

CANBERRA THEATRE CENTRE

LIGHTING LOOKBOOK

Updated May 2026

This resource has been created to select your lighting states for your piece for your dance festival.

The Lighting Lookbook has been divided into specific sections:

- **PART I: White lighting states**
- **PART II: Coloured states**
- **PART III: Additional + Gobo effects** (different textures or additions that can be added on to states from Part I or Part II)

Using the Lighting Lookbook and the Lighting Form:

Each lighting state or effect has been allocated a code. When you fill out your lighting form, write down the code reference that you wish to use in each section.

REMEMBER: You have a finite amount of lighting states or changes that you can make within your piece. A state can consist of one element from each of Whites, Coloured States and Effects

LIGHTING YOUR PIECE:

Lighting design has three main functions:

- **Visibility.**
This is the primary function of stage lighting; making sure the audience can see the part(s) of the stage that the director, choreographer and/or the lighting designer want them to see.
- **Selective Focus.**
The function of directing the audience to look where it is desired for them to look through the use of high/low intensity and changes in intensity.
- **Mood.**
Setting the tone or feel of the work. The function of mood is both one of the most difficult and at the same time the easiest function to maintain. The mood of the lighting should enhance the choreography and costumes, and not detract from it.

When choosing the lighting states for your piece, consider the following things:

- What is your piece about?
- What is the feel of your work?
- What are the costumes? What are the colours and fabrics?
- How many performers are in it?
- Where are the transitions in the work? Should they be accented or blended?
- What do you want to be seen? Do you want everyone as visible as possible? Do you want to highlight a particular area of the stage?

Haze:

Haze is used to enhance the lighting effects with the production.

Cyc vs black box:

Choose if you would like to have all the black tabs and curtains in (to make a “black box” theatre) or if you would like to have the cyc (for coloured backdrops or projection).

Specials and projection

If you are using projection within your piece, please note that you may not be able to use colour on the cyc or bright moving lights as it affects the visibility of your projection.

CONSIDERING COLOUR:

Making conscious decisions of what colour lighting state can affect the success of your piece. We recommend using this colour chart to help your selection.



Complementary colours are any two colours opposite each other on the wheel. For example, blue and orange, or red and green. These create a high contrast, so use them when you want something to stand out.



Split complementary colours use three colours. The scheme takes one colour and matches it with the two colours adjacent to its complementary colour. For example, blue, yellow-orange and red-orange. This scheme is ideal because you get contrasting colours, but they aren't as diametrically opposite as complementary colours.



Triadic colours are any three colours that are equally apart on the colour wheel. For example, red, yellow and blue. The Triadic scheme is also high-contrast, but more balanced than complementary colours.



Tetradic or double complementary colours uses four colours together, in the form of two sets of complementary colours. For example, blue and orange is paired with yellow and violet.

LIGHTING TERMINOLOGY USED AT DANCE FEST:

Backlight

Backlight is used to give more depth to the dancers by pushing them out of the background. Backlight is hung upstage of the dancers and focused downstage toward the audience.

Black out

The act of turning off (or fading out) stage lighting. There are several different types of blackouts: "snap to black" is a fast, immediate blackout. A "fade out" is an intermittent fading out of the lights and can be fast or slow.

Chase

A repeated sequence of changing lighting states.

Crossfade

Bringing a new lighting state up whilst bringing the previous one down, so that the new one completely replaces the old one.

Cue

Any signal (music lyric, time, choreography, movement or count) that indicates another action should follow. A command given to technical departments to carry out a particular operation.

Cyclorama (or cyc)

A cyc is a large curtain at the back of the stage area. It is used for projection or lighting purposes.

Fade

An increase, diminishment or change in lighting level.

Footlights

Footlights are positioned at the front of the stage and provide strong shadows on the cyc. It can be used to highlight faces or used to create drama with shadows.

Frontlight (or facelight)

Front light is the least commonly used lighting in dance. This light comes from the front of the stage and is used at low levels to increase visibility of the dancers faces.

Gobo

A thin metal plate etched to produce a design that is projected by a light. Common examples are breakup (foliage), windows and scenic (neon signs, city scapes etc.). The image can be used soft focus or to add texture.

House lights

These refer to the lights in the actual theatre, not the lights on the stage. The house lights illuminate the entire audience area.

Levels

The intensity of light ranging from 100% (brightest the light can get) to 0% (no light or blackout).

Lighting state

A lighting 'picture' or look. Each lighting cue results in a different state (or a modified state).

Sidelight

Sidelight is the most used lighting in dance and the most useful in revealing form.

Silhouette

To light the cyclorama in such a way that the dancers are cast into shadow.

Smother

The large black curtain that covers the cyc to create a black box theatre look.

Strobe

Strobes is an effect of rapidly pulsing to create a special effect. This should not be used for long periods of time as it can trigger epilepsy or dizziness.

Tabs

Curtains that border the stage.

Wash

A lighting state covering the whole stage, generally in colour.

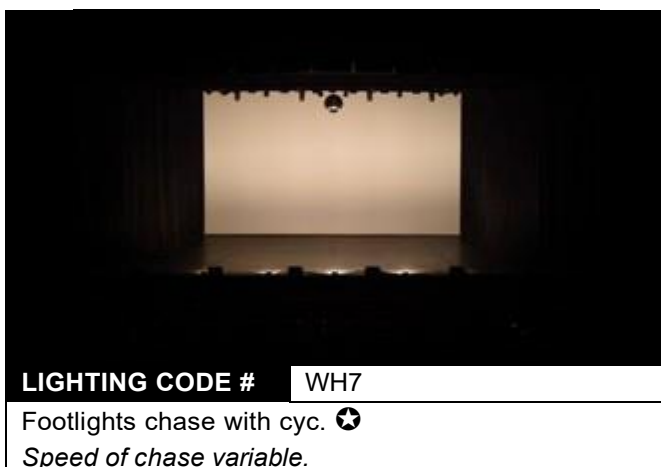
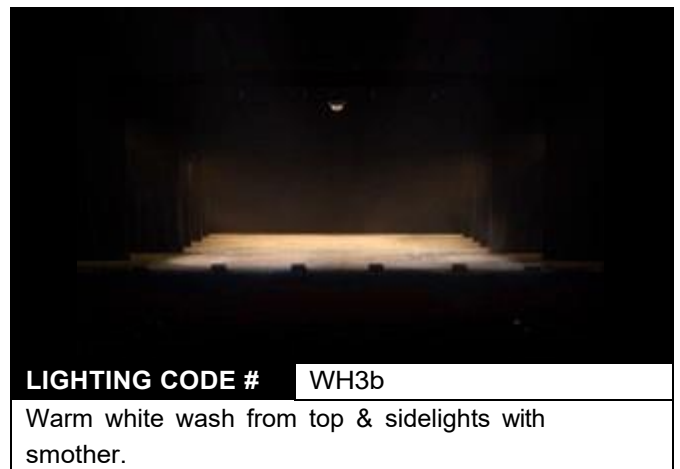
Wings

The space between the tabs or curtains. Where all entrances and exits on and off stage occur.

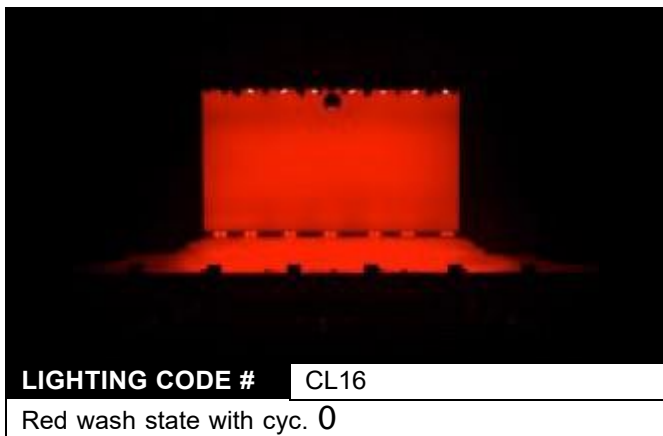
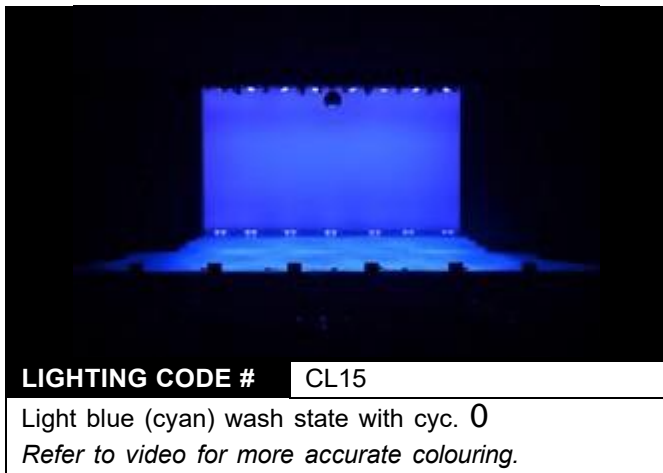
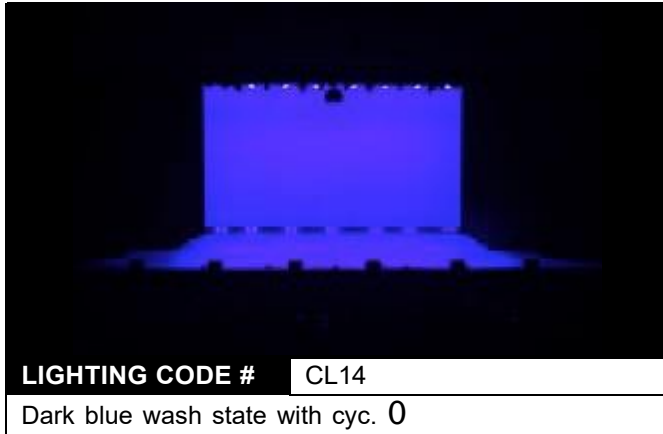
Work lights

Work lights refer to the lights that are on (both onstage and in the house) for the cast and crew to work by during a rehearsal or tech-check, while the theatrical lights for the performance are being set up.

PART I - WHITE LIGHTING STATES:



PART II - COLOURED STATIC STATES:





LIGHTING CODE # CL18

Orange/amber wash state with cyc. 0



LIGHTING CODE #

Orange/amber wash state with smother.



LIGHTING CODE # CL19

Pink wash state with cyc. 0



LIGHTING CODE # CL19b

Pink wash state with smother.

Refer to video for more accurate colour.



LIGHTING CODE # CL20

Purple wash state with cyc. 0



LIGHTING CODE # CL20b

Purple wash state with smother.



LIGHTING CODE # CL21

Green wash state with cyc. 0



LIGHTING CODE # CL21b

Green wash state with smother.



LIGHTING CODE # CL29

Magenta wash state with cyc. 0



LIGHTING CODE # CL29b

Magenta wash state with smother.



LIGHTING CODE # CL30

Sunrise (blue to pink) state with cyc. 0



LIGHTING CODE # CL31

Sunset (yellow to amber) wash state with cyc. 0

PART III - ADDITIONAL EFFECTS SECTION:

Colour of these states can be changed. These states can be added onto most block colour states.

