

Cuelist Software & *The Music Man*: Saving Paper and Time

Compiled by Josh Epstein, April 2022

One of the most labor and resource-intensive times in the creation of any piece of theater is the tech period. It has historically taken hundreds of hours and thousands of pages of paper to develop and document every event that takes place during a production. Cuelist — a collaborative and paperless script annotation solution for theater and other live events — was recently developed with the hope of making that process a little faster and a lot more eco-friendly. And it is starting to catch on. Since its launch in 2019, it has been used on hundreds of Broadway, Off-Broadway, Regional Theater, and collegiate productions. The most recent show to use Cuelist on Broadway is *The Music Man*, starring Hugh Jackman and Broadway Green Alliance Green Captain, Sutton Foster.

On the recent Broadway revival of *The Music Man*, the typical paper and pencil workflow of the lighting design team was replaced with a digital solution by using Cuelist. Cuelist is a web-based tool that allows users to mark up a script with notes and cues and instantly share that information with all collaborators. Not only does this save paper and time, but it provides new functionality and capabilities that were not possible before. *The Music Man*'s Production Stage Manager Thomas Recktenwald and his team maintained the script as usual — but instead of distributing updates with reams of paper, they did so by distributing PDFs. During technical rehearsals, Associate Lighting Designer Nick Solyom would use Cuelist to mark the placement, number, and description of the lighting cues set by Lighting Designer Brian MacDevitt. All other members of the team logged into Cuelist could see the updates instantly. Each day — after a PDF of the new script pages was distributed — Assistant Lighting Designer Nyle Farmer would take the PDFs and upload them to Cuelist in their appropriate spot. The cue placements automatically transferred to the updated page, eliminating that step of the work, which both reduced the chance of versioning errors and saved time. As Nick Sololyn says, "New script pages arrived via email in the morning, and Cuelist easily allows for replacing individual pages, ranges of pages, and inserting pages. The light cues attached to the old pages can seamlessly move to the new pages. It is hard to overstate the time savings, particularly on cue-heavy sections of the show!"

When working on a musical of the size and complexity of *The Music Man*, technical rehearsals are fast-paced, and information organization and retrieval are crucial to working quickly. According to Nick, “Speedy information retrieval is a huge part of my job. Cuelist helps me answer questions such as ‘Find me the light cue where we reveal Harold Hill on the train’ in a few keystrokes, rather than flipping through a big script. It brings a whole new functionality to tech that is a massive time-saver.” Using Cuelist provided bookmarking, notes, and search features that allow the lighting design team to work faster than ever.

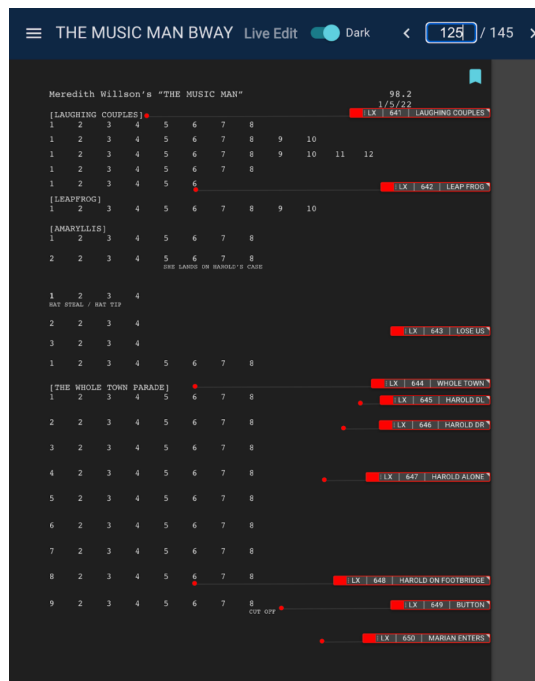
The *Music Man* is just one project, but little by little the move to digital scripts has really started to have an environmental impact in the world of theater. Since launch, Cuelist estimates a paper-waste reduction of over 250,000 pages of paper across all users. In addition, the benefits of Cuelist are exponential: The more departments on a project that use it, the more effective and useful it can be, and the more it can contribute to sustainability across the entire production. Cuelist focuses on a real-time exchange of information for all teams and each user can edit different levels of detail depending on the permissions that the project owner establishes. But not everyone on the production has to use Cuelist for it to be a good solution — shows where just one designer or one team have used Cuelist have also seen significantly less paper waste and huge time-savings. For more information, visit www.thecuelist.com.



**Associate Lighting Designer, Nick Solyom,
During *The Music Man* Load-In**



**Lighting Designer, Brian MacDevitt, at the
Lighting Tech Table**



Cuelist Screenshot in Dark Mode