

Lumière update

Jason Addison on his first six months

The long journey back to Hull from Chichester in February suddenly seemed a lot easier after I received the phone call from the ALD saying that they would like to offer me the position as the next Lumière on the first-full year scheme. I hadn't long left Chichester after my interview so this news, along with my daughter getting her first tooth made me very happy and became a very good day.

After working my notice as a technician at Hull Truck Theatre it was time to pack up my car and head to Chichester for my first day in April. I met Sam Garner-Gibbons (technical director) at the train station and we headed up to London for the first

day of rehearsals for *The Chalk Garden* by Enid Bagnold starring Penelope Keith and directed by Alan Strachan.

Due to train delays we arrived a little late for the meet and greet. Sam introduced me to Natasha Chivers, who I would be working with. We sat down for the read through and Natasha asked me to make notes of anything that might be lighting related. Simon Higlett presented his beautiful set design, based on the house in Rottingdean where Enid Bagnold lived. It was great to hear Simon's reasons behind the design and to observe Natasha's conversations regarding the relationship between the set and lighting. It threw up a few problems to solve including a ceiling beam CS and a raked garden US.

The next day was my first day at the theatre. I was given a tour of the building and was made to feel very welcome by the lighting department and all the staff. A week later I was travelling back up to London for the first day of rehearsals for the next

show I would be working on, *The Country Wife* by William Wycherley and directed by Jonathan Munby. This is a Restoration comedy and would be in the Minerva Theatre, the smaller of the two spaces at CFT. I would be working with Richard Howell, lighting Soutra Gilmour's black and white costumes and revolving and pivoting set; the lighting would make the actors pop and stand out.

It was great to see the development of both shows throughout rehearsals and to have meetings with both Natasha and Richard. As soon as *The Chalk Garden* opened, *The Country Wife* was into tech. During the tech rehearsals, I was responsible for keeping the lighting plans up to date, taking notes and assisting with focusing and anything the lighting designers required.

This busy schedule continued throughout the season as I got to work with Paule Constable and Marc Williams who co-designed *The Meeting*, a new play by Charlotte Jones, and with Johanna Town on *The Watsons*, a new play by Laura Wade. It was really interesting to work on new writing. As the plays had never been staged before they were fully open to



Jason outside the CFT

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interpretation by the design team, and we engaged in a really collaborative process.

The set for *The Meeting* used the full depth of the Minerva Theatre and included a circular CS platform within a raked stage where most of the action would take place. Paule and Marc decided to use a circle truss around this area filled with par cans to give an even coverage of light all the way around. It also helped pull the focus into this area when we didn't want to light the rest of the stage.

On *The Watsons*, Ben Stone's all-white set with a ceiling meant we couldn't have any top or back light, so we had to use a lot of high side lighting and front light, due to the thrust of the stage. The play itself started in a traditional Austen style, which descended into the obscure, complete with a disco and a spaceship landing. This was achieved by a ring of ACL par cans hidden from view above the audience, and a strong beam of light was projected down through the ceiling rose (the only top lighting) to create the illusion of a spaceship.

Throughout my time at CFT I was able to observe other designers, including Joshua Pharo, Tim Mitchell, Mark Henderson and Guy Hoare, who all faced different challenges and all had different ways of working, which was useful for me to experience

vastly different productions in each theatre space. I was also fortunate to receive Vectorworks training from Fridthjofur Thorsteinsson (Fiffi), which has helped me considerably, in drawing and updating lighting plans. I was also trained on and gained experience of using Moving Light Assistant, to archive shows, including focus notes and photos.

I was able to put all of this valuable training into practice when I assisted Katharine Williams on *Women in Power* at Nuffield Southampton. I was really pleased to be asked to relight the show when it transferred to the Oxford Playhouse. I worked closely with Katharine to draw the plan, was involved in the design decisions and used MLA during the relight. It was really interesting for me to see how the lighting design transfers from one venue into another, and the challenges that are faced with adapting the design to fit another space.

A big highlight of my first seven months was being able to work at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane on *Time Flies*, a gala performance celebrating 100 years of the Royal Air Force. I was assistant to Matt Clutterham and was responsible for calling



The Watsons
Chichester Festival Theatre
Director: Samuel West
Designer: Ben Stone
Lighting designer: Johanna Town



Women in Power
Nuffield Southampton
Director: Blanche McIntyre
Designer: Jasmine Swan
Lighting designer: Katharine Williams

the four followspots during the show. It was a very full-on day, starting at 6am for the get-in followed by technical rehearsals throughout the day for various acts, right up until doors opened at 7pm and then into the show. It was fascinating how Matt used the existing rig for *42nd Street* with a groundrow of his own to create some stunning visuals. I was very impressed with the programming skills of Daniel Street, whose fingers never left the console.

The ALD has been really accommodating during the scheme, and I have been able to develop my skills further by working as

tour). I was also very privileged to attend the 2018 Knight of Illumination awards in September and to meet with and be inspired by other lighting designers.

I have enjoyed reading Lucy Carter's articles in *Focus* – in particular, last month's in which Lucy was talking about life outside of theatre and childcare while working as a lighting designer. I have a daughter who is 19 months old and my partner gave up work to move down south with me from Hull while I'm on the Lumière scheme so that I didn't miss too much of her growing up.

My partner recently took a part-time job at the theatre and we put our

a lighting designer on *Slime* (The Herd, Hull libraries tour), *Taming of the Shrew* (Petersfield Shakespeare Festival, Theatre Royal Winchester), *Dark Winter* (E52 at Hull Truck Theatre) and *The Boy Who Wanted to Fly* (Rhubarb Theatre, UK

daughter into nursery, which was great for her development and for her mum to have some adult interaction. However, the problem we have faced is the cost and availability of childcare to fill the time needed when we are both at work, particularly when I was in tech. As we know, tech weeks are often 9am to 10pm each day, six days a week, and this has been quite stressful to work childcare around. I agree with Lucy that something should be done about it. I think the work PIPA is doing is great, but I feel it will need a big shift of thought and practice within the industry.

Job shares work in certain roles as shown recently with stage managers and performers, but it's difficult as a lighting designer if you are not at a level to be able to have associates, etc. Maybe the way forward is shorter tech days but done over a longer period, but I don't think this would be cost effective for the theatres and producers. We are heading in the right direction, and I am happy to say that both Chichester and Katharine Williams (on *Women in Power*) have allowed me to be flexible at certain times throughout tech to nip off to collect my daughter from nursery or take over childcare responsibilities.

I am now looking forward to the next part of the scheme based with different designers in a variety of exciting venues. My next stop is *Beauty and the Beast* at the King's Theatre, Edinburgh. 🌸

The last six months

Jason Addison reflects on his Lumière experience

What an incredible and busy six months it's been on the second half of the Lumière Scheme. I have had the opportunity to work on many different styles of productions in some amazing and contrasting venues.

Picking up where I left off in part one, the first production was *Beauty and the Beast* at the Kings Theatre in Edinburgh working with Matt Clutterham. After meeting up with Matt over Sunday lunch one day to discuss the plan and how he liked to work with the followspots for a pantomime, I was soon heading up to Edinburgh for one of the last runthrough rehearsals before Matt arrived the following day. Here I was welcomed into the panto family and it was my job to take any notes that might affect the lighting but also to create a followspot cue synopsis. I was then responsible throughout the tech for liaising with the spot ops, calling the spot cues and keeping track of any changes. This meant that Matt didn't have the pressure of having to think about the followspots while designing the rest of the lighting. He would let me know if he saw anything he wanted to change or try differently and he also allowed me to make suggestions if I thought something

wasn't working. I think this worked really well and it meant the followspot ops had a starting point of cues to begin with at the start of tech which seemed to make the whole process much calmer and easier.

It was fascinating to see the work that goes into making a pantomime. Qdos pantomimes have very high production values and are up there with the big musicals in terms of kit. They do have quite short tech periods so this meant long hours and high-pressure tech periods but the results were worth it. Due to the nature of the sets it was very important to light the set/cloths fully as they are so vibrant and colourful. The lighting, along with lighting the cast, also needs to help bring these to life. I'm pleased to say this won best pantomime for this size of venue throughout the UK at the Pantomime Awards.

Following this I was lucky enough to be offered the lighting designer role by the NST in Southampton to light their co-production of *Humbug! The Hedgehog Who Couldn't Sleep* with Dumbshow Theatre, directed by Michael Bryher and designed by Samuel Wilde. This was a perfect development opportunity after all the assisting I had experienced on the

scheme. I flew down to Southampton from Edinburgh to be in the last week of rehearsals. This was a lovely production for children and their families about Humbug, a hedgehog who tries to hibernate in her cosy nest when suddenly her home comes under threat! Forced to leave her bed, she goes on a quest to find a new place to call home, and along the way she meets a host of weird and wonderful characters. It is a humorous and uplifting tale of friendship.

The show starts in Humbug's nice warm nest but is soon destroyed by a digger, which we created by hiding two Source Four pars as headlights and an orange beacon light behind the set to shine through the pallets of the set wall. This was paired with sounds created by Anna May Fletcher worked really well to capture the effect we were looking for. We were soon out in the cold wintry forest where Humbug would encounter many different creatures including a spider who Humbug, along with the audience, helps to catch a fly in a UV scene. It was quite a challenge to design a rig for a studio space that gave us everything we needed. I really enjoyed working on this production and it gave me the opportunity to use and develop the



West Side Story
Royal Exchange, Manchester
Director: Sarah Frankcom
Designer: Anna Fleischle
Lighting designer: Lee Curran
Photographer: Richard Davenport

pushed back by at least half a day, which then had a knock-on effect to the amount of programming time available. In the end, this time was made up but things like this can add more pressure to an already tight schedule. I was pleased I could be there to assist in any way I could.

in Manchester with Lee Curran, who I was to work with later in the scheme. I then headed to London for my next two shows.

First up was the (Olivier award-winning) *Katya Kabanova* at the Royal Opera House with Lucy Carter. This was my first experience of opera. It was really interesting to see how the opera world works a lot differently to the theatre world. I had the chance to dust off my music theory skills from the past to read the score to be able to follow along during the rehearsals and write in the translation for Lucy. I found it quite challenging at first to understand what was going on and to watch the stage while trying to follow the score. I eventually got the hang of it.

skills I had learned through the scheme from drawing the plan, collaborating with the team and archiving the show as it is to be remounted in 2019. It was lovely to return to the NST in Southampton and work with the team there again.

As this was a family show and our tech/previews were all in the daytime this gave me the opportunity in the evenings to walk down the road to the Mayflower Theatre where Matt was lighting his third panto. It was interesting to see a very different scale of production in this recently refurbished theatre. Due to the set fit-up running over schedule this meant the focus session was

After seeing both of these shows open it was time to head home to Hull for Christmas. On the way back, I had time to stop off in London and attend the ALD Lighting Lunch. This was my first time being able to attend and it was a great way for me to end 2018 and celebrate our industry with other members of the ALD.

After a lovely couple of weeks off over Christmas to catch up with family and friends and see some other people's shows, I was soon back at it, with a visit to Hull New Theatre for a show I was going to light later in the year and a design meeting for *West Side Story* at the Royal Exchange

Once we moved into the gorgeous auditorium I was amazed to see how the tech rehearsals worked. Due to the ROH being a repertory system we had the mornings and part of the afternoon until about 2pm to tech our show but would then have to stop so a changeover could happen for the evening's performance. Within twenty minutes you would look again and our set would be gone and starting to be replaced by another one; lights were being refocused for that

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production and production desks were being cleared away. This was an amazing feat on such a big stage. The lighting rig is mostly a fixed rig and moving lights and the set has to be designed to fit on a floor truck. This means several shows are then able to move around the huge space backstage; as one leaves the stage another comes in. Along with the flying plot this must take a huge amount of planning for the season to make sure everything has space.

In the mornings we would then arrive to our set already being reset on stage and our lights being refocused. Once Lucy had done the initial focus this was then left to the show's dedicated lighting manager and crew chief to reset everything. Although this way of working sometimes left us with less lighting time than you might get in a normal theatre system, it meant the days were not as long. We would often be finished by 4 or 5pm depending on notes and if we wanted to we could go into the previz suite they have at the ROH to continue any plotting ready for the next day.

This was a busy time for Lucy. Not only was she lighting the opera but she also

had two shows in the West End: a recasting of *Everybody's Talking about Jamie* and *Home, I'm Darling*. This saw us after tech at the ROH hot-footing it around London for her to check in with her associates on these two shows. It was great for me to shadow her and experience the process of two very different West End productions and the challenges of working on more than one show at once.

Before I knew it, it was time for me to move on to my next production, working with Paule Constable at the National Theatre on the remount of *Follies*. The first few days in tandem with working at ROH

Follies
National Theatre
Director: Dominic Cooke
Designer: Vicki Mortimer
Lighting designer: Paule Constable
Photographer: Johan Persson





Jason with Lucy Carter at the press night for *Katya Kabanova*

were observing the focus and checking of presets with MLA that the team at the National was using. Once the press night of *Katya* had been and gone I was then into *Follies* tech. The Olivier Theatre is unlike any other space I have ever worked in. It's a vast amphitheatre with a roof on it. The lighting rig is on show and as Paule tells me it's important to use big gestures of lighting and she uses low backlighting and sidelight to ensure the actors don't get lost on the big stage.

Assisting roles at the National are often done by the in-house team; this meant some of the jobs I had done before were already being done in house. I was able to shadow the work Paule was doing, which

not only included remounting the show but also adding in new fixtures and re-working scenes and walking on stage during plotting sessions. It was lovely to meet and work alongside Lauren Elizabeth, a student who was also shadowing Paule. It was great for us to be able to discuss our thoughts on the production and our notes during previews and also see her confidence grow throughout our time there.

Paule was also keen for me to experience all of the National and I was also able to observe Oliver Fenwick lighting *Tartuffe* in the Lyttleton Theatre, spend some time in the Dorfman Theatre watching an in-the-round production of *The Winter's Tale* and also help with the prep of LED globes for an event that would be happening in the Olivier later in the month. It was fascinating to see how all of these theatres worked and the factory that is The National Theatre: three great theatres all producing top-class theatre.

After a great five weeks living the London life, I was heading back to Hull to light *Two Pianos – Rock 'n' Roll Experience* at Hull New Theatre. This gave me the opportunity to again use the skills I had been learning, and I was pleased to be able to walk into

a venue that before the scheme I thought was a big stage and out of my comfort zone yet this time round I felt confident with my skills and found the venue really manageable. Thanks must go to Tigger Johnson who was my programmer for the day. A useful tip he showed me was how you can create a global FX submaster on EOS for size and rate with the new software update. This allowed us to record an effect in a cue but during the show be able to change the size and speed of this. This was crucial for busking throughout the show as we only had a couple of hours to plot. I believe this has been a standard thing on other consoles for years but it's quite new on EOS and was a really useful tool to have.

My last two shows of the scheme were to be with Lee Curran: *Nora – A Doll's House* at the Tramway Theatre in Glasgow and *West Side Story* at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. I was delighted to be credited as Lee's associate for these two shows and felt this showed how far I had come throughout the scheme. During the focus session it took a bit of time to get the focus of the Lustr cover right due to the height and angle of the three different

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roof set pieces designed by Tom Piper. Once we cracked this Lee left me to carry on the focus of the rig while he went to see a runthrough of the show. After fit-up and focus Lee allowed me to miss the plotting session to head back to Hull so I could relight *Turning the Tide* at Hull University's Middleton Hall Theatre on our day off. I

had lit this show five times before at Hull Truck Theatre but this was the first time in a new space and it was great to refresh and develop the show for the sixth time.

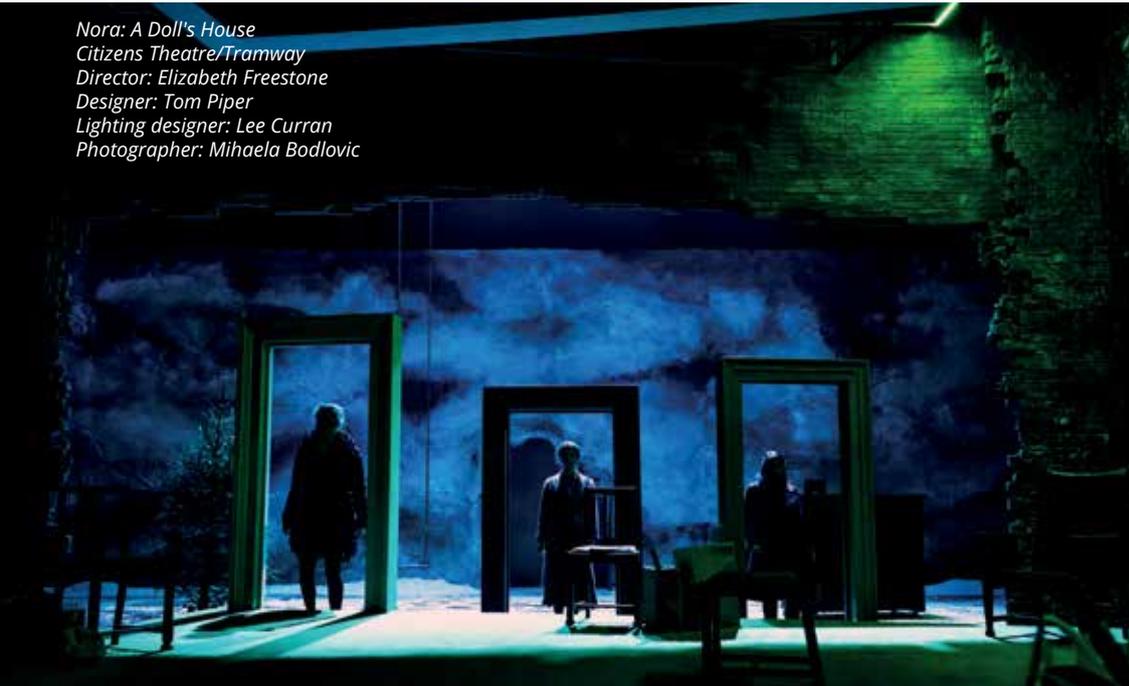
Back in Glasgow, *Nora* was a new adaptation by Stef Smith and there were three *Noras* each in a different era telling the story and showed how nothing had

really changed. Due to the fast-paced nature of time change we had to think of a language as a creative team that we would use to show these different times.

With the use of backlight and LED strip built into a framed roof piece and door frames we created different looks and colour palettes for each era. This, mixed

with different effects and tied together with the sound, helped shift the scenes quickly and effectively. The Tramway is a converted tram shed containing theatres, art galleries and dance studios. The space we were in also included a brick wall that you could walk around and brick walls creating a proscenium arch of sorts. These were built as set elements many years ago and still stand today and have become part of the fabric of the space. The Citizens Theatre company were performing here as their theatre is about to undergo a major refurb. Thanks go to Stuart Jenkins for giving me a tour around the very empty theatre before work began.

Nora: A Doll's House
Citizens Theatre/Tramway
Director: Elizabeth Freestone
Designer: Tom Piper
Lighting designer: Lee Curran
Photographer: Mihaela Bodlovic





*Jason and his daughter, Holly,
at the National Theatre
Photo by Gemma Clark*

Before I headed to Manchester it was back to London again. With thanks to Dan Street, I managed to squeeze in a day shadowing Dan at the Royal Albert Hall. What an incredible venue it is. The event was a concert showcasing the work of the Merton Music Foundation and included lots of school orchestras and choirs along with a big theatrical performance in the second half. It was great to see the amount of work involved to pull off this one-day event and the process of making it work.

The Royal Albert Hall has a great in-house rig which has been designed perfectly for multiple types of events.

The following week the time came for me to join Lee in Manchester. We had the luxury of the cast being able to have the last week of rehearsals actually in the space and working on the set. This was invaluable not only for the cast to get used to the space with their dance routines and physical movement but also for us to be able to watch it in the space. This allowed us to try some focuses and colours with the cast and gave us a little more time to make palettes and dimmer curves and really get the rig working best for the show. I was responsible for keeping track of the followspots and keeping the lighting plan up to date. It was great to work in the round properly for the first time and learn the different approaches needed for lighting in the round to other forms of theatre. The team there are all lovely and know their theatre really well.

I was really pleased that on press night, my final one of the Lumière scheme, my partner Gemma was able to join me to watch the show. She hadn't been able to

come to any other press nights throughout the year due to childcare.

Overall, it's been an incredible year. I have found it difficult to make these articles short as I've experienced so much. I always knew it would be great but it turned out to be so much more than I ever imagined. It's been a brilliant experience not only for me but for my family as well. I feel I have developed not only as a designer but as a person. I learned a lot about myself and I feel I now have the skills to move forward in my career in the lighting profession and I'm looking forward to working on my next shows.

I wish the ALD well for the future development of the Lumière scheme. It's such an amazing opportunity and really was what I needed for my development. I would like to say a big thank you to everyone including Ian Saunders, Katharine Williams and all of the lighting designers, creatives, casts, crew and everyone I've met along the way for your encouragement, advice and support. Hopefully I'll see you all again. 🍀