

Light and a long day's journey into night

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For many directors, a LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT remains a cross collateral character study. That is to say, since the play is punctuated with a number of dysfunctional characters the emphasis on the drama of the play should be on the performance of the characters. If the actors are not properly presenting the uniqueness of these characters then the play will fall apart. This is not an inaccurate assessment nor would it be a flawed approach to directing.

But, if casting and character examination were the only aspect of this play to be fleshed out then the approach would be single focused. This is because the very title of the play stresses that it takes place during the day and this would evoke the notion that the greater and brighter the lighting of the play the more potential for serious drama will be the result.

While "playing" with lighting has often been employed as a strategy for evoking mood it is almost a cliché that shadows are employed to create a certain mood. Then again, why would they not be? The use of shadows can often be employed to create a unique environment that can stress fear, confusion, foreboding, et al. With LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT, however, this would be downright impossible. After all, how many shadows can you create during the day?

Well, yes, there are a number of ways you could integrate shadows into a daylight scenario but this would not be my particular approach. Instead, I would prefer an approach where daylight literally "burns" non-stop through the proceedings. The reason for this is that such an approach would create a heightened sense of realism by pushing the character flaws of the cast to

the forefront. In other words, it becomes difficult to hide in broad daylight and this would be the approach taken to strip the characters somewhat bare.

The cast of characters are literally "loaded" with flaws. There are alcoholics, drug addicts, the grievously ill, etc. Now, this is not to condemn the characters for their problems as much as it is to point out they are characters battling demons. The problems that these characters much contend with are very real. As such, there should be no attempt made to hide the characters flaws and that means a symbolic and literal light needs to be shined upon them.

So, when there are scenes presented which are designed to highlight these flaws the scenes should be very brightly lit in the manner of shining daylight. This will create make any masking of their problems difficult as it creates a subtext of the problems being out in the open.

Again, this is not to say that the use of shadows and intermingling dark lighting into the proceedings will not work. Any attempt at manipulating the lighting in a motivated and effective manner has the potential to be successful. But, this would not be the approach I would intend to take when directing the play. As such, the use of shadows would be limited to as minimal as possible.

To do otherwise would harm a major aspect of the play: it is intended to take place in daylight and to hide daylight through generic or uninspired lighting would undermine critical subtexts that make it a powerful work. Daylight brings the play and its themes into the "real world" and this concept is an

important one. The play embraces the daylight and so should the play's director.