

# THE LUMIÈRE SCHEME

## Charlotte Burton on being the ALD's first "Lumière"

I was very excited and honoured when I found out that I was going to be the first participant of the Lumière scheme. I would have been nervous too but I didn't really have time to worry about it! Before I knew it, I had packed my belongings into my car and was driving to Chichester.

Having now been here nearly two months, it is hard to remember what it was like on my first day, as I just slotted into the department and was thrown in at the deep end, straight into a tech and cueing followspots on *A Damsel In Distress*.

Whilst at CFT I'll have worked on four different productions including *Damsel* and *Mack & Mabel* with Howard Harrison, *Educating Rita* with Johanna Town and *For Services Rendered* with Mark Henderson. Being able to work in both venues, the Festival theatre and the Minerva, on two shows each and with very different designers is great as I can see both venues adapt and change for what the current production's needs are.

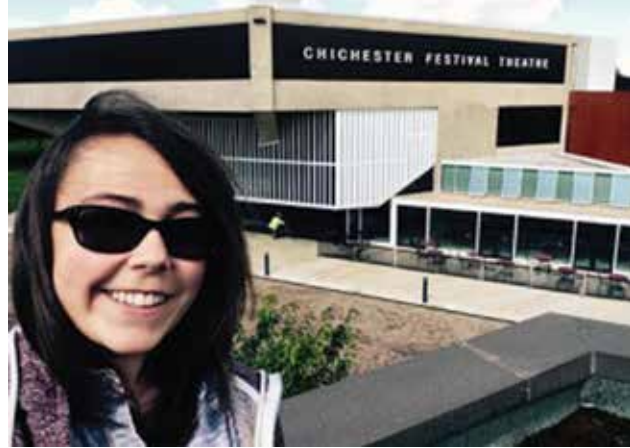
One thing I have observed being at Chichester is how well the in-house lighting department welcome lighting designers and programmers. Everyone is made to feel a part of the team. This may seem like a trivial thing but having now worked in various theatres I have seen the lighting designer/lighting department relationship either be brilliant or very divided.

It seems clear to me that on productions where the designer and the department are divided, it generally makes

the whole process more stressful, and even more so when problems or tight deadlines occur. For me that is the difference, everyone cares about the production we are putting on and I think we can forget that we should be concentrating on the show, rather than on how much work you've got to do. Everyone in the department here is happy to help aid the production in any way they can and CFT is better for it as it is a happy place to be and work.

On a similar note, I also like the fact that all departments across the theatre share the same office, also highlighting that there is no division and you can easily go and speak to someone in person. Especially as a newcomer it helped that I could easily put names to faces. Everyone is in it together.

Sometimes we fail to remember that lighting designers are more than just their



Technical rehearsal of Mack & Mabel



*The lighting team at Chichester*

job and that a smile, an offer of a cup of tea and conversation can go a long way and generally improve the working relationship on any production. As designers travel around, the more in-house teams can do to make them feel at home in their theatre – in my opinion – the better.

As I write, we are about to open the first preview for *Mack & Mabel*, which will be good. I always enjoying seeing the first performance with an audience, as during tech, sometimes you forget – people are

actually going to come and see it! I'll be sad to leave my new friends and colleagues here at CFT; however, I look forward to the second part of the scheme and getting to experience different styles of productions being put together. #

*Charlotte's next three months on the scheme will be spent at Hampstead Theatre, Royal Opera House, Warwick Arts Centre, Sadler's Wells, Almeida Theatre, The Young Vic and the Noel Coward Theatre. Phew! We'll have another update from Charlotte at the beginning of next year.*

*August/September 2015*

**T**hank you to everyone who has contributed to the funding of the Lumière scheme! As you can see, it's been of huge benefit to Charlotte, and the ALD is very proud and pleased to support young and emerging lighting designers in this way. The scheme is still growing, and we are in talks with several theatres to expand the scheme next year. If you would still like to contribute, you may do so by emailing [office@ald.org.uk](mailto:office@ald.org.uk) or by picking up a donation form at PLASA London in October. We look forward to more updates from Charlotte and our next cohort of Lumières!

**Peter**



*Technical rehearsal of Educating Rita*

# LUMIERE PART TWO

## Charlotte Burton reflects on the past six months

It is fair to say that I have worked on a variety of productions on the second half of the Lumière scheme. From being left to re-tech *Mr Foote's Other Leg* at the Haymarket (Mr Mumford was at the Opera House) to the next day being at Sadler's Wells teching a show with dancers jumping on a trampoline floor and being thrown into ball pools, it is safe to say that I could not have predicted last January that this is what I would be doing by the end of the year!

I got to work with Katharine Williams on *Weaklings* at Warwick Arts Centre, with Natasha Chivers on *Gravity Fatigue* at Sadler's Wells and with Peter Mumford on *Mr Foote's Other Leg* at Hampstead and the Haymarket, *Little Eyolf* at the Almeida and *A Christmas Carol* at the Noel Coward.

A big highlight for me was taking *Mr Foote's Other Leg* into the West End. Having seen the show develop at Hampstead and worked on it with the great team there, I was able to see the work that I had done be useful in re-creating the show in another theatre. You can work really hard on documenting a show to sometimes wonder – is anyone ever going to read this? Fortunately, this time they did. It was great to see what was useful about what I had produced at Hampstead and what had got lost in translation. It's easy to know a show whilst

you are still working on it and to assume people will know what you are on about, but having a new team work on the production showed me what I could improve on when creating the accompanying paperwork. I was also glad that I then had the opportunity to re-document the show and then take these techniques onto the next couple of projects.

It was great to work with knowledgeable programmers, to ask them questions and listen to their experiences and to work alongside them within a lighting team. As programmers work closely alongside lighting designers, like assistants, it was also interesting to see these working relationships and how people interact with one another. In a similar vein, having been at Chichester for three months, it was fun to go into multiple venues and see how their buildings run

and how their lighting teams work. To see what was unique to venues or to see a new way of running things was intriguing and was really useful to see how my job incorporates with their team.

Three of the productions on this part of the scheme had AV. It was interesting to see how it was incorporated into the design of the show and how the lighting and AV designers worked together. In *Gravity Fatigue* the AV was an accompaniment to what the dancers were doing and therefore lighting presented the performers and AV together, whereas in *Little Eyolf* the AV provided narrative moments



which were a part of the overall design and the lighting enhanced this. Striking the balance between the two is something that people are still developing but I think as long as designers are working together, to me, the two are going to meld well. Personally, I find it interesting to see how this will continue to evolve in other productions.

(FYI, the Almeida's green room is brilliant and comes in second in my list of favourite theatre green rooms. Unfortunately for them they are currently being beaten by Chichester... they have a garden! A garden! Although the Almeida wouldn't be able to have a garden even if they wanted to... Maybe I am being unfair... Chichester is the no. 1 green room for the summer and Almeida is the no. 1 green room for the winter.)

I have learnt a lot about lighting design and how to develop my skills as an assistant lighting designer. This includes being thrown into the job straight away to seeing how productions and designs develop to discovering all you need to have laugh in a tech session is some dancing fountain speakers playing Abba (*right*). Working on the scheme

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has given me the opportunity to work with a variety of designers, programmers and lighting teams in a variety of theatres. I've been able to see how regional theatre compares to the West End and how dance and opera operate differently to theatre. It has been an opportunity I will always be thankful for and will never forget. 🍷

*Images (left to right):*

*Technical rehearsals for Mr Foote's Other Leg with Andi Davis at the Haymarket*

*The famous dancing fountain speakers*

*Technical rehearsals for Gravity Fatigue at Sadler's Wells  
Lighting by Natasha Chivers*