The Scenic Charge Artist as Leader:
Research in Historical Models, Exploration in Practice, and Synthesis in Documentation

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Abstract: Through using leadership theories and styles, this study sought to clarify the requirements of a Scenic Charge Artist. As Scenic Charge Artist for Marietta College’s production of The Arabian Nights, I investigated leadership styles that met the specific needs of this position. The culmination of this project is a written document synthesizing and evaluating my research and experiences, in order to clarify the role of a Scenic Charge Artist as an artistic leader.
Introduction

Scenic artists interpret and execute a scenic designer’s artistic vision. The Scenic Charge Artist provides guidance toward, management of, and continuity in, the finished product. As an apprentice to the discipline, I desired a clearer precedent to follow. Regrettably, the duties of a Scenic Charge Artist are not documented in detail; and, without a clear model, the expectations of the role are confusing. In the end, after several failed attempts at finding a lead, I decided I would create my own.

Securing the job of Scenic Charge Artist for Marietta College’s production of *The Arabian Nights*, I used my experience to assess how leadership styles can affect the current standing definition of the position.

Beginning the process in October 2012, I attended regular production meetings as the Scenic Charge Artist. In these meetings I had detailed conversations about the vision for the set with the Director, Scenic Designer, and other area heads. Throughout the design and painting process, I scheduled separate meetings with the Director and Scenic Designer to clarify design concepts and color palette of the set.

Painting of the set began in late January and finished in mid-February, 2013. I had a crew of five scenic painters, with additional assistance from my faculty mentor, Jeff Cordell (who was also the Director of *The Arabian Nights*). Two painters on my crew and myself were cast in the show. This forced a majority of the paint work calls to take place after rehearsals. Nevertheless, my crew and I were able to overcome this obstacle without negatively affecting our coursework, acting, or painting.
As an indirect assessment of my effectiveness as a leader, I studied the artistic growth of my paint team from the beginning to the completion of the process. Out of the five members of my paint team, only one person started with minimal scenic painting experience. With this in mind, I already had an idea of what leadership styles I would use and what growth through training I helped to achieve as we completed the process. (For images of the process and realized set, see Appendix C).

Using Rinke’s book, Don’t Oil the Squeaky Wheel, I followed his descriptions for situational leadership styles. I concentrated on the following styles:

- Coercive—Leaders who use this style demand “immediate compliance.”
- Pacesetting—Leaders who use this style expect “results yesterday” and have high standards for performance.
- Coaching—Leaders who use this style focus on “growing people” and should be prepared to accept “short-term failures” provided they result in long-term development.
- Democratic—Leaders who use this style achieve “consensus through participation.”
- Affiliative—Leaders who use this style build team harmony, improve communication, increase morale, and help establish “emotional bonds” with employees.
- Authoritative—Leaders who use this style provide “leeway” for people to innovate and take risks provided they move in the direction of the stated idea (Rinke, 24).
I made the decision to avoid using the coercive and pacesetting styles of leadership in my study. Historical models support my decision. In the past, Michelangelo treated his hired aid as laborers. Rather than giving them an opportunity to learn, he had them cleaning or doing general maintenance tasks. Many artists still keep this idea today, treating their apprentices as grunts rather than taking the time to train them. I did not want to support this negative practice. Instead, I used the coaching and democratic models of leadership to create a more positive working environment.

In my process of testing leadership styles, I discovered that acting as a “democratic coach” created ideal results. I am in full support of this combination, especially when working in an academic setting. By leading in this combined style, my paint team improved their painting skills, collaborated on all paint techniques, maintained a positive outlook on their work, as well as respected my authority and project deadlines.

Following these styles of leadership also helped me see the potential for the management side of the job to become an extension of my role as a Scenic Charge Artist. In order to lead my paint team, management tasks, such as budgeting and scheduling, had to be complete.

My work establishes the democratic coach as the leadership style that best fits the role of a Scenic Charge Artist. Theatre is a collaborative art and strives for innovation and the development of new ideas. As an artistic leader, starting from a place of team building and instruction will always support these disciplinary ideals.

When documenting my findings, I decided to write in two modes. First, my research paper links to the preexisting discourse of the field. It is formatted as a hypothetical, supplemental chapter to Crabtree and Beudert’s *Scenic Art for the Theatre*. Many consider their
work to be the definitive text for scenic artists in training or as a professional reference. As such, I see it as the perfect model for expressing my conclusions to peers and future Scenic Charge Artists. Second, the journal accounts the practical application of leadership styles and overall team management I used while in the role. It is a record of my process and aided in the indirect assessment of my effectiveness as an artistic leader.
THE SCENIC CHARGE ARTIST AS LEADER

Full of opportunities and growth, scenic art is a challenging and rewarding profession. One unique opportunity, for those interested in leadership, is to become an artistic leader over a paint team. United Scenic Artists (USA), a labor union, refers to this position as the charge person; similarly Crabtree and Beudert refer to it as the charge painter. For my purposes, I will refer to the position as the Scenic Charge Artist.

The role of a Scenic Charge Artist is as complicated as the position’s naming practices infer. This is because the role of the Scenic Charge Artist has never been officially clarified. In this discussion, I will use my experience as a Scenic Charge Artist to clarify the position as I have come to know it.

The primary function of a Scenic Charge Artist is to be an “adaptive artistic leader.” In short, the job requires flexibility of technical skill, time, and patience. Once the scenic design is passed down to the Scenic Charge Artist, he or she becomes the “voice” for all scenic finishes; “interpreting the set designer’s illustrations concerning the color and texture of the scenery’s surfaces.” It is not a simple job. Unlike a scenic artist, who’s only task is to paint the set, the Scenic Charge Artist must prime both the set and their crew for the job. Preparing and executing large-scale painting techniques, mixing paint colors, budgeting materials and labor, supervising a paint team, creating a cohesive paint application with the paint team, maintaining communication with area heads (specifically the Technical Director and the Scenic Designer), staying on schedule, and correcting all paint notes (before and during the production), are all duties you will face as a Scenic Charge Artist. Do not worry, though. Being successful is all about being prepared.
**BEING PREPARED**

The duties of the Scenic Charge Artist will change depending on the company, or people, you are working for. This means you must be flexible. Once you meet with the other area heads, like the Scenic Designer, it is up to you to establish what the “rules” are. In this section, I will break down the job of the Scenic Charge Artist into duties you should be prepared to manage.

**Are you a Charge or a Designer?**

Before scenic artists can begin painting, the set design must be created. Through textual evidence and concept, the Scenic Designer, in collaboration with the Director, creates the world of the play. Similarly, the Scenic Charge Artist and the Scenic Designer should have a strong working relationship. This is because scenic designs frequently rely on a dedicated paint team. Throughout the process, it is common for the Scenic Charge Artist to make artistic decisions in place of the Scenic Designer. However, this does not mean that you *are* the designer.

The line between being a Scenic Charge Artist and a Scenic Designer can be unclear. Crabtree and Beudert speak in detail about the typical collaboration process between the Scenic Artist and the Scenic Designer. While I agree with their views, I would like to provide a different perspective that focuses on the Scenic Charge Artist and his or her relationship between the Scenic Designer and the paint crew.

In my experience as a Scenic Charge Artist, I find myself often giving a large amount of input into the scenic design. While I feel like it is important to be a part of the design process, I warn Scenic Charge Artists to know their place. When working with a Scenic Designer who is comfortable with your work, you may end up doing more design work than your job dictates. If
you are okay with doing more work, then this sort of relationship may result in some valuable conversations and collaborations. For an example of paint elevations I created as the Scenic Charge Artist, through collaboration with the Scenic Designer, see Figure 1 in Appendix A.

Be careful, though, not to spend too much of your time designing. It may sound like common sense, but the more you do it the more you will find yourself being taken away from your job. Your task is to maintain the paint schedule in order to complete the design, not to do the design work yourself.

Because of how closely related scenic art is to scenic design, the rules are often confused. Make sure you set your own rules with the Scenic Designer early on in the process. If both of you are on the same page about what you are doing for the production, it is harder to get your jobs confused. With those guidelines clear, both of you can then begin collaborating as artists.

It is best to start with the basics of communication in order to have a common language about how you work. An important rule that Crabtree mentions is to find a common vocabulary among the full collaborative team. Make this step a priority because without it you will find yourself doing more work than you should. Have a sit down meeting with the Scenic Designer where you discuss the meanings of words and phrases you both tend to use. It seems elementary but it will remove confusion in the long run. If you find that your Technical Director (TD) has the time to join in on the meeting, you should consider inviting him or her as well.

The job of a Technical Director is similar to that of a Scenic Charge Artist in that he or she also manages people, budgets and time. The only real difference is how they facilitate the scenic design, the TD constructing the set while the Scenic Charge Artist paints it. More often than not, you will be answering to the Scenic Designer but it never hurts to include the person...
who will be building and interpreting the set alongside you. Oftentimes the TD and your team will have to share the same space. When scheduling paint calls (or, in smaller theatres, establishing your paint area) you will go to the TD. It is best to establish your schedule early. In doing so, you have a greater chance to reserve the theatre for your team without conflict. In the case of conflict, scheduling early should create enough time for you and the TD to find a solution.

In your early meetings with the Scenic Designer you may find that he or she has never worked with a Scenic Charge Artist before. Now is the time to set the guidelines. You know what it is that you need to accomplish as the Charge on this production, so let the Scenic Designer know. Through taking time to establish the rules, you will begin the important step towards establishing a precedent for the job of a Scenic Charge Artist with your production team.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A SCENIC TEAM

A Scenic Charge Artist is an invaluable member of a scenic paint team. A scenic paint team can range from two artists to an entire cast of people. Ultimately, whoever is assigned to paint may be considered a member of the scenic team. Crabtree and Beudert write: “if there is no one painter who is the organizational and artistic leader of the crew, the paint shop is apt to be chaotic and the scenery inconsistently painted.” The Scenic Charge Artist becomes that artistic leader, taking charge of the scheduling and management of painting the set.

From my own experience as a Scenic Charge Artist, I find that being the artistic leader is the most important aspect of the job. It is assumed that as a scenic painter you already have artistic experience. Such an assumption will make your leadership experience the true skill-set to prepare. There are days where you will not touch a drop of paint. This is because you have become the mechanics of the machine, making sure that schedules and budgets are lining up to
meet production needs. (Examples of documents I created on the job can be found in Figures 2-4 of Appendix A.) As the Scenic Charge Artist, you have to be ready to make both management and artistic decisions at any moment. For instance, there are times when you have to speak for the Scenic Designer, knowing the set just as well as they do, to keep the production moving forward.

When working on large productions, it is especially important to communicate the value of a scenic team. For centuries, artists have relied on the help of apprentices and hired labor to help create large scale projects; the same is true for scenic art. Crabtree and Beudert concisely break down the scenic paint team into the ideal scenic staff. I use the word ‘ideal’ because, realistically, when you are first starting in the position it is rare that you will lead a scenic team that fulfills all staff positions. Instead, I recommend you use their break down as a reference for every paint team you lead. You will find that knowing scenic staff positions is an excellent way to look out for members of your team.

Similarly, I am a firm believer that a large part of the job of a Scenic Charge Artist is to be a mentor to their team. Despite the time it may take to teach a technique, the learning will continue to pay off. This is true for even the most novice concepts, such as cleaning a paint brush. I have been able to keep moving forward on tasks simply by knowing my team would clean up correctly after their projects were finished.

As a Scenic Charge Artist you must be able to foresee and manage the workload of a production. If the Scenic Designer has completed paint elevations then the Scenic Charge Artist can plan the number of people they need. With a team on hand, the Scenic Charge Artist can delegate tasks to every artist, spreading out the workload into manageable pieces. Breaking the
elevations down into various jobs and skill-sets allows the production work to move forward at a reliable pace. Knowing how to anticipate the workload of a production early will support the importance of having a scenic paint team. Without proper notification, a lone scenic artist may have to manage budgets while also trying to paint the set; that is a large amount of work for one person to handle. In smaller theatre venues, anticipating the amount of work will become a crucial aspect towards securing and leading a paint team.

If deadlines become a concern, set aside a separate time with your team for teaching sessions. It will not take as much time as having to continuously stop the work at hand to teach on the spot. In fact, the time you spend to teach a technique will benefit more than just the production in the end. All scenic artists should make the time to learn if you take the time to teach. Keep the art alive by sharing your skills. An artist on your team who is skilled becomes an asset who can help you, and the world of the theatre, for life.

Now that you have achieved the role of a Scenic Charge Artist, it is your duty to keep the best interests of your team at heart. If there is a worker who you believe may be better off in another staff position, consider speaking to them about it. Not only will he or she appreciate your taking notice of their work ethic, but you may also gain a professional contact and friend in the process. Every artist has to start somewhere.

LEADERSHIP

Many aspects of leadership can be connected to a field that you are passionate about. If you are passionate about scenic painting, and enjoy being a leader, then you should consider working as a Scenic Charge Artist. In fact, being a Scenic Charge Artist, means that you must be a leader. As a leader, you have to manage people, budgets, and time on a strict production deadline. Crabtree
and Beudert already do an excellent job of describing the management aspects of the position.\textsuperscript{12} As an alternative, I will focus on the leadership aspects and terminology necessary to succeed as a Scenic Charge Artist in the field.

**Personal Leader: “Lead Yourself to Lead Others”**

As a Scenic Charge Artist you will often have to put your self-interests aside. I knew I was a scenic artist when I felt energized by the outcome of seeing the scenic design come to life via my hands. After that moment I wanted to be the one to lead other scenic artists on that path, guiding them to their own sense of accomplishment. Scenic artists do not paint sets to become famous; they paint to fulfill an artistic drive to create worlds. A quality reputation comes with being good at your job.\textsuperscript{13}

**Energize Yourself**

Being a Scenic Charge Artist is about finding the fuel to keep both yourself and your team going. As the artistic leader, the paint team will look to you for energy when times get tough.\textsuperscript{14} If something goes wrong, you must be able to take the good with the bad. In fact, mistakes are often when the best teaching can happen. Explain to your team that what they are doing is just painting, and a painting can always be redone. No paint treatment is permanent in the field of scenic art and, at times, even the best artists will have to redo their work or take corrective notes from the designer. Use every experience as a means to learn. Grow your team as artists, rather than bringing them down. Remember; mistakes happen.

On the other hand, it is sometimes harder to keep up with multiple people experiencing success. You are only one person but, as I mentioned before, the team will look to you for
energy. In times of success or team unity, artists will want nothing more than to keep their tasks moving forward. As the mechanics of the machine, it is your job to facilitate this drive. Suddenly, you will be running back and forth when paint mixes become low or brushes need to be cleaned. This is an exciting moment in a production and it should be cherished as such. Remember, be encouraging and use your energy to help motivate team success.

Be a Democrat, Not a Dictator

As a Scenic Charge Artist you will work with all kinds of people. No matter what everyone else is like, remember to remain a positive authority. You are an influential member of the production team; your word and behavior will matter.

Being a democratic leader will “build trust, respect, and commitment” among your team. These traits will help establish a positive work environment, which is irreplaceable. The coaching style is nearly the same as the democratic one, the only difference being that it focuses more on “improving performance” and developing “long-term strengths.” For mentoring relationships, the coaching method works better but production timelines often do not allow for the trials and errors necessary.15

The important part is that you do not lead by force. Any leadership style that warrants ruling with coercion is not one you want to follow as a Scenic Charge Artist. It will immediately have a negative impact and may ruin productivity in your paint team.16

Granted, you may find some artists on your team may require different types of attention. This may require you to tweak your style of leadership. If you find that a member of your team is not being challenged, or is trying to challenge your authority, then they are probably trying to tell you that your methods are not working. There are ways to work through this. Either you can
attempt to change your approach with that team member or speak to them individually. Much like how you often have to negotiate ‘rules’ with the Scenic Designer, it may be a good idea to negotiate with your team about how they want to be lead.

For instance, during my process of working as the Scenic Charge Artist for *The Arabian Nights*, one of the members of my paint team felt like she was not being challenged. To remedy this, I used an authoritative style of leadership. The authoritative style is known to “give people lots of leeway to innovate…provided that they move in the direction of the stated vision.” Following this thought, I gave her a task of her own to complete. As a result, she learned new information and gained a sense of accomplishment. The authoritative style of leadership is best used when “employees are looking for a new direction” or “changes necessitate a new vision.”  

In the end, what matters most is getting the best results possible from your team. Different situations will demand different approaches, but most of the time you will find that a blend of the democratic and coaching styles will get you through the hardest times of production.

**Coaching & Democratic Styles**

In order to get the best results from your paint team you must build them up to be the best. Coaching leaders are interested in growing people. A Scenic Charge Artist grows people through production, teaching techniques and providing guidance to their team. The coaching style works best when you have a team that is willing to be taught. Teaching takes time, however. You will find it takes more time teaching a technique to a new scenic artist than it does to explain it to an experienced one. Consider this step early on in the process if you know you will be working with an inexperienced team. I love my job as a Scenic Charge Artist more when I am able to teach. Making time to learn in production will make not only the work environment better but also
energize your team. With those two pieces in place, the production work will be less of a challenge.

The theatre is an excellent training ground for artists of all skill levels. Being a Scenic Charge Artist does not mean that you always have to be the most knowledgeable person in the room. If a painter on your team knows a technique better than you do, take a moment to learn from them.\(^{18}\) After all, that same painter may end up needing your assistance on another technique later on. Part of the joy of scenic art is the collaboration you will experience between all kinds of artists.

If your team is already experienced, then you may want to coach them sparingly, lending your hand as a teacher only when the situation calls for it. However, it is good to remember that no scenic artist is done learning, including yourself. You will be a better artist and leader if you look for, and encourage, challenges in your work. An alternative method to challenge yourself that I enjoy is to try rethinking or creating a new scenic painting technique for every production you work on. You will be surprised how often brainstorming contains the exact solutions you need. I am a firm believer that coaching becomes leading when you lead by example. Stay current with your trade. Subscribe to trade magazines, attend theatre conferences and see theatre when you can.

Much like the coaching style, the democratic style can benefit all members of the paint team. An example of democratic leadership is when the Scenic Charge Artist and the paint team work to “achieve consensus through participation.” Remaining collaborative with your team will allow you to shape the work load to fit their needs. When your paint team is a mix of experience levels, match up less experienced scenic artists with more experienced ones. The experienced scenic artists will then be able to provide a positive example to their partners and answer
questions throughout the process. I find that this approach is best when the production has many demanding tasks to complete. When all artists know they can rely on one another to complete a task, it “builds trust, respect and commitment” in the scenic team. This is the core idea of the democratic style of leadership.¹⁹ For other positive outcomes, consider the following: ²⁰

- **Team Unity** - Corporations often use painting as a means to stimulate strategic thinking, emphasize individual roles and responsibilities, and encourage sequenced planning. As scenic artists, team unity is a necessity. It is concurrent with painting a backdrop, innately creating the aforementioned results.

- **Group Problem Solving** - Coming up with solutions to complex scenic problems further establishes unity and trust within the team. No one artist is responsible for the end results of a scenic treatment when you have many minds collaborating together. Remember, by the end of the process, the entire scenic team should receive credit.

- **Consensus Building** – Compromise is hard fought. In terms of creative problem solving, this is especially true when mostly all of the work is predetermined for you by the Scenic Designer. Instead, let your team know from the beginning that their opinions are valid and all points of view will be considered. Consensus building is all about bringing the team together “to find or create the best solutions by working together.” It is not about reaching a unanimous decision but one that is reached through understanding the needs of the entire scenic team.²¹

The coaching and democratic styles of leadership are naturally similar in their approach. Both aim to provide a positive work environment and improve performance. The main difference is how much time one has to teach. Under the right circumstances, I find that the democratic style can provide just as many opportunities to teach as the coaching style. In the example I
provide above, the Scenic Charge Artist is able to create an environment of trust through a mentor-apprentice relationship. The trust builds from consensus, the learning builds from the passing of knowledge.

The Democratic Coach

You will be successful as a Scenic Charge Artist if your leadership is a means for communication and collaboration. While a Scenic Charge Artist must always keep time constraints in mind, deadlines should never be an excuse not to be a leader. Part of the job of a Scenic Charge Artist is to lead their paint team in the right direction, guiding them through all aspects of the scenic process. If you are always looking out for the best for all aspects of the production, your team will appreciate your leadership. The most effective way to lead an artistic team is to be a democratic coach. Keep what is best for the team in mind at all times and ask for their opinions. If you set this standard from the beginning, experienced members of your team step up as mentors, answering questions in your place. Remember, you are never alone when you are leading an artistic team.

The “Art” of Leadership

It is a time tested fact that every team needs a leader. This is no different for theatre or the arts. Since the beginning of scenic art, very little has changed for the scenic artist. Brushes and painting techniques remain the same as when Aeschylus first described the Greek stage. What has changed, however, is that scenic artists are now treated as their own team. One artist must take charge in order to establish collaboration between departments and create a consistent paint treatment. As a result, the role of the Scenic Charge Artist was born.
While there are no standards for the position, I hope the suggestions I have provided will motivate you to design your own. Instead of considering the job of a Scenic Charge Artist as a management role, see it as an artistic leader. Not only does leadership get at the core functions and relationships of people, it is highly regarded across disciplines. From corporate heads to theatre directors, leadership styles provide reliable models and theories to follow. Whether you are speaking to a Scenic Designer, Director, or fellow painter, leadership gives you the advantage of a common language.

Research styles that interest you. Positive or negative, finding styles you relate to will set you on the right track to understanding how they are used.

Ultimately, the key to being a successful leader is to treat others how you would like to be treated. Remember that art arrives thru time, practice and vision. Scenic painting, like all other forms of art, depends on the passage of knowledge and skill. There are many different kinds of leadership beyond the ones I have mentioned, though. Lead people as you lead your life. As long as your share your knowledge and pass on your craft, you will find a home in being a Scenic Charge Artist.
Notes

1. For more on how scenic art is a rewarding profession, see Crabtree 4.

2. For more information on the United Scenic Artists labor union, see Membership.

3. For Crabtree’s description of the charge painter, see Crabtree 75.

4. For more on the adaptive artistic leader, see Parks.

5. For another definition of the Scenic Charge Artist, see Scenic.

6. For more information on the role of a Scenic Designer, see Irwin.

7. See my journal entries, especially from January 30th-February 1st, in Appendix B, for an insight into how I worked to establish a working relationship with a Scenic Designer.

8. For more about the collaboration process of the Scenic Designer and Scenic Charge Artist, see Crabtree, especially chapter 4.

9. An excellent quote describing the work of a Scenic Charge Artist, by Crabtree 75.

10. See my journal entry from February 19th, in Appendix B, for my documentation on successful team delegation.

11. For how Crabtree describes the staff in a scenic studio, see 73-77.

12. For more on the management aspects of being a Scenic Charge Artist, see Crabtree 77-87.

13. Scenic artists are often respected by others who work in the theatre. For more information, see Crabtree 4.

14. For more about personal energy in leadership, see Peshawaria 11.

15. For more on leadership styles, see Rinke 24-26. For further reading on leadership, see Hitt. While I did not directly site his work, his book is just as enlightening.
16. It should be noted here that I speak from personal experience. Your experiences or opinions may vary. I encourage you to go out in the world to see how you fair as a scenic artist under different types of leadership.

17. Refer to note 15.

18. See my journal entry from February 2nd, in Appendix B, for active journaling concerning this subject matter.

19. Refer to note 9.

20. The outcomes listed can likewise be witnessed through a program like Direct Effect Team Building, who use painting as a means to establish team building for all sorts of companies and corporations (Masterpiece Murals).

21. For more about consensus building, see Sandelin.

22. For more on the history of scenic painting, see Crabtree, especially chapter 1.
Appendix A—Documents of a Scenic Charge Artist

**Figure 1** An example of the digital paint elevations for *The Arabian Nights*.  
*Scenic Design by David Makuch, paint elevation by Justine Schneider*

**Figure 2** Social networking sites, like Facebook, are becoming a popular alternative for contacting members of your team. Above is an example of how I used Facebook’s group feature to communicate the scheduling of paint calls and tasks.


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**Figure 3** A table of team member’s conflict schedules I generated as the Scenic Charge Artist for The Arabian Nights.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type/Name</th>
<th>Product #</th>
<th>Quantity (Estimated)</th>
<th>Restock (X)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Phthalo Blue</td>
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<td>ODDINGS DEEP COLORS</td>
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<td>1/4 Gallon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yellow Ochre</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bright Red</td>
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**Figure 4** An inventory table I created, indicating what ROSCO scenic paint needs to be restocked.
Appendix B—Journaling the Scenic Charge Artist/Leadership Process

This journal was written as a means for me to process my practical application of leadership styles and overall team management as a Scenic Charge Artist. A learning journal from a member of my paint team would look very different than the one presented here. In my entries, I skim over explanation of some process steps and terminology as a way to highlight the most significant moments for me. It should be known that all terminology and processes mentioned in this journal were explained by me, in full, to my paint team throughout the project.

October: Hamlet work call

I regrettably did not journal about this when it was happening but my first experience leading a large group of painters with this Thesis in mind was at the Hamlet work call. Here I was directing 7 people intermediately through tasks while I was trying to get my own task complete. Leading that many people was exhausting work but really worked out in the end. We were able to achieve many different treatments in a small amount of time because everyone was able to spread out the work. During this I taught stenciling, wood grain, and staining to people who had never done any of those techniques before.

Week of November 11-17th

I started assisting with the scenic treatments for The Eight: Reindeer Monologues today. The Scenic Designer and Jeff, my professor and painting mentor, had some great conversations about techniques that I was able to pick up on and learn from.

There was the ‘leader’ in this conversation. She was the scenic designer and knew the techniques and samples she wanted to accomplish in her design through the paint treatment. She worked with Jeff and together they created the samples. I was able to pick up on the technique by asking her questions, learning through her experience and trials.

As strictly a scenic artist, I did not take any authority over the ‘look’ of the show. I painted the way that the scenic designer described, asking questions I did not know how to answer within the parameters that had been laid down.

The few times I took authority over the situation where when the scenic designer did not feel comfortable teaching her painting techniques to the workers. (In this circumstance, the scenic designer was technically the Scenic Charge Artist as well.) This was a strange moment of leadership for me because I do not know exactly where that falls in the scope of things. Based on my reading I would say that I was serving as the ‘lead artist’; the scenic artist who the Charge can go to without questioning their ability to pick up the task at hand.

NOTE: After this point, my job has started as the Scenic Charge Artist for The Arabian Nights. For the purposes of this journal, I will refer to specific members of my paint team as either numbers (Painter 1, 2, 3…) or with no differentiation at all.
November 28th
I decided to call in my paint team to paint the floor black for the studio shows. This was to get the team together and to begin showing them basic techniques so I, hopefully, will not have to waste time showing them again later (during the Arabian Nights phase). They were all very eager and receptive to learning even the most basic things. I appreciated their focus even though the goals of the night weren’t anything all that ‘fun’. Painter 1 seemed to get a little bored by my basic explanations and seems to be what I would call a ‘go-getter’—she just wants to be told what to do and get it done. I can relate. In the future I know I will have to take this into account between talking to her and the team as a whole. Painter 1 isn’t experienced in scenic painting but she does have a strong art background and can pick up instruction quickly. I think that the hardest thing for her will be to let go of the small stuff and see the picture as a whole at distance, rather than focusing on it like a canvas. Again, I know the feeling. I hope that she will experience the liberating feeling I experienced when I was able to begin letting that go. Scenic painting is fun because it’s at such a large scale; you have the room to make the details actually matter without having to get meticulous.

The experience of painting the floor black was more than just an opportunity to teach my team technique. I wanted to get the team together early so they could start working together as a unit. I really feel like gathering them together in this circumstance was the best way to do this. I couldn’t be more pleased with the overall variety in the group either. We are the perfect bunch of people to be working together at this time. Everyone has similar interests and comes from different backgrounds and experience levels. I’m excited for the challenge I will have in guiding them all to their next level, whatever that may be.

*At the end of the night the floor was painted in a quick and efficient matter with very little difficulty towards getting the task complete. They also learned a valuable lesson in respecting space when painting and learned not to block each other in.*

December
(It should be noted that I am writing this entry in hindsight; I fell behind in my writing during Winter Break and felt the need to still represent it after the fact.)

In the month of December I focused mainly on researching Leadership styles and preparing other forms of research. I took notes and began preparing an ideal schedule of basic tasks I wanted to accomplish with my team. However, trying to schedule too far in advance became difficult because I did not have scenic elevations or renderings from the scenic designer to work from.

Early January
I started on elevations and began having conversations with various design heads (mostly lighting and set). From my conversations with the scenic designer we decided it was best for me to figure out the elevation for the flying carpet and tile techniques—I have a feeling this will be true for the rest of the surfaces as well. At least the set designer and I communicate often. I feel we are both more effective as collaborators when we take some time to think before sharing our ideas; especially the color palette.

The lighting designer and I work best when we both have research to bring to the table. An example of this is when we met to test his gel colors and I brought sample boards of the paint
mixes I had. This interaction worked between us because it became a true collaboration and helped us ultimately arrive at stronger decisions.

January 23rd

We threw paint! I’m happy to say that there is now paint on the actual set floor. Through personal assessment, I knew I had to get started this week. In the past, I have had a tendency to put off tasks until I am coerced into starting, either by a coworker or deadline. I did not want to fall into that same pattern again this time.

In order to start on time, I spent the night of the 22nd mixing two colors for the scumble we would be applying for the base of the SR Caliper tile treatment. This task also got me back into the mindset of mixing to quantity for a large surface area. (I also found out that when mixing flour into paint you really have to get your hands dirty if you do not have some form of a blender...Note: It should be known that flour helps create traction on floor treatments.)

The energy of the team was high even though it had been a long day for most. I made sure to keep the energy up by making a few jokes here and there as I discussed the more meticulous process of explaining technique. I knew that, like when we based the studio floor, I wanted to get the technique of scumbling out of the way early so they would all know it. Scumbling is a technique that is used in many scenic treatments, including most of the treatments for Marietta College’s production of The Arabian Nights. Luckily, once I explained the basics of the technique, everyone was able to get their hands dirty and have fun with the process.

I purposely kept my hands out of their work after I showed them how to start. This way I was able to try to keep an eye on how each person was treating my direction as well as the energy they were bringing to the process. Much like before, Painter 1 went into making sure the edges were taken care of and that spots were not missed. Painter 5 went a little crazy with the paint brush but I have a feeling it is because this is a good release for her. She has also done this technique with me before. Painter 4 gets very caught up in herself and is worried about making a mistake. I asked her to thin out the paint into a fade towards the center of the apron but not to make it a straight line. However, because of the natural lines of the wood on the apron, she continuously followed the preexisting lines. I spent some individual time with her to explain the feeling we were going for and she started to get it. Painter 2 and Painter 3 got a little bit excited and started to cause some ruckus when they were nearing the completion of their tasks but overall kept with the task after I told them what they were doing was wrong. I will have to make sure to enforce the ‘rules’ of painting etiquette better to them if it happens again. Until then I think I will let them make the next move.

It’s hard to keep track of five artists at work in a small space with a loose technique. I had to hold myself back a few times from stopping them or taking complete control of the situation. I’m glad I did this. The end result was well worth it and I feel like it gave the team confidence in their abilities. Watching them step back and look at the work was a great feeling, too. It really showed how invested they are and how they truly light up at seeing their work coming to life.

*An Insight from also Acting in the Show: Learning Viewpoints and the Grid in rehearsal helped me see how to begin teaching my team kinesthetic awareness when they are painting. It’s an invaluable tool for us to have when we are working on this set in particular; with the small space, vertical surfaces, and “furthest place to fall.”

*On the Coaching Style: The team responds to my teaching well and they are excited to learn. My goal from using this style tonight is to wean them off of the coaching style as we get further
into the work; allowing me to leave them to their own devices while I am in rehearsal or prepping for other paint calls.

**January 24th**

The process of adding the second base coat went well today. I realize now that I probably shouldn’t have had as many people working on the project this time. Everyone seemed to remember the steps I taught them: from prepping the space to the technique we used the night before. Overall, I am most proud of the team communication. They started watching out for one another as they painted without me having to interject; letting one another know when they were blending color out too much/not enough, getting close to another work station, etc. They seemed to be having more fun, too, which is always a nice feeling. A note to myself: I ended up mixing just enough paint instead of over-quantity like I thought. I’m glad it happened in this circumstance and early in the process. Now I have a greater understanding of just how much paint two coats of my mix takes in that square footage. I have enough paint left to cover the scenic piece we are calling “Gerald” if the need arises and I was able to mix up enough of a duplicate color to darken the grout lines and wash the final tile treatment.

**January 26th**

I mixed the three color shades for the sand and the tile wash today. This took a bit of time because I had to sample them out before mixing to quantity. Thankfully I also created a sample board with both a white and black base treatment to test the sand color. Turns out, white was a better way to go. Without that test I would have been doing far more work than necessary. Once I figured this out, I called one of my painters in to help me base the floor white. Together we were able to finish the task quickly and efficiently, leaving the space as if we had never been there. I was grateful to be able to call on a member of my team and receive such a willing reply and work ethic. Now the floor is based and ready to get painted with the sand treatment as planned during my paint call tomorrow. While that is going on I plan on having a few other members of my team line out the floor for the tile treatment and get to work on finishing that task.

**January 27th Pain Call Goals:** Finish tile lining/wash, finish SL Caliper into Center Step/Apron sand treatment, continue sampling/mixing—maybe paint SL/SR Runways, back runway/diving board (depending on talk with Scenic Designer)

**To Do List:** Contact SW/Order Matte Water-Based Polyurethane (for Flying Carpet), finish Carpet design (border/edges), build Carpet stencil(s), mix to quantity/paint Flying Carpet, order packing tape/Sharpies/tape/Flat Black paint, base ramps white/give sand treatment, sample out/paint “O’Keeffe” side walls, Fountain/Palace/Back Wall design and implementation, paint audience platforms black, finish blacking details (last)

Waiting on: Center ramp unit (one built, one WIP), Palace façade, Fountain, Gerald Masonite cover, Gerald/Geraldine surface treatment confirmation.
January 27th

Call: 5:30-9:30pm (started a little late)

Accomplished:

Sand texturing: Scumble with extended rollers—1 team member worked with me on this today. Progress made, the painter learned a lot.
Tile lining: Measuring, chalk lining, sash brush paint (Van Dyke + DK Palace Tile wash) with line sticks—2 team members worked on their own on this project after I gave them instructions. It was reassuring to see the team picking up on my instruction both with precision and speed.

In the end I feel like we were able to accomplish most of what I set out to do in my previous journal entry. It’s a great feeling to see my scheduling working out.

January 28th

–15 minutes

Ordered Aqua ZAR—I took the leap. To clarify; no one in the department had experience working with matte polyurethane before so I had to do research behind what possible brands we could use. With help from others, I was able to narrow my search down to two possible brands. In the end, I decided to go with Aqua ZAR.

Talking/connecting with Sherwin Williams—going into the store to directly communicate with a paint materials expert was something new for me. I had never had an excuse to go into a paint store before, seeing as how my family doesn’t remodel very often. Meeting other paint professionals was exciting. I was able to speak about painting to someone who knew about paint firsthand. Speaking from my theatrical experience in painting was stimulating, too. After working primarily in the theatre, it is a challenge to think in the terminology of another field (the terminology between house paint and scenic paint is already inherently complicated.) I think the whole trip was good practice for me as a Scenic Charge Artist.

*Later today I discussed ideas/light arrangements with the Lighting Designer, mostly about houselights. I felt the need to document it so I can remember the interaction that can occur between the Lighting Designer and the Scenic Charge Artist.

January 30th

–1 hour meeting with advisor

Speak from the gut!—I have been feeling coerced into things regarding design and time management lately. Speaking with my advisor helped with this and we discussed how to come to a solution. In the end we decided that speaking to the Scenic Designer specifically would be the best way.

I was mentally exhausted from working on the light call on Monday so I didn’t get to mix like I should have. Went through painting with my team anyway and got some pretty nice results. The best part was seeing my democratic way of leading shine through when certain members of my team began throwing out suggestions about ways to get around the problem.

January 31st

I talked with the Scenic Designer. Instead of speaking right now I will meet with him after class tomorrow. He seemed to gloss over my acknowledgement of how I felt but it didn’t feel deliberate or malicious. I think he’s just busy with other things right now and he is being spread too thin.
**February 1**️️th—11am-12pm
The Scenic Designer and I had our meeting. It went well. We were able to arrive at decisions. While there are still holes in the overall design, I feel comfortable being able to move forward. I also know he will continue to think about our conversation. He is approachable, and is always willing to compromise to make the design a collaborative process between him and I; which is nice. I haven’t had a working relationship with someone quite like this before. I have to keep reminding myself not to go into my Scenic Designer mentality too much so I don’t step on any toes. As complicated as our relationship can be, I am glad that I am able to have a large degree of say in determining surface treatments; be it color, texture, etc.

**February 2**️️nd—1:00pm-6:00pm…11pm-8am
Today was a major stencil day. Taught the team the technique! The copier will always be out of paper when you need it most—it is useful to know how to fix it. The team failed at problem solving, by tracing the printed stencil onto un-treated butcher paper, instead of treating the butcher paper and then only having to make one cut. I learned Pounce Patterning from my advisor. Another member of my team was there to learn it as well, which was helpful. Even though roles were reversed during this learning period, it was beneficial to have someone there to pass on their knowledge and skill. The members of my team all respect the knowledge I had coming into the position and I have made it clear to them that we all still have room for improvement. As a leader who is striving to coach others, I have no problem being taught by a person who has the same outlook. I can only hope that I passed on a similar outlook to my team.

**February 4**️️th—6:30-8pm…11pm-5am
Carpet madness!
Figuring out stencil in ellipse corners—it was fun to watch and nice to know I could get other tasks done while this was moving forward. I knew I could trust the two people working on it to tackle the problem efficiently and keep the show’s aesthetics in mind.
Finished basic base of whole carpet—taught two different members how to do the directional wet blend. It was daunting because there was no turning back, but it had to get done. Once those working got the hang of it, I was able to relax and trust in my communication and our combined skill.
*Learning Point: Double the time you think it will take to do most tasks when using the coaching style—account for learning time.*

**February 5**️️th—12pm-4:30pm
Sealed over the carpet—all carpet treatments are complete except for stencil border. I taught a member of the team how to use the ROSCO lay-in brushes on an extension today. The extensions lay the thinned poly over the treatment, much like the directional wet blend, giving the artist more control over paint dispersal. The painter picked the technique up quickly because she was present for the original laying of the base technique.
February 7th
I had a member of my team tackle the Flying Carpet border stencil. She had been practicing on a neutral area of backstage flooring before this. I had seen her work and was confident she could take the task to completion. She did a great job and slowly gained more confidence as she went along.

February 8th—11pm-3am
Sand/Tile Completed except for “Gerald”—I taught the team how to use the Hudson sprayers for more than just spraying water. Because of the close proximity of the space, I did not end up having them apply any of the technique but they got the idea. Thankfully I had them all use the Hudsons to spray water at least once during the application of other techniques in the process. Base painted Palace Wall tiles & Center Step carpet Masonite (both sides to prevent warping)—and a member of cast helped. I ran the member through what I was going for. It wasn’t anything overly complicated and they saw the tasks through without much difficulty.

February 9th—7-11pm
Scheduled Work Call—actors and paint team called
Painted Audience Railings black—A few members of the cast mostly did this part. I guided them towards the ultimate goal and set them up with what they needed to accomplish it. The rest was pretty self-explanatory.
Cut out props silhouettes/painted black—I was glad my scheduling allowed for some assistance with props. Sometimes props come through the paint shop and it was nice for my team to see this happen first hand. I did all of the work cutting out the shapes but members of my team got to participate in everything from doing enlargements to sanding the cut edges before painting.

February 10th
Stayed up to fill in backgrounds of ellipses on Flying Carpet to be awake for a morning class—sometimes it’s nice to have “mindless” tasks to fulfill when you know you can’t think through doing much else. I was going to have to stay up regardless, but I also got to have a small sense of accomplishment through doing so—not to mention take a paint task off the ‘to-do’ list.

February 13th
I had a painter work on a projection transfer of the Center Step carpet. There were challenges for me in letting them discover things in the moment. Once more, the coaching method takes time!
Base coated Palace Wall Units—one member of team took last wall unit home while I had to go to rehearsal—showed confidence and was a self-starter; coaching method pays off!

February 18th
We finished the Palace Wall details and trim. Painter 3 took this home with some ground support from another member. I found that having ground support there is beneficial, especially because Painter 3 was up on a ladder. Despite that, having another person with you while you are
painting is nice sometimes. As I have learned through other experiences; working with partners creates a safer work environment, gives you company and someone to bounce ideas off of.

Painted the Fountain/”Geraldine”—I took this project home when I realized it was a task that I would be able to accomplish quickly and efficiently while others worked on the Palace.

**February 19th**

Assigned crew specific tasks:
- Base Coat the SL Proscenium Palace Walls: 2 person team
- Sand treatment touch-ups: 1 person
- Paint the Theatre Floor & DS Audience risers black: 2 person team
- Enlarge and paint back wall “Turret Towers”: Myself and 1 other
- Base coat Fountain tiles: 1 person
- Paint prop vases: 1 person

I am very pleased with all of the progress my team has made. Assigning tasks went remarkably well. This time, when I assigned the painters, I did it by writing the task and team on a white board, letting them take the job home from there. I was, of course, still around to answer questions but I was pleased to see that they were confident enough to work without my constant guidance.

**February 20th**

Finished all paint treatments!
- Completed detail/trim of Pros. Palace Walls: 2 person team
- Touched up SR back-wall Turret Tower: 1 person team
- Transferred pounce pattern onto Fountain tiles, traced and painted with aging: 2 person team
  - During the above task I taught aging techniques—using a paint scraper, tile wash and leftover show colors.

Myself and another set of eyes took on the task of adding some color to the Flying Carpet ellipse areas. It was a particular challenge for me because I did not feel comfortable adding onto what was already a successful treatment. I received notes about possibly adding more detail to the ellipse areas before and, while I agreed with the notes, I did not know how to go about doing it. Tonight ended up being the night where I decided to go out on a limb and try something out. I was grateful to have one member of my paint team there to ask questions and bounce ideas off of during the process. (I’m a collaborative artist and leader which is why I wanted to follow the democratic style throughout my process.)

**February 21st**

Last task!
I installed the Fountain tiles before 6pm—they were all ready and dry well before the photo shoot through. My only note after the run was to touch up the bird detail on the Fountain with Permanent Marker.
No paint drying on the night before or on opening night! What an accomplishment! In my four years of painting at Marietta College I cannot say I have ever felt this prepared to open a show. It’s such a wonderful feeling knowing that my job, for the most part, is done. Once the show officially opens I will only have to manage maintenance paint notes; depending on what may need to be touched up or fixed during the run. To be able to focus on being an actress, rather than the paint treatments, is a great feeling that I had been hoping to achieve since I started this process. I am glad that I was able to juggle both jobs with high dedication and timely, quality results.

*A Fun Fact: On opening night I cut my toe open on some piece of the set. This, as you can imagine, resulted in my blood getting on a lot of the painted surfaces my team and I had worked so hard on. Because I had confidence in my paint treatments (especially the Aqua ZAR sealant), I ultimately was able to complete the show without any concern for what the blood may have done to the set. I was actually more concerned about the actors and costumes, knowing full well that the Costume Designer would kill me if my blood stained Scheherazade’s white costume.

**Strike: The Conclusion**

Here is a little bit about strike from my perspective as Scenic Charge Artist.

An important part of all productions is strike. All area heads, cast members, and crew, must attend. As Scenic Charge Artist, it is your last task to complete for the production. Strike is a time when the theatre is brought back to its original state; spaces are cleaned, props and set dressing are put back into storage, and the set is torn down.

In the paint shop, comparable situations occur. Paint mixes must be “mucked”, or condensed, into gallons of similar colors, storage containers are cleaned, and brushes are put back into their proper places. Sometimes set pieces, or the set itself, must be repainted to a standard flat black as well. It is a time consuming, but rewarding, experience. I like to see strike as a time for reflection and renewal. One show closes but, in closing, it leaves a clean slate for the next.

As I leave the role of Scenic Charge Artist on this production, I feel confident that I have made a change. Through perceiving the position of Scenic Charge Artist as an artistic leader, I am optimistic that I have sparked a new appreciation for scenic art; not only in the members of my paint team but in the city of Marietta. Leadership is more than management, it is about growing people. By the end of strike I could see the positive growth all members of my team experienced and I am confident that I prepared them for a future in scenic art. I feel confident in my claim because of the leadership styles I chose for this study.

If successful, I believe that following a combination of the democratic and coaching styles provides visible results by the end. For me, strike was that end. My paint team closed down the shop with a precision and skill that they did not have in January. I could not be more proud of their growth, as artists and individuals, and I am happy to have shared this experience with them.
Appendix C—Process and Realized Photos from *The Arabian Nights*

**Figure 1-2**  Left, process of floor details. Right, process of wall details.
Using the authoritative style, I often gave members of my team projects to complete on their own.

**Figure 3** Painting sand dunes on the structural walls of the theatre.

**Figure 4-5** Left: painting over preexisting walls to create unity in the set. Right: process of painting a set piece.

**Figure 6** Using the authoritative style, I often gave members of my team projects to complete on their own.
FIGURE 7  Left: finished scenic treatment. Right: process photo of the supplies necessary for a grid enlargement.

FIGURE 8  Left: An image of me cartooning in Sharpie over a pounce pattern. Right: finished scenic treatment.
Figure 9  Photos of the lobby display I created. It included sample boards, research, and documents I generated.
FIGURE 10  Realized set photos. Top right; treatments under blue light. Bottom; treatments under orange light.
Figure 11  Realized scenic treatments in production.
Bibliography


