

LIGHTING DESIGN FOR

THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH

BY THORNTON WILDER



About the show:

How does humanity make progress? Is progress a linear march toward perfection, a series of improvements as our knowledge grows and our mistakes dwindle? Or is it a book bound in a circle, a cycle where our successes repeat but so do our failures? This is what Thornton Wilder asks us in *The Skin of Our Teeth*: Have we as humans made progress?

The Antrobus family lives a cyclical life: they endure an apocalyptic End of the World, only to survive by the Skin of their Teeth. Again and again this pattern repeats- apocalypse, survival, apocalypse, survival - and still the Antrobuses carry on. Theirs is a story of hope and despair: a despair that improvement is impossible, and a hope that perfection is attainable. That Wilder chose "The Skin of Our Teeth" as his title for the play speaks to the value of humanity's continual survivals, even in light of our continual failures. Ultimately, Wilder believes in humans, in our capacity for hope. (*Adam Levonian, Student Dramaturg*)

Artistic Staff

Director	Dona Freeman
Lighting Design	Brian Bjorklund
Scenic Design	Steven Coleman
Costume Design	Kathy Kohl
Sound Design	Sam Getke & Nathaniel Glewwe
Stage Manager	Helen Muller
Technical Director	Todd Edwards
Photos	Heidi Bohnenkamp

Lighting Goals

The Skin of Our Teeth is an episodic play- it references a span of time running from the pre-historic to the present with multiple locations, a large number of interesting and sometimes unusual characters and a variety of plot lines. As I worked with the director and the scenic and costume designer for the production at St. Olaf, I developed the following lighting goals for the design:

- Establish locale- Act one is the home of the Antrobus family. Act 2 is the Atlantic City Boardwalk. Act 3 is back at the Antrobus home, destroyed and ravaged by war. Preceding each act is a short scene staged as a lecture hall which provides context for the upcoming act.
- Visual Focus- Since the play includes a fairly large cast and utilizes a good portion of the stage space, controlling visual focus and composition was a high priority.
- Ability to establish a wide range of moods and atmospheric conditions, including multiple times of day, realistic and stylized imagery, storm, glacier, destruction and altered realities.
- Presentational techniques- the play moves back and forth between the world of the play and reality; actors stopping the play and talking to the audience.

ACT 1

THE ANTROBUS HOME



BACKGROUND IMAGES

CYC LIGHTS AND IMAGE PROJECTIONS



A white cyclorama was chosen for the background by the scenic designer. As part of the lighting design, standard RGB cyc lighting at the floor (rear projected) and from above (front projected) was used. In addition the lighting design included image textures delivered with two data projectors on the Aux electric.



Act 1
Glacier

A 0.5X Super Wide Angle Lens was added to the front of the data projector lens to double the image size. These lenses were originally used on VHS camcorders. Images show the shop-built custom bracket.



Act 2
Boardwalk



Act 3
Destruction