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A tech portfolio interview at the 2009 Thespian Festival.

The Portfolio

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in design and production, the audition for an A-list B.F.A. program is a little different: it's a show and tell in which you'll present a portfolio that documents the work you've done and suggests what you are capable of doing in the future.

The portfolio consists of visual documentation of your work collected in a case designed for the purpose (and sometimes supplemented with material displayed on a laptop). The contents will vary according to the kind of design and production work you've done. Some of the things it will likely include:

- Photographs. Pictures of props, costumes, or scenery you've de-

signed and built. Photographs of set models (don't take the model to the interview). Production photos showing your work, including lighting, onstage. Pictures should be sharp, well-composed, and color-accurate, and should be neatly mounted onto the portfolio page and labeled with the title of the show, the theatre that produced it, the production date, and information about your role in creating the item or effect in the photo.

- Sketches, renderings, and draftings that show how you express your design ideas to the director and others you work with.

- Organizational paperwork, such as lighting cue sheets, hook-up sheets, and gel sheets for lighting design-

ers, and sound cue sheets and system diagrams for sound designers and audio technicians. Stage managers can include promptbook pages, cast and crew contact sheets, rehearsal schedules, and other documents that show their organizational and communication expertise.

You'll also need an up-to-date résumé. Basic information to include: your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address; a statement of career goals; education; honors; production experience; related work experience; references.

If you work hard putting your résumé and portfolio together, the interview should be easy. The college reps will be looking for clues to your character: your dedication to theatre, your ability to solve problems, your work ethic, your personality. They'll probably interrupt your presentation with lots of questions—and you, too should do some friendly investigating during the interview, about the courses you'll be taking and who will be teaching them, about the school's production and shop facilities, about the opportunities you'll have to design. Questions like these are a signal to college representatives that you take your education seriously and have put some thought into what kind of program you want.

—Steve Nelson

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