

Alex Shapiro's PAPER CUT: A Visual Guide Sheet
Peter Guenther, Owatonna High School

What you will need:

- 4-6 48 inch fluorescent black lights with homemade wood cases painted black
- 4 Smaller (12-18 inch) fluorescent black lights for the front row and percussion
- Multiple colored LED Finger Lights; we purchased ours from Windy City Novelties.
- Theatre Gaff Tape

Since Paper Cut is rather rehearsal intensive, adding lighting effects will make it more so, so you must plan ahead. The work will yield a very creative and effective result.

The holders for the black lights must be painted black, as the fixtures will be white and will, in turn, glow along with the paper. This will ruin the effect of the focus being on the paper.

Use theatre gaff tape to tape an LED Finger light to the bottom edge of each music stand, with the light pointing up at the music. This will do two things: color the paper as you tap it, and allow the students to read the music so they do not have to memorize it. It will also yield a colorful, kaleidoscopic effect to the ensemble.

You will have to experiment with light placement based on the size of your ensemble. Make sure your students wear black shirts without white buttons. They also glow.

We did different heights with the paper in our performance, and we made paper airplanes at the end which gave a 3D feeling for the audience, especially when they were hit in the forehead in the darkness!

The opening of our version used green finger lights on all of our percussionists, doing choreographed hand movements which we wrote ourselves. We were trying to go for a "laser light show" effect, and we thought it worked well.

As conductor, I used one finger light as a baton. I tried to keep it hidden from view, although our youtube video is shot from the side so it is visible.

You will notice the lights came up in the middle of our performance. I would have ducked out of the way as well if I were to do it again. The lights coming up were intentional. We wanted to make it look like the band "disappeared" when the lights came up, and then "reappeared" in the darkness.

The most demanding challenge by far was the transport of the fluorescent lights. They are very, very fragile. This can be, frankly, expensive.

Paper Cut is worth it. In the dark, the piece takes on a whole new dimension of performance and communication. The above listed comments are designed to just get you started. Make the piece whatever you and your students feel will convey the best connection.

Good luck, and Don't Rush!

Any questions?

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