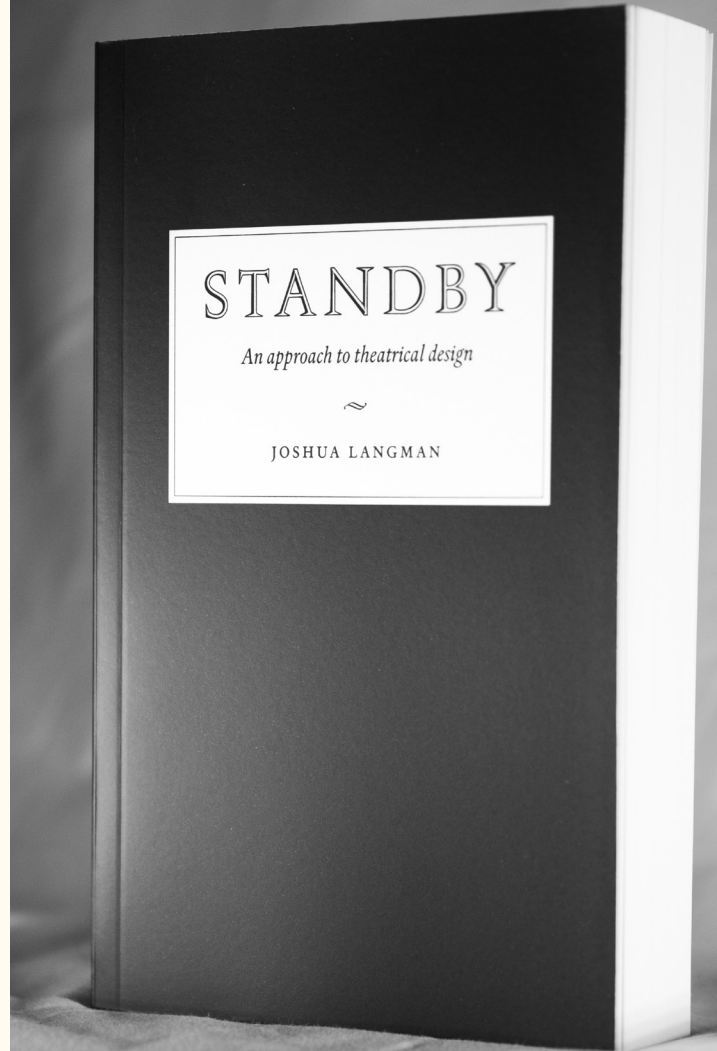
2023 “Outstanding Academic Title,” *Choice*

Selection, 2023 AUPresses Book, Jacket & Journal Show



Southern Illinois University Press

WWW.STANDBYBOOK.COM



ABOUT THE BOOK

STANDBY proposes a practical philosophy of contemporary theatrical design that addresses all design disciplines, all theatrical collaborators, and all forms of theatre, from the traditional to the avant-garde. In a field that is too often dismissed as purely technical, Joshua Langman celebrates design as a transformative force with the power to elevate a performance and enable it to resonate beyond the bounds of its physical production. Beginning with the proposition that design contributes essential layers of meaning to an experience, *Standby* argues for a unique approach centered on the creation of revelatory theatrical moments.

In a mission to illuminate the soul of the craft, Langman investigates the purposes of design, details the elements of a production concept, uncovers the mechanics of creating meaning, explores the relationship of theatrical design to fine art and art history, and offers practical guidance on designing productions. He also considers what has changed as designers have embraced digital technology and suggests fifteen concrete methods for preserving the magic of live theatre in a digital age. Blending scholarship and storytelling, personal experience and contrarian wisdom, *Standby* challenges theatre-makers to harness the rich dramatic potential of theatrical design.

FEATURES OF NOTE

- Proposes a unified, holistic theory of theatrical design
- Includes innovative, practical frameworks for structuring design concepts
- Illustrates principles with a wealth of stories and examples from a broad array of productions
- Offers rare clarity to students, who may struggle to separate the essential spirit of the discipline from the technicalities of production
- Captures the elusive magnetism that draws artists and audiences to the ancient art of theatre, reminding us why it matters
- Situates design within the rich context of the other theatrical disciplines and the aims of the art form
- Makes a case for beauty, craftsmanship, and conceptual rigor
- Appeals to designers, actors, directors, playwrights, stage managers, technicians, audiences, educators, and students of all levels
- Draws on the author's extensive personal experience
- Offers concrete directives and advice to young designers
- Includes a succinct summary of key terms and concepts for easy reference
- A companion website features resources to enrich readers' engagement with the text: www.standbybook.com

EXCERPT

DESIGN has survived the millennia because there are truths in the theatre that designers alone can speak, just as there are truths that can be spoken only by actors, dancers, and musicians. Though theatrical design is often misunderstood as an illustrative task, the best designers rarely illustrate a play. Instead, they enlarge, enrich, and ennoble the play. They release the play from the strictures of reality; they elevate the play to the status of the mythical; they reveal the play for what it is, what it means, and why it matters. A production that is designed with intention therefore *means more than* the same production designed by default or by rote. The script may be the same, but not the significance. The text may be the same, but not the experience, and it is in the experience of the play that much of its meaning lies.

Playwrights, directors, actors, and designers know that a play is not its script. A *script* is made of words; a *play* is made of moments. The script becomes a play, the score becomes a concert, the choreography becomes a dance only when it is transmuted from an idea into an experience. The alchemy of this transformation lies largely in the hands of the piece's designers.

from Chapter 1, "House to Half"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOSHUA LANGMAN has designed lighting, sound, and projections for Ensemble Studio Theatre, Summer Shorts, Khunum Productions, La MaMa ETC, the Jim Henson Foundation, singer-songwriter Cidny Bullens, Teátrica, Brooklyn Gypsies, the 52nd Street Project, and many others. He has facilitated workshops at Carnegie Hall and spoken at The Players and the Drama Book Shop. Langman is a faculty member at the Kean University Theatre Conservatory, where he teaches theatrical design.



Paperback · 5 × 8 inches · 378 pages · USD \$35.00

ISBN (paper): 978-0-8093-3844-3

ISBN (electronic): 978-0-8093-3845-0



To read more about Standby, download educational resources, or book Joshua Langman as a speaker, visit

WWW.STANDBYBOOK.COM

To request an examination copy, visit

WWW.SIUPRESS.COM

or e-mail BOOKPUB@SIU.EDU

Southern Illinois University Press
Morris Library
Mail code 6806
605 Agriculture Drive
Carbondale, IL 62901