

# Chess

## Intro:

The following is a script treatment for UCI Drama's staged production of *Chess*. This document contains the initial ideas for the use of lighting in this production. This document includes research and inspiration images to help support ideas of color, texture, emotion, and overall atmosphere. This lighting script treatment does imply certain blocking and scenic elements that are only used to best convey the lighting ideas. Any comments, suggestions, and questions are welcome.

## Lighting Concept:

The lighting in this production will be used to enhance emotion and atmosphere, add kinetic complexity, and establish the location of each scene.

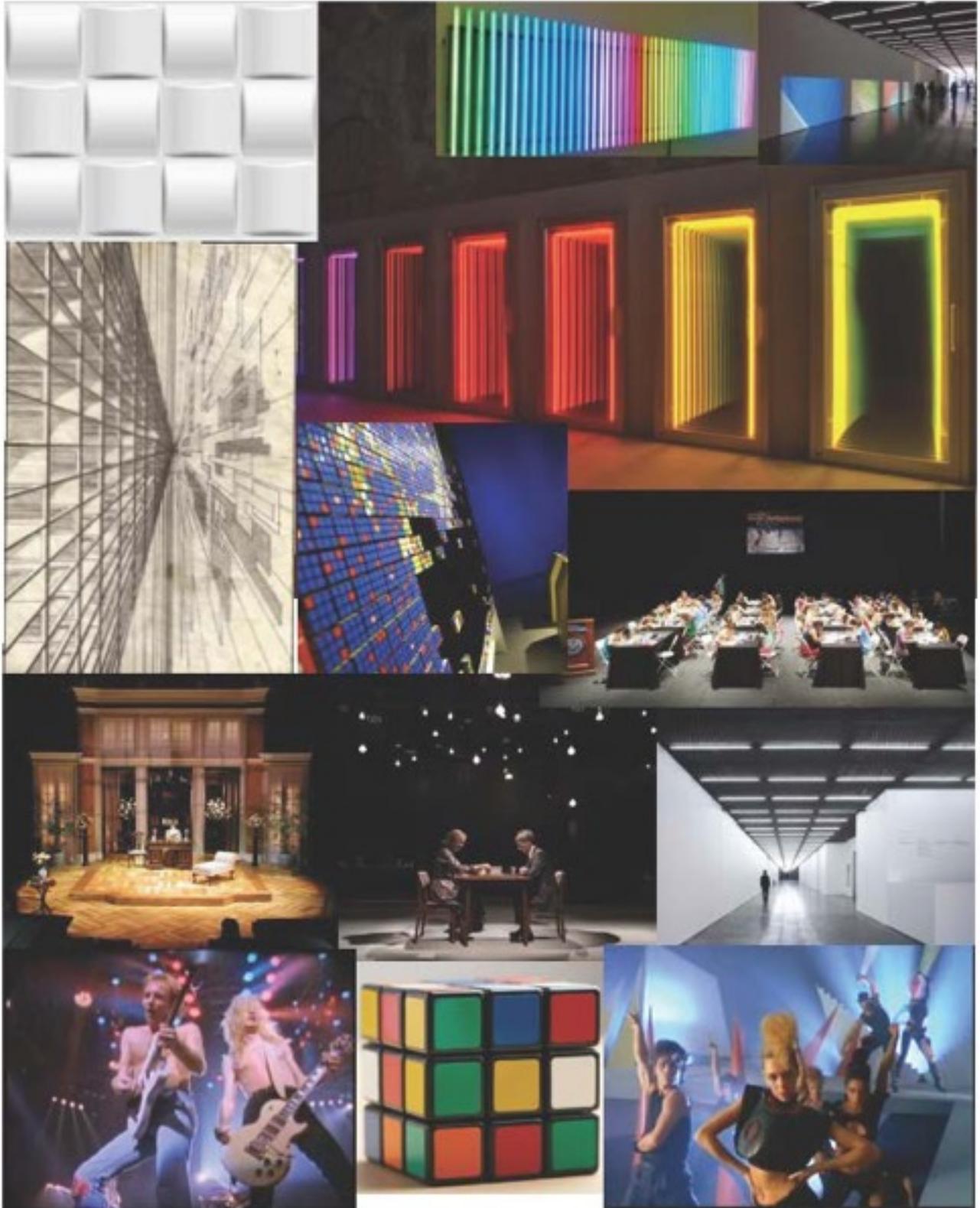
There are three main worlds where this musical takes place: the intimate spaces (hotel rooms), public spaces ("One Night in Bangkok" and other large musical numbers), and the semi-public events such as the chess matches. Each world offers something specific to further the story.

The private spaces are close quarters among the actors. The light feels more motivated from familiar sources, with interior lights such as lamps. This is where the intimate conversations happen, the ones not meant to be broadcast to the world. It feels soft and warm, wrapping around the actors. The space is calm and still.

The public spaces are the biggest and brightest of the three worlds. This is when everyone is on camera and they know it. This is the publicity stunts, the grand gestures, and the big musical numbers. Everything that happens in this world is open to the public of the show, and usually is done larger-than-life precisely for that reason. The public moments require the entire expanse of the performance area, taking advantage of the projection screens and the large ensemble risers. There is a lot of color and kineticism, lights chiseling out the figure of the performers and supporting the onstage movement with movement of its own. It is generally angular and brash, fully unapologetic. We feel like we are at a rock concert, or at the very least at a live episode of *American Idol* or *So You Think You Can Dance*. The audience should sense the character in focus is pulling out all the stops, either due to a strong emotional reaction or to perform for the media. "Rock Merano" is Freddie putting on a show for the public and announcing his grand arrival. "I Know Him So Well", in contrast, occurs because of strong emotions that are best conveyed in a song.

The third world, semi-public, is unique to shows like *Chess*, where sometimes things happen in a setting that is somewhere between intimate and public. The third world opens a new realm of exploration, inspired by reality tv shows and the show's (*Chess*) general obsessions with publicity and the media's opinion. In *Chess*, these moments are the chess matches. In most chess tournaments, the lighting is focused over the chess table, while lighting between tables is much dimmer. This type of lighting has a trifold purpose: it isolates the players so they are less likely to be distracted by the spectators, it draws focus to the chess tables, and it ensures that the tables are the brightest thing in the room, minimizing the chance of any movement in the game being missed. In the show, this chess match has been heightened to the same caliber as the Olympics or the Superbowl. At both of these events, there are hundreds of thousands of spectators in the stands of the arenas and stadiums with their cameras flashing and flickering. I will create this atmosphere during the chess match scenes. The stark lighting closes in on the chess table and the main characters. The ensemble members are holding some type of small light source that can flicker and flash, giving the effect of an arena of people surrounding the table and watching intently.

**Worlds Collage:**



## Scene by Scene Breakdown:

### Prologue: The Story of Chess

*Chess* begins with the Prologue, an instrumental introduction leading into the song *The Story of Chess*. *The Story of Chess* sounds very secretive and sneaky, the Arbiter certainly is not as grand as they will be later in the show. They are acting more as a narrator character in this moment, in a world that has yet to take shape. It is a vague location and the lighting will wait to reveal anything about the show's location. There is stark, isolating light on the Arbiter. He/she appears out of blackness, to share prefacing information about the game of chess. The Arbiter's voice is joined by various members of the ensemble, each of which will be lit by similar, stark lighting when they sing, hopefully all in squares of light. Those not singing will remain in darkness so as not to give away all the stage at once. It feels secretive, as if the cast is going out of their way to sneak this information to the audience. It is the only scene in *Chess* that does not follow the rules for the three worlds:

public, private, and semi-public. It is a sort of no-man's-land that is most similar to that of the semi-public world.



Lighting Script Treatment  
Version 4  
**Act 1, Scene 1:**

LD: Morgan Embry

*Merano:*

Scene 1 shifts us into a crisp, bright day in Merano, Italy, full of sweeping sunlight. Depending on how *The Prologue* transitions to Scene 1, that shift can be sharp and sudden, or *The Prologue* can gradually brighten

until we arrive in sunny-day Merano. It is positive and public. The town is full of the hustle and bustle of a busy day, especially on a day as exciting as this. The upcoming Chess Championship has caused a stir of excitement in the small town. The atmosphere is bright and giddy.



*Rock Merano:*

*Rock Merano* interrupts the pleasantness and sweetness of the beautiful, sunny day in Merano. Freddie, the hot shot that he is, has arrived and has brought his badassery with him. The lighting sharply switches from innocent sunny day to an outdoor rock concert. The sunny day stays, but the lighting and existing color palette becomes kinetic with some bright accents of color like that in a rock concert. The moving lights become slightly kinetic, sweeping into position as Freddie enters. This shift sets the tone for the entire rest of the musical. It is big and bold. It is also high in emotions.



*Merano Reprise:*

Freddie continues on his way, and his bold lighting fades with him. The setting returns to the pleasant day outdoors in Merano. The ensemble returns to their song as before, though perhaps with a bit more excitement now that the famous champion has arrived. Scene 1, overall, introduces the audience to the style of the show. It flips between realistic and normal, to that of over-the-top and bold, and the shifts are often very sudden. The lighting plays a very active role in this musical, reacting and interacting with the action on stage in often kinetic ways.



### **Scene 2: The Palace Hotel, Merano**

Scene 2 shows us the look and feel of the private world for the first time. It is intimate and warm. The light is soft and wraps around the actors. It feels as if it is coming from a nearby light source, like an overhead light or a lamp. There is a feeling of sunlight pouring in from a nearby window, as well. It feels comfortable and secluded, Freddie and Florence have clear control over the space and the conversation, free from intrusion.



### **Scene 3: Palace Hotel, Conference Room**

Scene 3 finds us in the midst of a press conference, hosted by Freddie. The light is warm like the other interior moments thus far. It feels as if it is coming from a pendant light overhead. The light on Freddie is much starker and brighter, drawing attention to him. The reporters all have some sort of flashing light source, creating the chaos of a mob of flashing cameras. The room is dimly lit enough for this flashing to be irksome to Freddie, although he loves the attention. Perhaps the warm conference room light is creating a silhouette feel on everyone, as it pushes in from somewhere above and slightly behind the actors. A special light highlights each reporter as they speak, representing how the reporters are a collective, faceless mass to Freddie until they are speaking to him individually. When tensions rise between Freddie and Reporter #4, high angled lighting pushes down on both of them. Once Freddie storms off, his high angled light remains, waiting for Florence to step into it to deliver her line. This is to represent how Florence is stepping into Freddie's place in order to clean up his

PR mess. An action we will soon see as a trend for Florence and Freddie's relationship. Throughout, a low angle back light pushes in from behind the ensemble in a incandescent-feeling, warm light.

#### **Scene 4: The Palace Hotel, Molokov's Suite**

*Anatoly and Molokov:*

Scene 4 is a private scene, taking place in the hotel room of Molokov and centering on a closed conversation between Anatoly and Molokov. The light is similar to that of Scene 2 in Freddie's hotel room. It is warm, wrapping, and soft light. I would like to have a lamp for their hotel room to make it feel different than the other hotel rooms, maybe more sultry. The room is enclosed, intimate, and secluded enough for candidness.



*Where I Want to Be:*

This song has a dreamlike quality. The space expands to include the ensemble. The waltz lends itself to a swirling feeling like that of the waltz dance style. Moving lights will embrace this swirling style of kineticism. The ensemble have lights that glow green to suggest evil eyes watching him, like in a nightmare. The song alludes to Anatoly being chased and running from failure. The lighting will express these high stakes and sense of being hunted then swept up and overpowered. As the song dwindles down, the space slowly contracts back to just Anatoly, honing in on the trapped and lost feeling he is expressing, worried that he will end up back where he started and having not actually accomplished anything meaningful.



**Scene 5: The Arbiter's Chambers**

*Diplomats:*

Scene 5 opens in the Arbiter's chambers. Due to the heightened emotion of this scene, I feel that it is best suited to have a more abstract interpretation of this space. A window texture will sweep across the space, to let the audience know that it is an interior space. The Arbiter does have a strong presence and his chambers contain bold, high-angled, stark lighting to reflect that. Members of each team will be lit from behind with their corresponding color (either red or blue), as they stand on either side of the tight performance area of the chambers. This creates the visual division to mimic the cultural and emotional division already existing in the story. It is a semi-public setting, but one without the presence of the media or spectators.



*The Arbiter:*

The Arbiter is an interesting character who seems to take pleasure in their importance and power. It is not that they abuse their power, but rather enjoy their status and its perks. As a result, the Arbiter should have a grand entrance for this song. There will be an alley of back light, perhaps at a low angle, to silhouette him as he enters from upstage. This is everyone's first interaction with him as the Arbiter. He/she would want to make a striking impression. Moving lights at high angles upstage will be reacting to the down beats of the song, a low key shift into the rock concert aspect of this song. As the song builds, the kineticism of the lights builds with it. The Arbiter's movements about the stage are tracked in a followspot, to make the introduction of this character as impressive as possible. Upon the conclusion of the song, the moving lights all pan downward to the stage and trail away with the last notes of the music. The atmosphere of the Arbiter's chambers returns, a refocus of attention takes place as they get down to the business at hand. It is a visual clearing of the throat.



*Hymn to Chess:*

*The Hymn of Chess* is a short song which does not call for much. The space will soften and warm up to resemble that of *Merano*. The warmth and impression of the tradition and nostalgia exuded from the lyrics of the song.

**Scene 6: The Arena**

Scene 6 is the first chess match of this championship. Tensions are high, as are curiosities. Stark light pushes down and in on the chess table, where Anatoly and Freddie are deep in strategy. The rest of the arena is dark, lights in the ensemble flickering and flashing all around, like tons of cameras. Isolating light also highlights the members of each competitor's delegation. The excitement in the arena is palpable, as if the ensemble spectators are leaning more and more forward to see the action.



**Scene 7:**

*Quartet:*

The lighting for this song is extremely isolating. Each character is stuck in a state of self-justification and defensiveness, while being assaulted with accusations from the opposing delegation. Florence, Molokov, Anatoly, and the Arbiter are all isolated in a sharp down lighting, representing the scrutiny and pressure they are under from the other characters in the scene. Florence is desperately trying to spin Freddie's actions into a logical reaction to the unjust of the Russian team. Molokov is defending his champion's actions as well as

protest the behavior of Freddie. The Arbiter is under pressure from both teams to side in their favor. The pressure is weighing heavy on them.

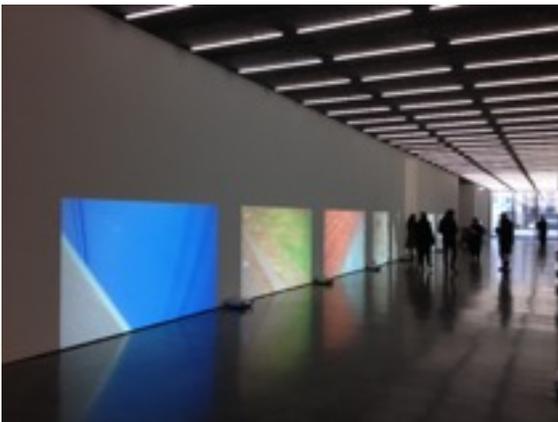


*Florence and Molokov:*

Florence and Molokov remain alone after the other two depart. The isolating light widens to encompass the two of them in a common pool of light. The red of blue of the two sides they represent push in from upstage, dividing the stage into their perspective teams. The two colors become more and more clear as the argument escalates.

### Scene 8: TV Control Room

This scene, in particular, could really benefit from some manner of showing media content upstage to set the scene. Whether it is through projection or LED panels, the setting would be set very successfully with several variations of tv screens showing on the upstage surface. It would emit the blue glow associated with tv screens and the rest of the small space designated for the tv control room would be lit by overhead lights, perhaps in imitation of the color of fluorescents or other dingy overhead light sources.



#### *1956-Budapest Rising:*

At the top of the song, the content on the upstage screen goes to a blue glow. Blue glow starts to creep in from the sides as well. Red and blue light, symbolizing her internal struggle, begin to push in from behind. The red and blue pops to full intensity as she sings “There’s a time and there’s a place” for the first time. Matching the intensity of the emotion in the song. The second time Florence sings this lyric, red and blue side light pushes in from opposing sides ever increasing in harshness and power. The back red and blue sweeps downward to the stage and then back upwards again, fingers of light reaching out through the mass of performers. The contrast of the two colors show on the figures on stage, each character embodying the conflict between Florence and Freddie, between Russia and the US, and within Florence.

# Lighting Script Treatment

Version 4

*Nobody's Side:*

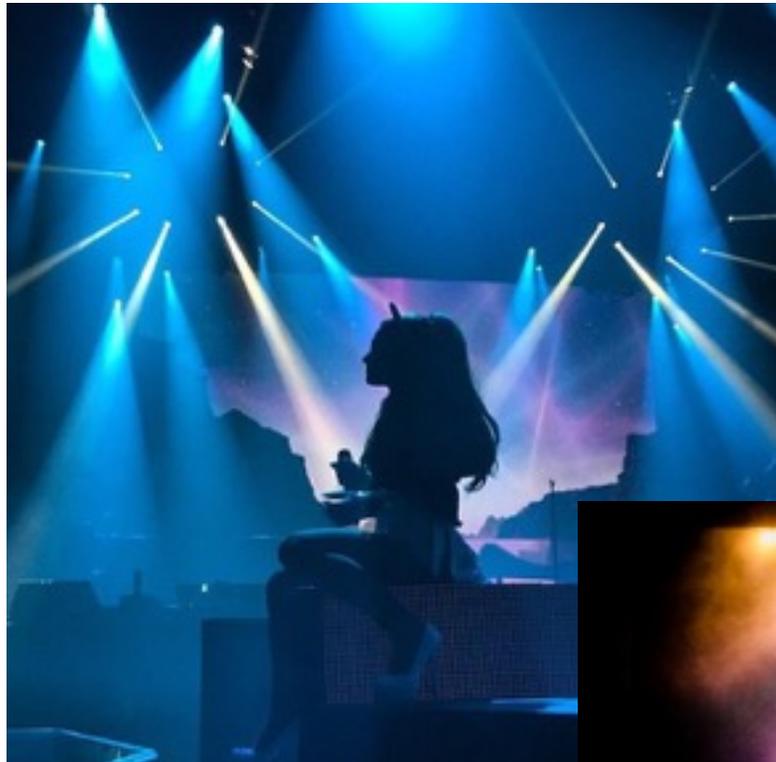
LD: Morgan Embry

This song is Florence's moment of reclaiming her power. It is her breaking point when she decides she deserves better than how she has been treated previously. The song is one of empowerment and her own form of badassery. There is a cymbal crash as *1956-Budapest Rising* transition into *Nobody's Side*. On this crash,



the red lights on stage shift to blue. The conflict within her subsides, giving way to empowerment and a clear decision of what she should do for herself. The fingers of light from the previous song expand and soften, the tension subsiding. For each verse, lighting from a high back or side angle match the ebb and flow of the song, the beams of light expanding and shrinking with the rhythm of the music. During the chorus, the same lights pulse,

matching the down beat. This is to highlight the two sides of her empowerment that she goes through in this song. The chorus are in the heat of her anger and frustration, when she can see clearly how wrongly she is treated by Freddie. These are the moments that she feel strong enough to be on her own. The verses are



representative of her hesitation to strike out her own. These moments happen after she has calmed down from fights with Freddie. She convinces herself it is better to stay and that leaving was an irrational thought. Fortunately, by the end of the song, Florence has made the decision to strike out on her own and cut ties with Freddie.



### **Scene 9: Merano Mountain Inn**

#### *Der Kleine Franz:*

This song takes place in the very warm, cozy restaurant of Merano Mountain Inn at night. The crowd within the restaurant is animated and high-spirited. Florence and Anatoly are there shortly before venturing outside for quiet and privacy. They push through the ensemble to exit the restaurant.



#### *Mountain Duet:*

*Mountain Duet* is an awfully romantic song, with sweeping moonlight and twinkling lights like stars held by the ensemble. It is sweet and soft. The magical essence of this song is interrupted by Freddie's arrival. Anatoly and Freddie exchange a tense stare down as the lights shift back to that of the chess match.

### **Scene 10: The Arena (video)**

(This scene can be depicted live or through prerecorded video projected on the upstage screen. This is how it would be approached if performed live.) Slowly, the moonlight and stars fade away and the stark down light of the chess match pushes in, isolating the two players from the rest of the arena. The flashes of cameras return, vigorous and piercing.

### **Scene 11: Palace Hotel, Freddie's Suite**

The scene returns to the hotel room of Freddie, as in scene 2. Although, this time it feels smaller and more isolated. This is due to being nighttime outside, with no exterior light shining in the windows. The air feels stagnant and thick. There is tension between Florence and Freddie, and the audience can sense those issues are about to be hashed out.

#### *Florence Quits:*

The argument migrates onto center stage as the song begins. Light pulses and presses in from both sides in an alternating fashion, egging on the former couple as they speak their mind.

#### *Pity the Child:*

*Pity the Child* is Freddie's self assurance for his less than honorable actions. Here he shows a side of himself to the audience that better explains why he is the way he is. It does not justify his less than enjoyable personality, but it does give us some insight. He sees himself as the perpetual victim, which is why he is always on the defense and the attack. He puts on such a show for the media to keep them on his side. This song is his defense for the social trial he is anticipating, now that Florence has abandoned ship. The song's lighting is comprised of high angled side lighting that points down of him accusingly. Whether it is the world's actual judgement or his paranoia of being judged, is up to the audience to decide.

### **Scene 12: Arbiter's Chambers**

Scene 12 takes place in a more public version of the Arbiter's chambers. It is warm and interior, but the ensemble is included in the action. This is one of the semi-public moments in *Chess*.



This scene takes place on the street outside the consulate in Merano. It feels bright and sunny. Florence and Anatoly have a serious conversation, that gives Florence clarification on where she and Anatoly stand in their relationship. There is a nice juxtaposition between the cheerful atmosphere of the city street, with the weight of their conversation and the authority of the consulate building.

*Heaven Help My Heart:*

Florence is left alone on the street outside the consulate, as Anatoly and Walter proceed to go inside to get Anatoly's new papers. The atmosphere feels soft and sweet, the severeness of the building is brushed aside. The lights shift to a rosy hue, wrapping around Florence as she sings.

*Anatoly and the Press:*

Scene 14 is back at Merano Station, although under much different circumstances than when the show began. It is more serious and tense. The situation is pressed, a sense of rushing. I plan to capture this feeling of rushing with the sun setting. During the song, the sun sets from the scene, shifting into night. The sun itself is not seen, only the effects of the vanishing sun are seen and felt.

*Anthem:*

The scene has shifted completely into night. The sun has set, but the emotion has risen. Anatoly realizes that his private business has been leaked to the press and Anatoly, unlike Freddie, does not want everything about himself in the media. Anatoly feels conflicted about his decision. He is catching a lot of judgement for his choice to defect, his private business has been leaked to the public, and he is unsure of the right thing to do about his love life. The ensemble becomes the stars in the night sky as a big gesture of light pushes in from the back. It grows in scale as the song builds. Anatoly is isolated in his own pool of light. I envisioned some form of patriotic content from both Russia and the US running through the surface in the background. It is abstract and sending subliminal messages of the pull from both countries.

**Act 2, Scene 1: Bangkok Nightclub**



*One Night in Bangkok:*

This song feels like it would have a pixelated, yet kinetic, aesthetic. It is boxy and angular. It is also very public, utilizing the ensemble lights and a lot of the stage space.

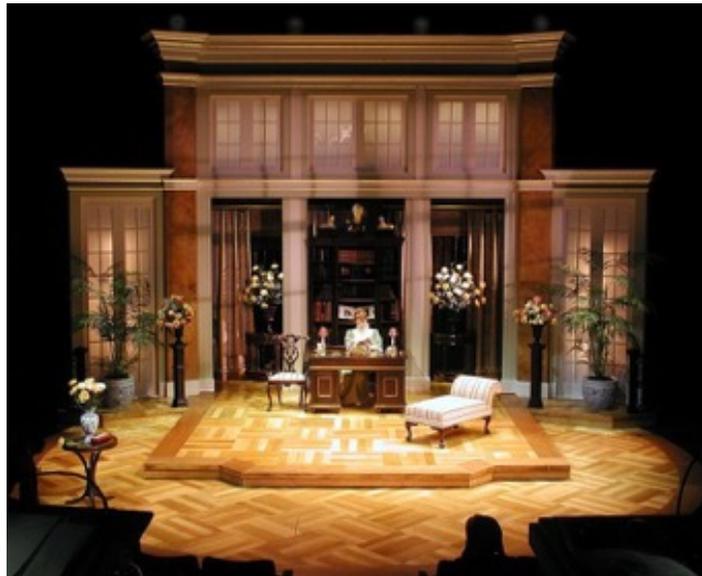
The content on the upstage surface will reflect this cube stylization. It should feel like a new and exciting place that we have not been to yet in the show. The lighting will create the feeling that Frederick is moving through the city as he moves around the stage. Lights will be used asymmetrically

and intermittently in order to convey the idea that various sources of light are passing by, such as street signs, store signs, street lights, and other eye catching light sources. The ensemble wristband lights will be used to expand and contract the space as the music expands and contracts.

## Scene 2: The Oriental Hotel, Bangkok, Anatoly and Florence's Suite

### *One More Opponent/ You and I:*

For this scene, the setting returns to the privacy of a hotel room. The light is soft and wraps around the actors; it is intimate and warm. It feels as if it is coming from a nearby light source, like an overhead light or a lamp. There is a feeling of sunlight pouring in from a nearby window, as well. It feels comfortable and secluded, enabling Florence and Anatoly to speak candidly.



## Scene 3: Dust Thani Hotel, Bangkok, Svetlana's Suite

### *Someone Else's Story:*

Scene 3 of Act 2 takes place in the hotel room of Svetlana. The light is similar to that of Scene 2 in Florence and Anatoly's hotel room. It is warm, wrapping, and soft light. I would like to have a lamp for their hotel room to make it feel different than the other hotel rooms, maybe more sultry. The room is enclosed, intimate, and secluded enough for candidness. I would like for it to take place on the opposite side of the stage from Scene 2, to get the effect of the focus being drawn across stage. The contrast between the two situations would have a better effect if the location of the scenes required a pan from the audience.

#### **Scene 4: The foyer of the Oriental Hotel**

##### *The Deal:*

This first section of *The Deal* is in a public setting. The foyer of the Oriental Hotel is high angled, cool lighting. Ensemble lights from the lower rows flash intermittently, much less frequent than in other scenes. The public is not very interested in this encounter. Though, if they knew what was going on in the conversation, they would be very interested. at the end of the song, the scene goes dark.

##### *The Deal (Part 2):*

This next section of the song is private, initially. The location will be ambiguous, a limbo world in transition between part one and the end of part 2 of this song. It acts as a palate cleanser between these two parts. Two isolating lights appear, one on Anatoly and one on Freddie. The conversation seems to be just between them at first. Another isolating light appears on the grouping of Walter and Molokov, expanding the conversation to the semi-public. It is unclear whether or not Freddie is aware of their presence. After Anatoly yells, "There's no deal!", the lights return to the high angled, cool light from the foyer of the Oriental Hotel from part one. We return to the public setting; the ensemble lights begin to flash with more fervor, the public is catching on to the drama.

##### *The Deal (Part 3):*

The final section of this song is still very public and in the foyer of the Oriental Hotel. Ensemble lights are flashing everywhere, as now Freddie, Florence, Anatoly, and Svetlana are all on stage and interacting. There is no way these four could be in the same room and talking without attracting the media's attention.

**Scene 5:**

*I Know Him So Well:*

Scene 5 shows Florence and Svetlana left alone in the foyer of the Oriental Hotel. They are both awkward and unsure of what to say to the other. Finally, Florence breaks the silence. Soft, lavender light pushed in from the back, silhouetting the two women in a light of reminiscence and bittersweet acceptance. The love is still their for Anatoly, on both of their parts. However, it seems that both have decided they must let him go. Softly structured content flows across the upstage surface.

**Scene 6: The Arena**



*End Game (Parts 1-4):*

All sections of this song take place in the open space of the arena. All the drama entailed is out in the open air, for the media to document and share with the world. The ensemble lights are flashing furiously throughout. Stark white, high angled and overhead lighting sharply defines the floor space of the arena. Color, then, is added in reaction to each section of the song. Specifics of which are yet to be determined.

**Scene 7: The Arena**

*Before You and I Reprise:*

This bittersweet song takes place in the arena after the spectators have left. The arena floor definition remains, but the flashing slowly dissipates as we transition into this scene.



*You and I Reprise:*

The world around Florence and Anatoly swirls, transitioning from one world to the next. The airport setting for this song is artificial fluorescent-inspired from overhead, with help from the sweeping daylight of outside from large windows all around.

*Walter/ Florence Finale:*

We remain in the airport setting. Other characters enter, then exit. Walter enters and interacts with Florence. Once Walter enters, the space begins to slowly close in. By the time Walter leaves, the space has dwindled down to barely more than will contain Florence, patriotic content slides across the upstage surface. She begins her final rant.



*Epilogue:*

This setting is ambiguous and mysterious. This conclusion is more of an emotional statement, and less of a realistic occurrence. We return to the isolating pools of light from high angles, like in the *Prologue* and the *Quartet*. We only see who we need to see, the rest of the stage in darkness. As Florence continues to speak, the other characters step into light along side her, one by one. They each join her in what she is saying, matching her frustration and intensity. The LED wristbands begin to twinkle, increasing in their franticness and then calming back down.

*Anthem (Reprise):*

The actors being to sing Anthem, light pours in from behind in patriotic colors (red and blue). The lighting is somber and bold, supporting the emotion of the soloists singing. The lighting will either slowly dissipate and the actors fall into darkness as the song fades, or the song will build to a climax and the lighting will sharply cut out on the last beat.