

Mamma Mia! Design Statement

When it came to the musical “Mamma Mia!”, every single person involved in the production of it all agreed that all the aspects of design should be vibrant and be able to stand out to the audience.

The lighting was an interesting concept with this show, and the set we had. When we began hanging the lights needed for the show, we had to position them in a way that fit this multi-storied and complex set. Now, when I got to programming, it was very hard to not just make every scene super bright and exciting. This is because even with a show like Mamma Mia, with music from Abba, not every scene is happy and exciting. You have to find the right balance and the right moments to display the lighting necessary to portray the mood of a scene.

Sound was a bit different for this show than the other shows I've done, we had very little actual sound effects, all the sound just came from the pit. Nonetheless, the pit was able to deliver everything we needed perfectly. Along with sound effects, the music itself was a very large contributor to the design process. Music can make or break the mood of a scene.

Now, costumes were a difficult task from what I understood. The mix of present and past costumes had our costume designer thinking a lot, about how the characters themselves would look and what they would wear in the many situations they are in. For example, the dynamos had their old-timey and bright costumes, contrasting with everything else worn in the show.

Last but not least is props. Surprisingly, there are not all that many props in Mamma Mia. Thinking back on the show now, the only hand prop that comes to mind are Sam's old bagpipes that Donna holds. Even then, those bagpipes did hold a lot of meaning, about Donna and Sam's past, which of course, led into the number “SOS”.

For the most part, Mamma Mia is a very light-hearted and uplifting show with a relatable theme of self-discovery and love. All these pieces of production merged to present this theme as best as they could. Mamma Mia is often looked at as a fun and goofy show that has little to no actual heart-warming or somber moments, but that's just where all those people are wrong. While yes, on the outside the show is colorful and exciting, but on the inside, a deep story does present itself, especially with the characters Donna and Sophie. Donna had to consistently deal with her past while also caring for her daughter, and Sophie was trying to discover exactly who she was, even if it meant having a whole wedding. Every single person in the production design team had to realize this to accurately portray the message of this unseemingly complex show. My job in particular, the lighting designer, I felt I had to realize this concept the most, that way not every scene was bright and overdone. It was all about the balance, not just for me, but for everyone.