

ALD # FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers

"More art, less tools..."

In the backlight this issue:
Rob Sinclair on a rock and roll • Mark Fisher reviews lighting at the Edinburgh Festival •
Knight of Illumination Awards • Michael Northen Bursary ... and much much more...

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From the Chairman....

Well, we have certainly reached an age when lighting designs can be regarded as being accurately reproducible in re-stagings, revivals and tours, pretty much as reliably as set designs. We have people skilled in the art of relighting shows and the equipment and recording facilities to ensure that a design will maintain its visual integrity in new situations. Therefore the whole business of design rights and copyright, and also royalties, becomes even more relevant to our profession. There are many discrepancies in this area and it is yet another aspect of contractual negotiation where lighting designers are not really represented other than by their individual agents or even just by themselves. Managements, both commercial and subsidised, seem to be able to make up their own conditions according to their own whims. Some are fair and others not, but the ground rules can be changed pretty much without negotiation as far as I can see.

It is, in my opinion, high time that lighting design rights on a production, be it a ballet, opera or play, were clearly defined in terms of licence. Many ballet companies accept a rights licence of five years before there needs to be a renewal fee, which I would say was reasonable. However, it is my understanding that one of our foremost opera and ballet companies now claim 20 years before a renewal fee can be negotiated, which is a long time

to wait! There are even commercial managements that refuse to pay a proper royalty to lighting designers. The problem is that we as lighting designers have very little ability to negotiate because as individuals we know that if we turn down a job, our place will rapidly be filled. We work in a freelance world and, although we stand together at ALD functions and Christmas lunches, we are ultimately in competition with each other.

Now, as we all know the ALD is not a negotiating body even though we make recommendations regarding contracts and minimum fees. So without "raising the red flag" I just want to point out the inequalities in these areas (which I'm sure many are aware of) and again encourage more discussion and openness to see if there are ways that we can achieve standard agreements about rights and standard (and equal) agreements about royalties, particularly within the commercial sector, but also in the subsidised arts.

Fees will always vary according to demand/ experience, etc. but certain principles can be applied in these very important areas. There are many managements that operate totally fairly in their negotiations and I would like those to be the benchmark, not those who operate on the basis of the lowest common denominator.

I will be interested to see if you, the members, will respond to this and how. 🍀

Peter



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I'M IN HEAVEN!

says **Mark Jonathan**

“Well, I’m in Glasgow actually. What was the chance, by total coincidence, of me having two consecutive jobs in the same country, same city?”

The last time this happened was quite a few years ago when I was lighting a musical at the Birmingham Rep and Birmingham Royal Ballet at the Hippodrome. I kept fit by running up and down the quite steep hill that separates the two theatres.

In this case, I find myself ecstatically running (or maybe taking the odd taxi) as I belt between production rehearsals of the Scottish Opera small scale tour of *La Traviata* with the gorgeous and brilliant creative team of director Annilese Miskimmon and designer Nicky Shaw and the early rehearsals of Scottish Opera's main scale production of *The Magic Flute*, directed by the great British opera singer, Sir Tom Allen with extremely imaginative designs by Simon Higlett. In both cases, it's the third time I have been cast in these 'operatic' teams so, there is a sense of feeling comfortable as we put on our well-worn slippers to work happily and creatively again.

I think about the different productions of *La Traviata* that I've seen; Jonathan Miller's production at Kent Opera; then I worked on the Peter Hall production at Glyndebourne and on tour; I saw Richard Eyre's at the ROH, the Zefferelli film and Zambello's production on a pontoon in Sydney Harbour. I find it interesting that the effect this opera has modulates in parallel with

one's own experience of love and death. This production will be the smallest and most intimate. It will provide opportunities for a number of singers who are at the start of their careers. I remember touring the Glyndebourne production and being asked to give the young tenor singing Alfredo a lift in my car from one city to the next. He was also at the start of his career too, spoke no English and was getting lost trying to find his way across the UK. That young tenor was the now world famous, Roberto Alagna.

I often wonder if there is a sort of tacit prejudice about doing small scale? We usually get paid less which doesn't help but I like to call small scale productions 'chamber work' as there certainly isn't a prejudice in terms of classical chamber music. We know that every instrument in a chamber orchestra will be vitally important and must be played by a virtuoso musician and although there may not be as many instruments, or 'musical colours', so I believe we should be able to make outstanding lighting, even with a *chamber orchestra of lights*.

I'm especially attracted to this idea when you take the predicament that Scottish Opera finds itself in; that a lot of the population is a long way from the urban centres where opera might traditionally be performed. This year, celebrating



its 50th anniversary, it lays down the gauntlet that no one in Scotland will be more than 30 minutes from an operatic performance in a year when it is presenting operas at fifty different venues in Scotland.

I've lit the musical *Babes in Arms* in which there is the line "Let's put the show on right HERE!"

"What, right here in the barn?"

Well, this is the Scottish version of that line:

"Let's put the show on – right here in the small, village hall in the highlands and

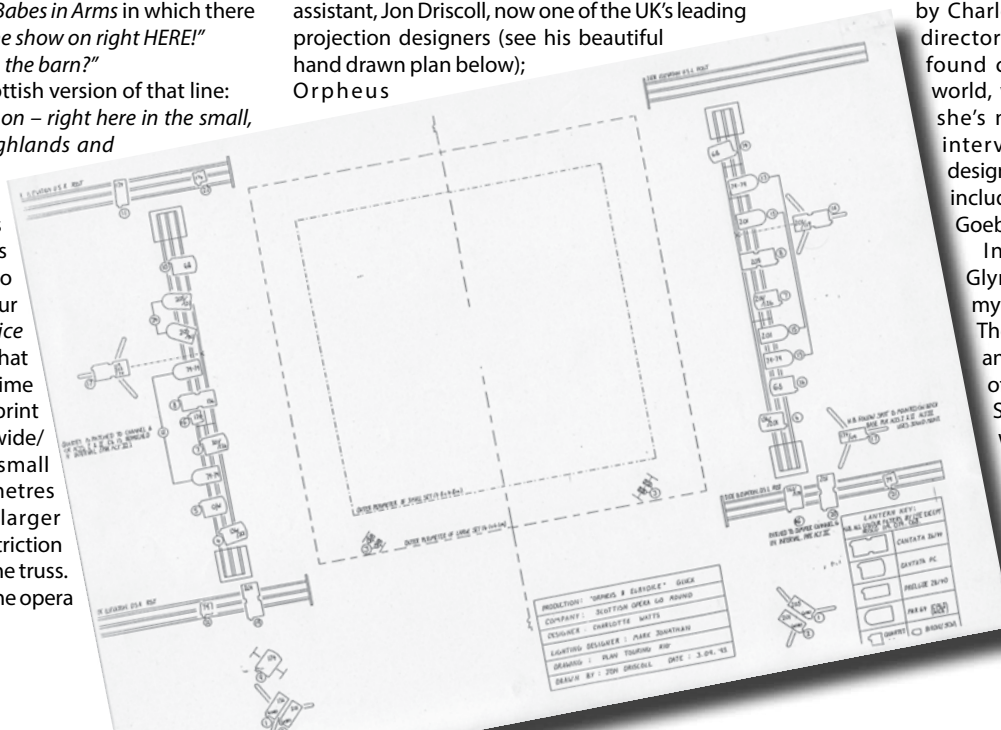
Islands." The theatre-man inside me is enchanted with this idea, as I was 19 years ago, when I came to light the small scale tour of *Orpheus ed Eurydice* for Scottish Opera. What hasn't changed over time is that the stage footprint has to fit a 6 metre wide/ deep footprint for small stages and and 8 metres wide/deep for the larger places; the height restriction is 3.5m to the top of the truss. On the autumn tour the opera

will be sung by a cast of eight with piano and next spring, on a 2nd tour, it expands to mid-scale theatres that can house a chamber orchestra.

I wondered what will have changed over 19 years? In 1993 I was here with my young assistant, Jon Driscoll, now one of the UK's leading projection designers (see his beautiful hand drawn plan below); Orpheus

was directed by a young director Anthony Fabian, now a film producer/director and choreographed by Wayne McGregor, now resident choreographer at the Royal Ballet and artistic director of Random Dance, with stage and costume designs by Charlotte Watts. The musical director was Harry Bicket, now found conducting around the world, with Lisa Milne singing-she's now at the Met. In the intervening period lighting designers of the small scale tour include Bruno Poet, Wolfgang Goebbals and Johanna Town.

In 1993, I had just left Glyndebourne and I was in my first year at the National Theatre but while that was an amazing place to be, part of me was missing opera. So, my summer holiday was spent lighting opera. The kit list of 38 lamps that I used comprised 8 Parcans, 10 Cantata PCs, 6 Prelude profiles, 4 Cantata profiles, 4 Quartet Fresnels and 4 Birdsies.





The technical staff on tour included a CSM, who drove a mini-bus with the singers, a DSM, a lighting ASM and a costume ASM. The sets, costumes, washing machine, ladders, trussing, lights and everything needed to build a theatre were driven by the LX ASM in a 35cwt Luton. The lighting ASM was assisted by the CSM, DSM and costume ASM who had to *multi-task* on the fit-up. I arrived to watch the first fit-up on the tour to find one major change had been implemented by the 'non' lighting tech staff. *"We're not having any of those random Patt numbers,"* they said. *"We're re-*

naming everything depending on its size." The lighting ASM was standing at the top of the ladder calling out what he needed to his happy helpers: *'I need a suitcase, 2 briefcases, a wallet, a purse,'* and with a tinge of embarrassment, *'a handbag'.* The rest of the team would cackle like the witches in *Dido and Aeneas* as they passed the electrician his purse and handbag! I've never seen a rig go up so quickly. Oh, and there was certainly one hall where the CSM had to feed



"local temptations"

the electricity meter during the performance. I also remember that for the epic journey made by Orpheus I used a followspot in the SL wing; a profile on a bench base which was slid around, as Orpheus crawled through the dark underworld in act 2. It was rigged on a stand in act 3 for the return journey and operated by the lighting-friendly, wardrobe ASM between costume quick changes.

Nineteen years on there is a bit more trussing to play with; bear in mind that on this tour we simply need a space with enough power and chairs. Everything else would travel. I think the staff and size of transportation has expanded a little. There is a touring manager with a company car, and professional drivers to drive the equipment and company. The tech crew: SM, DSM, ASM, Wardrobe and Prod LX have their own car which they drive, apart from going to the further flung places which they fly to. Of course, I thought Shetland would be a bit like the Isle of Wight, just off the mainland. Oh no! Shetland is 10 miles further from Glasgow than Glasgow is from London! This tour is going to travel more miles than any regular UK theatre tour.

In 1993, we had a small memory lighting desk with 24 dimmers but only 23 worked – so I had an interval re-plug. Now it's an *ETC ION* with 42 dimmers. The rig was brand new then but its been replaced. Nineteen years on I'm using 8 Source 4

Junior 25/50 profiles, 10 Parnels and 6 Showtec multi pars with scrollers; 4 Altman 30 lamp 3 circuit battens, 6 Showtec Sunstrips, 2 birdies and 6 floods. I've added a white/RGB LED footlight. On stage, there is a Patt 123, a light box and two practicals. I will also use a Cantata PC with no lens for some epic shadow effects. In fact, I would only use 16 of the available 26 par type lights.

What I was excited about where the Altman Strips. I conjured up the idea that I might have two rigged vertically on each side downstage, giving me a good cross light cover in 3 colours. One pair crossing downstage and one pair focused up stage. I also would rig five sunstrips as a light curtain of back light in Lee 201 with the 6th one rigged upstage of the doors in the set to back light through the doors.

When I came for the model showing in April, I had already been given a kit list and been told by the production manager: *"You have to light the show without using any FOH as we go to some places, like a cinema, that have no FOH positions"*. On *Orpheus*, in 1993 we had toured two stands with T-bars on which I placed two Minulette profiles a side with gobos; at the time, I thought this was a rather risqué FOH cover. 'Well,' I thought, 'I just had a warm and a cold gobo cover last time – this time it will just have to be done with lights from within



the stage and my new LED foots’.

As soon as I saw Nicky Shaw’s white card model for *La Traviata* I could see the lighting possibilities and I was able to hand in a plan in April knowing that I would know no more until I saw a run through and that would be after the rig was scheduled to be rigged. So, there’s no difference between small scale and large scale where we, lighting designers, have to guess and predict what we are going to need months before the director says in a lighting session, “*Have you got any green or red?*” I felt I could be more confident this time as the rig has six scrollers, along with my LED footlights so I was covered on anything random colour-wise that might come up nearer the time. I sensed a possible theme of red for love and blood.

The cream set comprises a box set. A section of the flatage could be removed to reduce depth and/or width. Cost meant that the original ‘solid’ design was made in canvas flats. We agreed the height of the set; it would sit just below the lights which would be rigged on the onstage cord of an up and downstage truss; a short black border would hang on the offstage cord. I was keen that the black lighting rig should be as discrete as possible. Upstage centre, there are a set of double doors; 60 cm further upstage there is a track with 3 small backcloths that are pulled across for the

two party scenes, a garden and a hospital corridor for the final act. The period would be late 1950s, Parisian. So the costumes would be fashionable and elegant. There would be a gathered, silk front cloth that would track across, a mere metre upstage of the setting line. There was much talk of action that would take place downstage but also the need for shadow play in the musical preludes to Act 1 and Act 3. The director and designer wanted a door on the frontcloth. There was a discussion about video projection or whether it might be painted. Everyone seemed to be looking at me. I had a feeling that we didn’t need either and that a simpler solution would somehow present itself. I knew it was to do with the ‘shadow’ light that we thought would open the acts...

While I was in Glasgow for the model showing in April I asked the head of lighting, Bob Dickson, to get a 1.2k Cantata PC and take the lens out. We would need sharp shadows and I already knew that a light without a lens would do that much better than one with. I demonstrated the basic idea for the shadow play but the solution for the door was still to come.

We can fast forward to September; I’m in rehearsals watching the first run in the rehearsal room. The joy of small scale is that the cast are rehearsing on the set, the rig is up. We can

even focus and light before we arrive at the first date. I ask ‘G’ our talented lighting programmer/electrician/re-lighter to show me the shadow light. I place it as far upstage as possible. It just fits between the back cloths and the double doors in the set. At full flood it just covers the 8 metre surface of the front cloth. 1.2kW on small scale is like a 5kW in an opera house. It was perfect.

As I watched the rehearsal, the singers lining up on the downstage side of the front cloth as though in a street I understood how we would make the doorway in light. When the rehearsal ended, I jumped up, “*G, put on the shadow light.*” Again, small scale means you can just nip round and play without needing a lighting crew and a 3-hour call. I realised that by opening and closing the physical doors in the set that sat just in front of the shadow light (soon to be known affectionately by everyone as ‘*Bertha*’) we could make ‘rooms’ and ‘doors’. More than that we could ‘zoom’ our picture to reveal or hide aspects. Creative juices were flowing in the minds of director, designer and lighting designer.

The next morning I nip over to Edington Street to look at the *Magic Flute* set which has been built in the rehearsal room in readiness for rehearsals. Then I go to a *Flute* costume fitting. “*This is the first time a lighting designer has come to a costume*



fitting,” says John Liddell, the head of costume. The lithe Bob Dickson is on his knees, under the Queen of the Night’s skirts, discretely connecting the fibre optics that have been woven into her skirt and cloak to an LED light source. We need a dark room to see the effect and we all end up in a window-less loo. She’s going to look sensational.

Back to *Traviata* for a run followed on Saturday by a cueing meeting. I’m a bit stickler for this – regardless of scale and regardless of whether it’s a play, opera, ballet or musical I always place cues in the prompt copy before we go into production. A couple of hours over lunch and the 90 cues were in the score and I was racing to the station to come back to London for the weekend. The train journey allowed time for me to type up my cue synopsis. I was ready.

“I’ll break off to mention that the next day I found myself at the Knight of Illumination awards. Many congratulations to all the nominees and winners and many thanks to all the sponsors and especially Clay Paky for an outstanding success. I was sitting next to Robert Bryan, the lighting designer who first inspired me and who lit so many of the operas I saw as a teenager; and on my other side, was the formidable LD, Andrew Bridge. Many of

my readers will know that there is a danger if you’re on a high that you might just relax and enjoy the excellent wine. . . I never sleep through alarm clocks, well hardly ever. I opened my eyes, the alarm had been ringing for some time. The suit trousers were lying on the floor where I had obviously discarded them in my stupor. I focused on the clock and realised it was a race against time to catch the train, this time, to the airport. Somehow, I made it complete with a hangover. The Solpadeine kicked in as I landed back in Glasgow. I had time in hand.”

I meet Simon Higlett and Bob Dickson and we look at the *Flute* set in the rehearsal room. Then back to *Traviata*; we would focus on Monday evening, light on Tuesday evening and I would light over the two session day rehearsals from Wednesday. We did a run on Thursday and although when we started there were a lot of ‘blank/copies’ of cues I pulled and stretched cues as the DSM gave them. Another joy of a small rig – fewer numbers to manipulate and G programming as fast as I could call the numbers; in the dark, I should add, as he touches all the keys without any light to see by – very impressive. By the end of the run we had the 90 cues. We ‘tidied’ up in the evening session, concentrating on the

quite complex sequences that we had created using the our opening and closing doors in the set for the shadow sequences along with the scene changes into the various acts. Friday brought with it our last ‘floor run’; the management arrived and we presented a full run in costume with lights still in the spacious rehearsal studio.

That was followed by lunch. The crew would strike and load out and have their last well-earned weekend off. We would meet again in Giffnock for the official production week culminating in the opening on Thursday with a 2nd performance on Saturday. Thereafter their schedule would be: travel on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays, with a fit-up /performance/get out on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays.

I hike over to the other Scottish Opera facility at Edington Street, exchanging Verdi for Mozart and remember how very lucky I am. After watching rehearsals of *The Magic Flute*, in its first week, I go for a serious briefing session (in the pub) with technical staff who all wanted to know how Trav was going, buoyed up by cold Pinot Grigio, my Monday hangover seemed a long time ago.

Monday comes all too quick and I meet Bob to check over and agree the fly plot and some additions to the *Flute* lighting Rig. I arrive in Giffnock to find the Eastwood Park Theatre; a





ON A (ROCK AND) ROLL

“It’s great fun... with a steep learning curve,” explains [Rob Sinclair](#), rock lighting designer and a 2009 ‘Knight of Illumination’

I’m fortunate enough to be able to keep my head above water and Florence, our rather recalcitrant dachshund, fed by lighting rock shows. I started coiling cables in the Vari-Lite warehouse in the early 90s and, though a series of lucky breaks and some bluffing, moved from being a technician to operating other people’s shows to designing my own.

The process of going from sketch to opening night is, in some ways very similar to theatre and in others completely different. The main one is that the person on stage is, at the same time, leading actor, director, producer and, often, production designer. I’m very lucky and have some fantastic, creative clients who understand the mechanics of building a show but interpreting their ideas and making them into practical reality can sometimes be mildly tricky.

In the last few years I’ve lit wonderful sets by Es Devlin for Pet Shop Boys and Mark Fisher for *The Queen Extravaganza* but very often I, usually by default as a creative team of one, design the whole show. At a very basic level it can be thinking of a riser configuration and backdrop but it can involve working on arena stage layouts, sight lines, costumes, video screen layouts and content ideas and complex set pieces.

I’m really not quite sure how I’ve ended up being what in my grander, ego led moments I call

a show designer but it’s great fun, although with a very steep learning curve. I always approach things from a lighting angle, try to make the show look unique and avoid having a group playing in front of a logo backdrop or a flat upstage video screen.

Research, research, prepare, prepare...

When I’m asked to meet a new client or if I’m fortunate enough for one of my existing ones to ask me back the first thing I do is listen to their music on repeat to really try and soak it into my brain and start to form some opinions on how it makes me feel. Album artwork, interviews, videos and press shots also help to try and work out where the bands’ head might be and a possible visual direction for the show.

I always try to arrive at a meeting armed with some kind of reference material as a way to start a conversation. Usually I will have had some sort of short brief, recent ones have included ‘the 50s’, ‘motel chic’, ‘trashy glamour’ and ‘the seaside’ but sometimes I have to go on instinct. More often than not whatever I bring will be abandoned but it’s a great way to start things off and encourage the band to think about ways of presenting on stage the music they have been locked away making, often for years, on stage.

Sometimes I’m asked to pitch for work by email,



Will Young, Belfast

usually at very short notice and with a minimal brief. I’m always very flattered to be asked and try and respond with some drawings but it’s very difficult to come up with something that a band will be like without some sort of dialogue.

It’s a temptation to keep a stockpile of rejected or old ideas and try and fit them to new projects



Adele at Hammersmith

but it's a one that I really try and avoid. It's really important to have ideas based of the band, their music and their ideas rather than something that would simply look cool. I always sit and stare at drawings before I send them off and ask myself if they are in any way generic or similar to my previous work and quite often find myself rejecting them. Of course it's impossible not to self plagiarize or rely on experience but it's also important not to repeat oneself. Previously docile pop stars can turn very nasty if they see you using 'their' ideas with another act.

The client is King (or Queen...)

I think I once read that design is the process of helping your client realise what they want and then delivering it to them. I always try and remember that I'm designing a show to help my client be able to perform their songs in an environment that they think appropriate and not bolster my ego, although that's a very pleasant side effect.

Bands who know what they want and can articulate it are, thankfully, fairly common. It's such a pleasure to be able to take a great reference or

idea, add to it a little, turn it into reality and see the client happy. The stage often becomes a reflection of their personality and needs to be a place where they can comfortably sing songs that are often very personal both to the artist and audience.

Adele is a great example of this. She's funny, charming and very likable, meetings with her rarely lasted more than 20 minutes and was very immediately honest about what she did and didn't like. Starting from a reference of a set at the Oscars a few years ago we decided to turn the cliché of a big rock back wall of lights on its head and make a wall of 96 lampshades, all on individual dimmers (*left and cover*). With some simple gold drapes and risers the stage became a very warm, slightly surreal living room in which she felt at ease and gave a great setting for her music and unique, unscripted and often hilarious stage chatter. The shows at Hammersmith last year were two of the most amazing nights I've had.

Not everyone is so direct or sure of what they want. Meetings can veer off at, usually very amusing, tangents or slightly frustrating blind alleys. Getting things back on track can be difficult, as can explaining that some slightly outlandish ideas might not quite work. Probably the most outrageous but serious idea I've heard was to spend the entire production budget on a smoke machine and as many ecstasy pills as we

ON A (ROCK AND) ROLL

Rob Sinclair

could carry in our luggage which would be given out to the audience to 'create a good vibe'.

Although I do push back sometimes to either fight for or resist an idea one must always remember that the pop star is always right in the end. It's their money, their music and them on stage which all adds up to a convincing argument in their favour.

Even at the early stages of the process I, while trying not to stamp on anything, have to keep practical considerations in mind. With record sales in decline but concert business on the rise tickets now make up an important part of a bands' income which means that there is always a lot of pressure to deliver a spectacular show for as little money as possible. There is no point in my trying to sell a band on an idea they can't afford and I always try and find out before we start the number of trucks, busses and people that the tour manager wants to have on the road which gives a good idea of how big the show can be.

Production manager is key

Concerts have to be built very quickly, taken down quicker and be very flexible to adapt to a wide variety of venues. A good production manager is extremely important; they need to be receptive to silly ideas and be able to translate them into affordable systems that can be thrown in and out

of trucks every day. Unfortunately it's an easy trap to make the logistics the focus of the productions' efforts rather than the show itself. I've seen many shows that look like a load out waiting to happen rather than a big night out and often patrol in the afternoons to remove boxes stored on stage and call for more masking.

Drawing and planning

After the initial meeting I draw the show in 3D in

Vectorworks. This is essential to help work out how things fit in space, how much room there will be on stage and to look at sightlines. From this I make line drawings and renders to show the band and plots to send for bid. I don't really like renders as they aren't an honest depiction of a design and I generally introduce them as cartoons to show style rather than a photographic reality.

Once we have a vague plan I'll start to learn the songs. I used to make long notes of structure



Keane, Bexhill



Queen and Adam Lambert, Hammersmith

‘verse-into-chorus-into-middle-eight’ which were rather confusing and difficult to navigate. I had a Eureka moment in Es Devlin’s fabulous studio when she showed me lyrics pinned to the wall as her libretto and inspiration for Lady Gaga’s show. Since then I’ve kept and annotated folders of lyrics for every song to help me navigate the sections, mark cue points and keep brief notes.

The lyrics book exists in conjunction with a

spreadsheet showing songs, any notes from the band, the colours I feel appropriate for them, any video or staging ideas and any special gags we might try. It’s here that I try and start to structure the show - how will we start? How will it build? Can we afford to hold anything back? Most importantly: are we being too clever for our own good and will the audience understand and appreciate what we’re doing?

ON A (ROCK AND) ROLL

Rob Sinclair

Keep it simple

I’m a strong believer in simplicity and try never to use effect for its own sake. It’s very easy to get caught up in what the equipment can do rather than what it should be doing. If a whole block of a show feels red then it needs to stay red rather than turning a red song green for variety’s sake. We decided to light the Adele show entirely in shades of white which, although terrifying beforehand, was a wonderful education in using shifts in level and colour temperature.

A ‘hands on’ LD

Most rock LDs operate and program their own shows. I love operating; it’s a real pleasure to be able to only concentrate on one thing for a couple of hours. Increasingly I hand my shows on to some very talented lighting directors to run on the road. It’s really hard, especially for a dreadful control freak, to hand let the show go but it’s great to revisit and see how things have progressed. The person on the ground needs to take responsibility for moving the show to different venues and continents and it’s really important for them to understand both the idea behind it and to take some ownership. Bands tend to move the set around, change arrangements and add new material during the tour and the show needs to be able to adapt. I’ve been very lucky to work





Pulp, Hyde Park

with some fabulous people, most of whom are vastly talented designers, but I still struggle with quality control and making sure that the show still looks right without being overbearing and micro managing.

Production rehearsals...

... are always difficult but rewarding. Large shows rehearse for anything up to a few weeks, small ones only for a day or two, really small ones not at

all. I like to work late at night after everyone else has gone home. It's really hard to put a song on repeat and start to work through it during the day while there is noise and people asking questions. I used to dread the band coming out to look at progress but now encourage my clients to sit with me and look at every cue. It builds trust and confidence and means that they know what they are standing in front of.

ON A (ROCK AND) ROLL

Rob Sinclair

Festivals...

... are a great way for a band to make some ready money and every summer seems to bring more of them. While most acts take some specials with them, usually some floor lights or video screens, the bulk of the work needs to be done by a locally provided house system which means that programming a festival tour needs a wholly different mindset to a full production show. The show needs to adapt to a wide variety of instrument types and some fairly horrible house rigs and is no time for subtlety or small statements. Modern consoles which allow programming to be swapped between different types of fixtures have finally over the last few years allowed some consistency into festival shows.

"So, how do you get into rock lighting?"

I get slightly bemused when people ask how they can get into the business as I have no real idea how I managed it. The simple answer is that you need luck and once you've got lucky you need not to balls it up. The more complicated one is to work hard, know what the equipment is and how it works, know what you can reasonably ask the crew to do, listen to the music and give the band what they want. Most importantly: remember that it is a business relationship and to be friendly rather than friends with the band.

Touring is a tough life, but one that I love. I think the contrasts between the best and worst of times, often very close together, are what makes it such fun. Yesterday I had a 4am lobby call, after 2 hours sleep and a late show, for an early flight half way across Europe. On the same day, however, I had a long walk in the Swiss woods, ran a headline show and enjoyed a spectacular cheese board in catering. Over the years I've ridden motorcycles in the Andes and down the Great Ocean Road in Australia, been towed screaming behind a snowmobile in the alps, jet skied in the Mediterranean, met the president of Georgia, ridden the rush hour subway in Tokyo, catapulted off the deck of the USS Nimitz and made great friends all over the planet. Not bad for vaguely flashing the lights in time behind pop groups. 🍷

Rob Sinclair's recent credits include shows for Pet Shop Boys, Keane, Pulp, Adele, Queen + Adam Lambert, Will Young, Hurts, Goldfrapp, Bloc Party and sets for Mumford and Sons' Stopover festivals and Marina and the Diamonds. He's currently working on Peter Gabriel's 'Back to Front' show which opens in Quebec City in September.



Vampire Weekend, Brussels

MICHAEL NORTHEN BURSARY 2012



The winners

Michael Northen Bursary: Rachel Bottomley
presented by Durham Marenghi

Francis Reid Award: Alexander Ridgers
presented by Francis Reid

ETC Award: Zoe Spurr
presented by Mark White

L to R: Durham Marenghi, Max Spielbichler who collected the award on behalf of Zoe Spurr, Mark White, Rachel Bottomley, MC Nick Moran, Francis Reid, Alexander Ridgers.

The awards were organised by Jack Knowles on behalf of the ALD, with thanks to judges Johanna Town, James Farncombe, Kathy Sandys, David Howe and Jack Knowles. Our grateful thanks to the Young Vic which hosted the judging deliberations. Thanks also to Nick Moran who hosted the awards presentation at PLASA 2012.



The judges said:

This was a very impressive and excellently presented portfolio showing atmospheric, bold and dramatic states.

Rachel showed an interesting and thoughtful approach to scripts and finding relevant reference material, visibly demonstrating how it was involved within her process through to seeing it implemented in the finished design.

She clearly has a good understanding of how to support a narrative using colour and composition, whilst understanding how to exercise caution and not over doing things, only using something when it was fully justified.

Rachel displayed advanced thinking regarding her approach to lighting and it's affect on an audience, and demonstrated clearly a very positive and creative process to her lighting, producing fantastic results.



Rachel Bottomley

Winner: Michael Northen Bursary

presented by Durham Marenghi



The judges said:

Alex's portfolio included lovely photos, which showed very strong stage images and composition.

His concept ideas were good and interesting, which were clearly seen with good overall outcomes for the designs included.

The lighting allowed plenty of the cast's faces to be seen, at the same time keeping the lighting interesting.

Alex demonstrated a very encouraging attitude with very positive work as a collective with the other members of the creative team.

We saw extremely clear and concise lighting plans which indicated what was used and how effects were achieved.



Alexander Ridgers

Winner: Francis Reid Award

presented by Francis Reid



The judges said:

This was a good demonstration of influences and source material, which directly informed decisions, made within her designs, as well as showing detailed and thorough discussions with the creative team.

Zoe's photos showed strong composition and atmospheric lighting states.

Demonstrated a good use of alternative light sources in an unconventional venue demonstrating an ability to adapt and improvise

Zoe included good descriptions of why and how the different designs were created, with photo references demonstrated in show photos.



Zoe Spurr

Winner: ELC Award

presented by Mark White



“Ahoy there!” Nigel Lawson Dick tests the water at PLASA

Some of us tried to escape for the Summer. Having sampled the delights of Iona, Staffa and a warm welcome on Coll it was soon time to head south to the Brittany coast and the Channel Islands. It's a magical place to sail. Potentially hazardous waters, there is huge satisfaction in piloting one's way through odd nooks and crannies and gaps between rocks – and with 30 foot tides to contend with the land and sea-scape can look very different within a six hour span.

Rather like the fit up at PLASA. On Saturday rocky outcrops of flight cases, an archipelago of crates of aluminium section and panels for stand and enclosure construction and the entire floor concealed with a mirror-like sea of plastic sheeting. By the following morning a transformation and – as the aged critics might say – “we have a show”.

Well we do. It seems to have dieted a bit from last year, maybe drawn in the waistline here and there, but all the ‘usual suspects’ are on parade and plenty of well-known faces.

The layout though did mystify us a bit, what with Sound and Stage management cheek by jowl with major lighting companies and our ALD stand set round the back next to a somewhat gloomy ‘seating area’. But we brightened things up, creating a warm and welcoming haven for weary members after they had tramped the aisles – or maybe providing a launch pad for them to do so.

Lots of well-known familiar faces round the stand with several score of our members dropping by. Add to that an excellent crop of Sponsored Student applications and, to our great satisfaction, a significant number of new Professional and Associate members with some more in the pipeline.

Once again we had the pleasure of seeing young and talented designers collecting their Michael Northen bursary awards – how exciting to see the fantastic quality of the work that this new generation is producing. Congratulations to all those who submitted their portfolios and especially the winners.

Wednesday brought an influx of new college students, many of whom had just started their course at the beginning of the week. Piled on to a coach and taken to PLASA many could be forgiven for looking a bit lost and bemused. “*Find out what's new*” is the challenge. For heaven's sake, some of us having been coming here for decades and still find that question hard enough to answer!

So after many years it is farewell to Earls Court as we head for Docklands and Excel in 2013. I suppose the expression might be ‘pastures new’ but perhaps ‘uncharted waters’ is nearer the mark. It's moved back to October; so see you there in a year – and a bit. 🍀



A HISTORY OF LIGHTING EDUCATION

Kelli Zezulka continues our series of retrospectives with a review of education and lighting design, from then... 'til now.



Before lighting design was recognised as a profession in its own right, training was informal and usually gained by way of an apprenticeship or work experience. No differentiation was made between the technical and the artistic – as there was no professional differentiation – and it is only in the last thirty years or so that formal training in lighting design as a specific and discrete discipline has been offered by educational institutions. Early training programmes such as those at the London Theatre Studio and the Old Vic Theatre School were important not only because they attempted to standardise the knowledge and skills required to work in the industry, but also because they founded the basis for contemporary training courses.

The first lighting courses

The London Theatre Studio (LTS) was founded by the director and actor George Devine (1910–1966) and the French director Michel Saint-Denis (1897–1971). In addition to acting classes, Devine also taught stage management and lighting. Lighting classes were taught to technical and acting students alike, the idea being that all students

A HISTORY OF LIGHTING EDUCATION

Kelli Zezulka

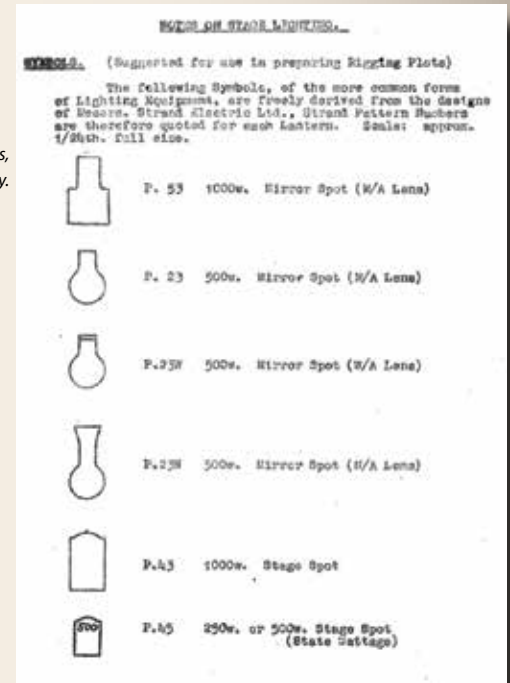
should understand the entire process of the production of a show. In his lighting lectures, Devine (right) focused equally on the artistic and the technical aspects of lighting. Students were taught about the capabilities of different lanterns and their corresponding effects on stage, the best way to light an actor's face, the use of gels, and the importance of having the lighting control at the rear of the auditorium. They conducted experiments concerning light output (foot candles) and beam angles from varying distances and were aware of the advantages and potential shortcomings of each type of lantern. This may seem elementary to us now, but the course and the level of instruction were revolutionary at the time. Devine was widely considered one of the best 'lighters' in the country at a time when directors (or producers, as they were then known) did their own lighting (usually in consultation with the theatre's chief electrician).



LTS was closed with the outbreak of World War II, but with colleague Glen Byam Shaw (1904–1986),

*Croydon College light symbols,
1960, Robert Stanbury.*

Devine and Saint-Denis began drafting their scheme for the Old Vic Theatre School (OVTS), which opened in 1947. In addition to courses in acting, there were two technical courses: Stage Design and Stagecraft (each lasting one year, with the option of an advanced second year course in production and design). Students had lectures and practical classes in scenery, ground plans, stage management, period research, scene painting, technical drawing, costume design, properties and lighting. The students of the Stage Design course were assessed on their ground plans, costume design and practical work, including mask making, scene painting, costume dyeing and painting, technical drawing and model making. On the technical production course, student success was determined based on their skills in technical drawing and model making, and practical skills in stage management, lighting, carpentry and production. The culmination of the training was a series of public performances, to which prospective employers would be invited. Technical students were responsible for all aspects of production, from stage management, the making of the props and building of the set, to the lighting and costume design, all with minimal intervention from the staff. Although revolutionary in its time, most conservatoire drama training now follows this model; in fact, according to a 1951 article in the Times, it



was upon Saint-Denis' principles and working methods that Michael MacOwan and Norman Ayrton were to build their training programme at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) in 1954.

The stage management and technical theatre course at LAMDA in its current incarnation started in 1965 (a similar stage management course had been running at the Royal Academy of Dramatic



Art (RADA) for three years). Richard Pilbrow and Theatre Projects were both involved in starting the course and their involvement meant that specialists from Theatre Projects were often called upon for teaching duties. The course was extended from eighteen months to two years in 1980 and included (and still does include) classes in voice, movement and stage combat, as well as the innovative provision for work experience in the second year.

The stage management and technical theatre courses at both RADA and LAMDA are quite similar in terms of format: first-year students assist second-year students in the staffing of all productions, while gaining knowledge across all production disciplines, and second-year students take on head of department roles in stage and production management, lighting (including design), sound and construction. The RADA course now includes a third year BA option in a specialist technical subject area.

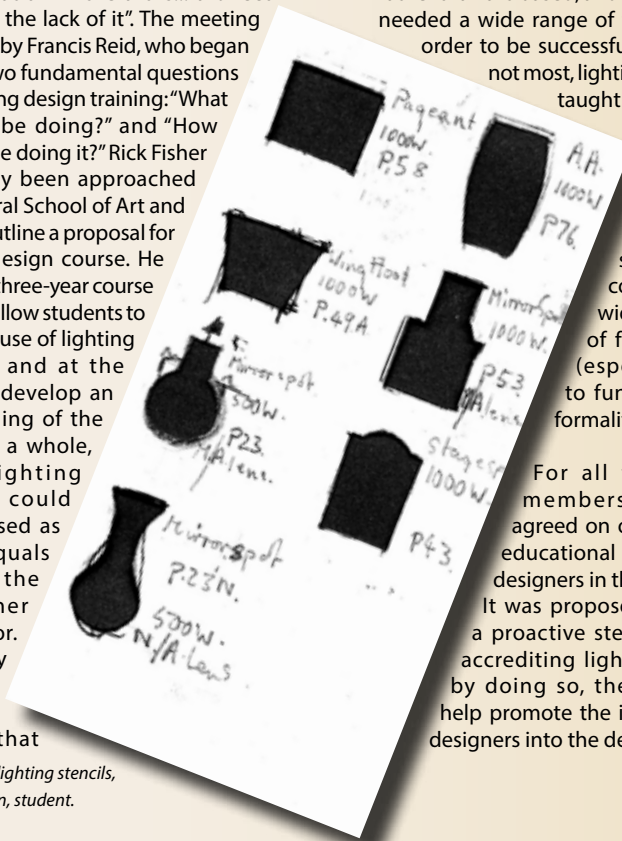
Specialist lighting design courses

In 1989, the ALD held a panel discussion/seminar in Bristol entitled *Training the Lighting Designer*. By this time in the UK, there were still only a few courses for technical theatre, and even fewer where lighting design specifically was taught. The report of the meeting noted that "the high level

of interest and concern among lighting designers about education in the art is... a direct response to the lack of it". The meeting was chaired by Francis Reid, who began by asking two fundamental questions about lighting design training: "What should we be doing?" and "How should we be doing it?" Rick Fisher had recently been approached by the Central School of Art and Design to outline a proposal for a lighting design course. He proposed a three-year course that would allow students to explore the use of lighting in theatre and at the same time develop an understanding of the industry as a whole, so that lighting designers could be recognised as creative equals alongside the set designer and director. It was widely agreed by the panel members that

any courses in lighting design should be practical rather than art-based, and that lighting designers needed a wide range of theatre knowledge in order to be successful in the field. Many, if not most, lighting designers were self-taught and had learned their craft either by way of apprenticeship or "on-the-job" experimentation. The specifics of how such a lighting design course would run were widely debated in terms of format, location, cost (especially with regards to funding) and degree of formality.

For all the debate, panel members and participants agreed on one thing: the current educational provision for lighting designers in the UK was inadequate. It was proposed that the ALD take a proactive step in developing and accrediting lighting design courses; by doing so, the association would help promote the integration of lighting designers into the design team.



*Croydon College lighting stencils,
c.1960, Pat Cowan, student.*





To aid in this aim, in 1990 the ALD began producing a series of publications entitled *Focus on Education for Lighting Designers*. The Arts and Entertainment Technical Training Initiative (AETTI) was founded in 1987, with its remit to “identify the minimum level of skill needed in order to undertake a specific task”, and was initially welcomed by the ALD. However, when AETTI began to set formal standards for designers in the form of NVQs, the ALD withdrew its involvement with AETTI. The editor of *Focus* at the time, Jonathan Howard, noted this was because, “until it is possible to produce accurate representations of the way in which a lighting designer contributes to a production and quantify its worth the question of training standards will probably remain rhetorical”.

What followed was a heated debate between members of the ALD and AETTI, extracts of which were published in the 1991 edition of *Focus* on Education, and included the brilliant provocation by Francis Reid that AETTI would, “promote enough hocus pocus and mumbo jumbo to provide multiple orgasms for the vast army of bureaucrats who are currently determined to stamp out creativity throughout the land”. Also included was an article by John A. Williams, head of the lighting course at the Academy for Performing Arts in Hong Kong and former head

of lighting at Bristol Old Vic Theatre. He, like others elsewhere, was adamant that lighting design courses should be industry-based; that is, those developing, running and teaching on such courses must not be removed from the practices and needs of the industry.

Lighting design training today

The last twenty years has seen a huge proliferation of specific courses in lighting design. As the industry and profession itself has grown and become more specialized, so has the formal education opportunities available to those who wish to pursue lighting design and related subjects as a profession. Broad foundation courses, such as those at LAMDA, RADA and Mountview, give students a working knowledge of all elements of technical theatre production; RADA also offers a four-term course in stage electrics and lighting design, incorporating both the technical and artistic aspects of the profession.

Guildhall’s BA Hons in technical theatre arts is complemented by its summer course in stage lighting skills. The Central School of Speech and Drama runs a BA Hons degree, in which thirteen specialisms are available, including theatre lighting design and production lighting, and also offers MA and PhD programmes. The courses at Rose Bruford College go even further:

students can opt for a BA Hons in lighting design or a BA Hons in creative lighting control, a three-year programme focusing on the role of the programmer in lighting and video design, as well as postgraduate degrees and PhD research study. Other formal courses in lighting and lighting design range from NVQs, short courses run by youth theatre companies (such as Chichester Youth Theatre) and HNDs to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

The question of the ALD’s involvement in lighting design training and education is still outstanding, however. How much should (and could) the ALD be involved and how much can we, as an organisation, influence the next generation of lighting designers through formal training? #





'Just a (very) quick hello!'

from **Sean Gleason** your new Student Members' Rep

I've just returned home from a long day in the theatre, and what felt like an even longer evening at my first Exec meeting...

With no idea what to expect, (nor did I know where I was actually going when I was running around Shaftesbury Avenue looking for the new office!) I soon stumbled into the meeting and was instantly welcomed with great support and enthusiasm from my (as of now) fellow Exec colleagues.

With what initially seemed like an endless list of items up for discussion on the meetings agenda, it immediately struck me as to how all such items (whether now, or in the not too distant future) directly affected the student body and instantly highlighted to me the importance of having such a student presence and voice on the association actually is.

Over his time on the Exec, Jack Knowles (my predecessor) has gone a long way in working closely with those in education offering support and guidance and it was from my own positive experiences and relationship I've had with the ALD throughout my own studies, that has since made me want to play a much more active role within the association.

I hope by taking on the role within the ALD, and by working closely with those currently in education, emerging designers, and fellow young professionals within the industry, we can gain a much better understanding of our needs and actively work towards these.

Ongoing, our immediate plan is to setup a 'student sub-committee', in which current students from Universities and Colleges from all around the country will sit, in order to create a much more proactive student presence within the association. This will not only allow us to discuss and explore current relevant issues and happenings,

but will create a platform to voice and develop ideas and opinions, and will progressively work towards offering a greater support network to the student body, graduates and young professionals alike.

Should anyone wish to be a part of the student sub-committee, details will be going out to colleges in the near future, however please feel free to email me in the meantime to express an interest.

Finally looking ahead, I will be around at ABTT and intend on meeting up with those who show an interest in becoming part of the sub-committee, but it would also be great to speak to any other students, and fellow members to hear your opinions on the future of the student committee and it's ongoing role within the association. I'll also be there to offer any advice and to pester you all into preparing to submit your work for entry into this year's Michael Northen Bursary award (for which the deadline for entries has been extended until mid August).

The bursary award is now open to all students and graduates from 2012 and 2013, and is a great way to bring your work to the attention of experienced lighting designers and other industry professionals on the judging panel. There's everything you will need to enter on the website however again please feel free to give me a shout should you need any more info or advice. 🍀

Sean Gleason

After traveling and working within the lighting industry for some time, Sean chose to specialize and study Lighting Design at Rose Bruford College. Throughout his studies he continued to light, assist and work as a freelance Production Electrician, and since graduating has worked within the lighting department at The National Theatre on Southbank. Beyond the National, Sean continues to light, working notably with several physical, and new writing theatre companies in order to develop exciting new pieces.

sean.gleason@ald.org.uk



The ALD hosted a seminar and panel discussion at this year's PLASA Focus in Leeds, entitled "Light, spectacle and the large-scale event". The session was chaired by Scott Palmer, one of the ALD's Education reps and a lecturer in scenography at the University of Leeds, and featured on the panel Jez Hellens, Phil Supple, Tanya Burns and Durham Marengi.

Scott opened the session a brief introduction on light as spectacle, reminding us first of the precis for the session:

In the last year, the UK has been host to several large-scale events, including the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Next year, Glasgow will host the Commonwealth Games. How do lighting designers approach such events? In addition to the design brief, what technical and logistical aspects need to be taken into consideration? This seminar will explore the lighting designer's role, the use of technology, and the importance of collaboration, innovation and imagination when designing large-scale events.

ALD Seminar at PLASA Focus 2013

Words: **Kelli Zezulka**, photos: **James Laws**

Scott went on to note the profound impact that lighting has on our everyday lives, with light always at the heart of spectacular events, in everything from natural phenomena (rainbows or solar eclipses) to special events (candles on a birthday cake or New Year's Eve fireworks). He explained that although "spectacle" has often been criticised as lacking artistic merit, light's ability to transform our perception of space and affect our emotional response to events is becoming more widely acknowledged, alongside the recognition of the skill of the lighting designer.

Scott then introduced each of the panellists, who gave a short statement about their work. Jez, as a technical manager, talked about the challenges of creating work that is engaging and that "allows the audience member to take something away with them" in spaces with "no barriers, no boundaries".

Phil then spoke about his work helping "artists deliver a lighting element

to their work" and establishing an appreciation of the urban built environment. He described working with landscapes of all kinds and the importance of recognising the effect that lighting can have on the public's interaction with those landscapes.

Tanya talked about what she believes are the two most important tools of the craft of lighting design: technology and your collaborators. She also emphasised the importance of constant

L-r: Scott Palmer, Jez Hellens, Phil Supple, Tanya Burns and Durham Marengi



Focus – The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers – "More art, less tools..."



communication with other members of the creative team, always asking questions, both logistical and creative. She went on to stress how imperative it is to know the brief and the capabilities of the equipment and venue to the best of your ability, in order to be as prepared as possible when, inevitably, changes are made at the last minute.

Durham then explained briefly his theatre background and the challenges faced when working with theatre practitioners on large stadium events where a television audience (and the 360-degree set-up in most stadiums) needs to be taken into consideration. He echoed

Tanya's comments about being prepared for the inevitable and specifying equipment that is suitable for the venue, in terms of both its capabilities and the limitations of the venue.

This left approximately 35 minutes for audience questions, which ranged from the use of video projection as scenography to the practicalities of waterproofing equipment for use outdoors.

The seminar was one of the most popular events at this year's PLASA Focus, with over 100 people in the audience. I would like to thank Scott and all the panellists for an entertaining, interesting and thought-provoking discussion.



ALD Social at The Wardrobe

sponsored by
HawthornTheatrical

The panel session at PLASA Focus was followed by what we hope will be the start of regular northern socials.

We gathered at The Wardrobe, near to the BBC, West Yorkshire Playhouse and Northern Ballet, in what is becoming Leeds' cultural quarter. The social was very generously sponsored by Hawthorn, with Martin Hawthorn and Mick Freer making sure no one was ever without a drink!

The conversations naturally carried on from issues discussed in the panel session, with many in attendance remarking on how nice it was to talk to and socialise with others in the industry.

We are hoping to build on the success of this evening with further socials throughout the north of England - please email meetings@ald.org.uk if you would be interested in hosting a northern social.

Kelli



ATOMOS BY RANDOM DANCE

Ian Saunders was at the members' meeting with **LD Lucy Carter**

The opening of *Atomos*, the latest work by choreographer Wayne McGregor and Random Dance, was the culmination of a year's work for all those involved based on the initial outline concept that was presented.

This was generally summed up by the show's lighting designer Lucy Carter as what happens when you distil the parts of any idea until you can go no further. This process started with the body and the dancer, and was followed by everyone else across the various creative disciplines. To assist this process, however, was the visual reference of the film *Blade Runner*.



Lucy, who has worked with Random for 20 years and has lit McGregor's work outside the company in the meantime, then went away to think about breaking down light into its individual parts. Studying the 1982 film, she broke it down into its individual lighting elements: moving fans through haze, venetian blinds, fluorescent sources, heavily backlit scenes in "Blade Runner Blue", that constant kinetic element of lights moving, searching, and sweeping across the screen.

In terms of set design, the scene where Deckard examines a picture seems all too evident as the set is the zoomed in image of a face in a pixellated form.

Indeed, Lucy's first lighting cue of the show was also a small square, a single pixel, from which the first part of the show developed.

Lucy explained that she prefers to start with ideas rather than the technology that is available to carry them out. This piece was divided up into 31 atoms of choreography by McGregor over seven weeks. They had different lengths but no real structure or order to them. For that reason, Lucy also developed a range of lighting ideas to bring to the two-week development process at South London's Laban Centre, although didn't know which section of the show any single idea would go into.

It is of course at this point that the technology comes into play. The kinetic movement of light, whether through the source moving, colour changing or focus changes, was going to be important. In order to create the pixel images, as well as the sweeps across the dancers, Lucy used the PRG Best Boy. These were perfect for fading smoothly between shutter cut positions. One effect we were shown gave the optical illusion that a section of the stage was rising up like a platform. It was just the movement of the sharply focused shutters working against each other and tricking the brain.

The iconic *Blade Runner* image of fans turning in light was also achieved with the Best Boys, with it morphing out of what looked like shimmering water as the focus and rotation speed changed over a slow fade. The ability to zoom between 8 and 64 degrees was also a benefit, meaning that large sections of floor could be divided up into areas with a minimal amount of equipment, important for a show that will be touring to a number of venues of varying sizes across the world.

Lucy often feels that dancers on stage are often 3D elements within a 2D space. Using smoke or haze gives a volume to the space once it is lit, but the inevitable shafts of light from the side sometimes create an unwanted language. She therefore wanted to find a small colour changing unit that could create the 3D space by



lighting haze without too much identification of the source. The requirements of size and colour adaptability effectively meant travelling down the LED route, and Lucy discovered the Rosco Miro Cube: a four-inch cube with changing lenses, which could act as footlights and be used at the bases of the side booms, enveloping the space in light and giving an even, soft look to the show. When enabled with its "Filament Mode", which mimics the much-loved tungsten delayed blackout glow, the Miro Cube smoothly fades from and into blackout to give an ethereal effect to the space and make the space glow as a single 3D pixel in the opening of the show.

Finally a bar of pixel-lines with 40 degree lenses fitted was discovered to be the perfect angle to light both the floor and the cyclorama to achieve a single-image, full-stage backlight to the space as well as being used to sweep colour across the stage and cyc, another kinetic light source that continued the idea of light moving all the time.

It was great to hear Lucy talk through her design, always pointing out that the idea or the required image for any one of the "dance atoms" was the starting point to discover just how she could add her layer to the multimedia show (3D glasses were needed to watch and plot the central section where monitors were flown in and used as pixels), and that the technology was used to create that desired image rather than dictating what she could do.

Our thanks also go to her team of production electrician and programmer Ashley Bolitho, Random Dance's technical director Christopher Charles and technical manager Colin Everitt, as well as the Sadler's Wells crews who gave up their time to demonstrate how the show comes together in its final form. #

Random Dance: www.randomdance.org/home

PRG Best Boy: www.prg.com/product/bestboy4000/

Rosco Miro Cube: www.rosco.com/lighting/mirocube4C.cfm



Atomos production credits:

Lighting designer: Lucy Carter

Choreographer: Wayne McGregor

Costume design: Studio XO

Film and photography: Ravi Deepres

Knight of Illumination Award 2012 Winner

David Finn: Dance



Simon Bennison accepts the award on behalf of David Finn

**David Finn for
Sweet Violets
Royal Ballet**

"For his stealthily evoked sense of place capturing the visually and morally murky world of Walter Sickert paintings, from the darkly claustrophobic and blood-stained to the stark energy of music-hall."

*Production photo:
© ROH / Bill Cooper*

Knight of Illumination Award 2012 Winner Howard Harrison: Drama



**Howard Harrison for
Anna Christie
Donmar Warehouse**

"For bathing and shrouding the actors with light and his use of light in perfect harmony with set and sound to whip up a storm of wind, rain and churning sea on the tiny Donmar stage."

Production photo: Johan Persson



Knight of Illumination Award 2012 Winner

Neil Austin: Musical



Gary Longfield accepts the award
on behalf of Neil Austin

**Neil Austin for
Company
Sheffield Crucible**

*"For his arresting use of colour,
with contrasting panels of
light embedded into the set,
its precise patterning driving
key dramatic moments and
defining transitions and mood
changes."*

Production photo: Ellie Kurtz

Knight of Illumination Award 2012 Winner DM Wood: Opera



John-Paul Percox accepts the award
on behalf of DM Wood

DM Wood for *Suor Angelica* Royal Opera House

*"For creating a gleaming,
clinical world of a hospital
ward run by nuns, defining and
igniting the sufferings of Suor
Angelica with fresh intensity
and anguish."*

Production photo:
© ROH / Bill Cooper 2011





**LIGHT
RELIEF**

update

Light Relief received some major donations during this year's PLASA show in Earls Court in September.

The Trustees were delighted by the continuing support of ROSCO who donated the proceeds from the sale of R313 Light Relief Yellow, and this year's donation has brought the overall amount raised from this colour to over £18,000!

ETC has also put in place a very generous scheme that benefits Light Relief for the European sales of their essential app and this year an outstanding contribution was made of £16,855! It is also worth celebrating that our American sister charity Behind the Scenes benefits from the same scheme for sales of the app in the USA.

Light Relief benefited from the astonishing Olympic spirit as well. AED auctioned one of the Olympic torches at PLASA, engaging a professional auctioneer to make sure the maximum was raised and with all the proceeds going to Light Relief. This raised over £6000 pounds for the charity. We are very grateful to them and all of our corporate sponsors for this generosity.

Clay Paky's President and CEO Pasquale Quadri presented Light Relief with a substantial donation of £5000 at this year's glittering Knight of Illumination Awards in London. Clay Paky is already heavily involved with the lighting



Pasquale Quadri, CEO of Clay Paky, presents Rick Fisher with a donation to Light Relief at the Knight of Illuminations Awards dinner.

industry, not just as a manufacturer but also as a main sponsor and organiser of the KOI Awards and as corporate sponsor of Light Relief.

The Trustees also wish to thank the many lighting designers and ALD members who continue to support *Behind The Scenes Day*, which this year raised over £4000 from individuals making sure that Light Relief can always respond quickly and effectively to help our colleagues when they need it most.

We are always anxious to hear about members of our lighting community who might need some support from Light Relief and often friends and colleagues do this. However, if you know of any one who might need our help please contact me, or any of the trustees via our website www.lightrelief.org.uk. 



Edinburgh International Festival 2012

A welcome return for critic and journalist **Mark Fisher** who shares our enthusiasm for lighting...

Light was at the very heart of the 2012 Edinburgh International Festival. The first show to open – and just about the last to close – took place on the slopes of Arthur's Seat where the environmental art company NVA used the power of LED technology to turn an after-hours ramble into a mesmerising light-based adventure.

A response to the London Olympic Games, **Speed of Light** sought to celebrate the dedication of the endurance runner. For each evening's performance, NVA commandeered large numbers of volunteer runners (totalling 4000 over the three-week festival), who moved in choreographed formation over the hill. Setting off at staggered intervals after dark, the audience climbed to the peak, all the while watching the runners.

What made them visible was their specially designed suits of lights, powered by their own kinetic energy and operated remotely to add colour to the human patterns choreographed by Litza Bixler. The brief given to head designer James Johnson was to devise *"a lighting system that expresses the movement of running and walking [and] uses the minimum amount of power but gives the greatest possible effect"*. The company wanted both runners and audience to generate electrical power, with kit that could be worn by large numbers in a variety of weathers.

Working with the Edinburgh International

Science Festival, Johnson devised a webbing suit for the runners that incorporated colour LEDs, battery pack and radio control. Each audience member, meanwhile, was given a walking staff with a glowing acrylic rod in the base that illuminated the route and created streams of white light in the distance where each group walked. At the top of each staff was a removable polycarbonate tube that housed two LED lights that were powered by the upwards and downwards motion of the stick as it struck the ground.

Surprisingly, despite the exertions of the athletes, the idea of running was not particularly present in the performance, part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. In the dark, it was hard to get a sense of the scale of the runners; they could have been galaxies millions of light years away or some illuminated giant much closer at hand. The distortion, however, was part of the pleasure. With their synchronised movements, the runners made abstract patterns, defining the contours of the landscape and making you look anew at the backdrop of stars and city lights.

From different vantage points during the two-and-a-half hour trek, you looked down to see silver starbursts, pulsing red blood cells and ice blue butterflies. One minute, they seemed to form a Miro line, the next, a Jackson Pollock splatter.

Eventually, as we neared a glowing cairn on the hilltop, those images were accompanied by alien harmonies emanating from our walking sticks, adding to the otherworldly loss of perspective. There are plans to restage the show in other cities, including Glasgow in 2014, the year of the Commonwealth Games.

In that production, light was at the centre of the theatrical event. Several other festival shows, meanwhile, used light to put the audience at their heart. It's a simple technique to keep the house lights up for the opening moments of a play, but it was used to good effect a number of times during the month.



Above, and facing: *Speed of Light*.
Photos: Sally Jubb





Edinburgh International Festival 2012 Mark Fisher

*Barry McGovern in Samuel Beckett's **Watt**
with lighting by James McConnell.
Photo: Jeff Clarke.*

Tom Creed's staging of Samuel Beckett's **Watt**, for example, was one of those productions where the theatrical space was defined entirely by light. At the start, lighting designer James McConnell took the lights down on the audience almost imperceptibly slowly, drawing us unknowingly towards the stage where actor Barry McGovern appeared out of the blackness of the Royal Lyceum stage in a column of grey light. It was a technique that worked for this production not only because Beckett's novel is a comic study of nothingness and we were being ushered towards the gloom, but also because McGovern is a master of the art of storytelling and it was crucial our focus was exclusively on him, the precision of his delivery and every perfectly chosen word.

In the same space a week or so later, Vince Herbert kept the house lights up for similar reasons as singer Camille O'Sullivan and pianist Feargal Murray launched into their superb cabaret-infused interpretation of Shakespeare's **The Rape**

of Lucrece. Best known as a chanteuse specialising in Nick Cave, Radiohead and Bob Dylan, O'Sullivan proved herself an expert storyteller. The deeper she took us into Shakespeare's tragic poem, the more Herbert narrowed the focus until, by the rape itself, she was held in a sharp, relentless spotlight. He also did a gorgeous job at picking out the autumnal colours of Lily Arnold's set and



*Shakespeare's **The Rape of Lucrece**.
Lighting by Vince Herbert.
Photo: RSC/Ellie Kurttz.*

responding to the changing moods of the poem, be it by bathing the stage in bright morning light or casting gothic shadows against the wall at a moment of hysterical fear.

It gave tremendous visual support to O'Sullivan, in Elizabeth Freestone's production for the RSC, as she drew out the heart-wrenching tragedy of the poem.



A Midsummer Night's Dream, lighting by Ivan Vinogradov.
Photo: Natalia Cheban.

With a similar emphasis on the audience's shared experience, but to quite different effect, Ivan Vinogradov kept the house lights up for long passages of Dmitry Krymov's exuberant production of ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. This was a version of Shakespeare's play that dispensed with everything but the Mechanicals and their telling of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe (two enormous puppets), performed to an irreverent audience which, for as long as the house lights were up, seemed to include us.

The show began in the stalls in a frenzy of noise, as the actors carried a huge tree trunk through the auditorium with a nervous dog tottering on top. That same dog – the star of the show – was later left alone on stage, sitting in a sad and beautiful silhouette. Before long, the house lights were up again, implicating all of us in the ramshackle action.



Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir (Aurores).
Lighting by Elsa Revol.
Photo: Michèle Lauvent.

Three shows at the Royal Highland Centre on the edge of town were given purpose-built stages to match the conditions of the original productions. In the case of one of these, the four-hour ***Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir (Aurores)***, it meant replicating the ample dimensions of Ariane Mnouchkine's stage at the Cartoucherie, a former army munitions warehouse in Paris. This included creating the illusion of natural light through the sloping ceiling, as well as having performers operating follow spots and hand-held lights to maintain the sense of communal creation that is Mnouchkine's calling card. It was a superb show, underpinned by consummate technical skills.



2008: Macbeth with lighting by Jacqueline Sobiszewski. Photo: Pavel Antonov.

In a neighbouring space, the audience for **2008: Macbeth**, a 21st-century reworking of Shakespeare's tragedy by Poland's TR Warszawa, was confronted by an enormous wall divided into four playing areas. Lighting designer Jacqueline Sobiszewski had to capture the brilliant Middle Eastern daylight in one playing space, while coping with live video projection in another. Sometimes the focus would be on one corner, while a band of soldiers were visible in a shadowy half-light elsewhere. You can only guess at the technical discussions that took place about the phenomenal fireball that set one space ablaze and sent a blast of heat at least half way up the auditorium.
























Being responsible for set, lighting and projection design, Kai Fischer gave himself similar technical challenges in **Wonderland**, a morose journey into the darker corners of internet pornography by Glasgow's Vanishing Point. He created two playing spaces on either side of a transparent screen. Downstage, you'd see filming taking place, with video images projected live onto an undulating curtain. Upstage, on the other side of the screen, you'd see an everyday living room where the actors silently mouthed their conversation, as if being spied upon from afar, or else there was David Lynch-influenced nightmare imagery of sadistic chat-rooms and snuff movies. As a show it was bleak, but it was never less than technically accomplished. 🚩



Above and below: **Wonderland**. Lighting, set and projection by Kai Fischer. Photos: Tommy Ga-Ken Wan.



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This seasonal picture was taken from the graveyard of St Luke's, Grayshott by James Laws who was lurking around after lighting Howard Shelley and the London Mozart Players. He maintains that no Hammer Films personnel were present during the taking of this picture (they would have insisted on keylight anyway and that would have been a pity).

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BOOK REVIEW: WILL YOU, WON'T YOU, WILL YOU, WON'T YOU, WILL YOU JOIN THE DANCE?

asks **James Laws**

This monumental survey of 15 years of *World Scenography* is but the first volume of three which the authors plan and which they hope will then be continued by others. They are starting from the point that René Hainaux's four volumes of *Stage Design Throughout the World, 1935-1975* left off.

Note the change of title in this new series; *Stage Design* is now *Scenography*. This term is one that OISTAT has embraced from its earliest days. It means different things to different people; google Definition of Scenography and you get lots about perspective technique in scenery, leading back to the Greeks. The Americans look on it as a European production idea, which is perhaps one factor that leads to perceived European over-representation in the volume presently under review. Pamela Howard's *What is Scenography?* (published by Routledge, 29 West 35th St., NY, NY 10001 and

Routledge, 11 New Fetter Lane, London, EC4P, 4EE - ISBN 0-415-10085-2 (pbk) ISBN 0-415-10084-4 (hbk), explains the concept very well:

"The Scenographer visually liberates the text and the story behind it, by creating a world in which the eyes see what the ears do not hear."

"Scenography - the creation of a stage space - does not exist as a self-contained art work. ... Scenography is always incomplete until the performer steps into the playing space and engages the audience. Moreover, Scenography is the joint statement of the director and the visual artist of their view of the play, opera or dance that is being presented to the audience as a united piece of work."

So, Scenography is an over-

arching concept of a fully integrated designer or (in some productions) design team, who carries an interpretive responsibility, shared with the director and the performers.

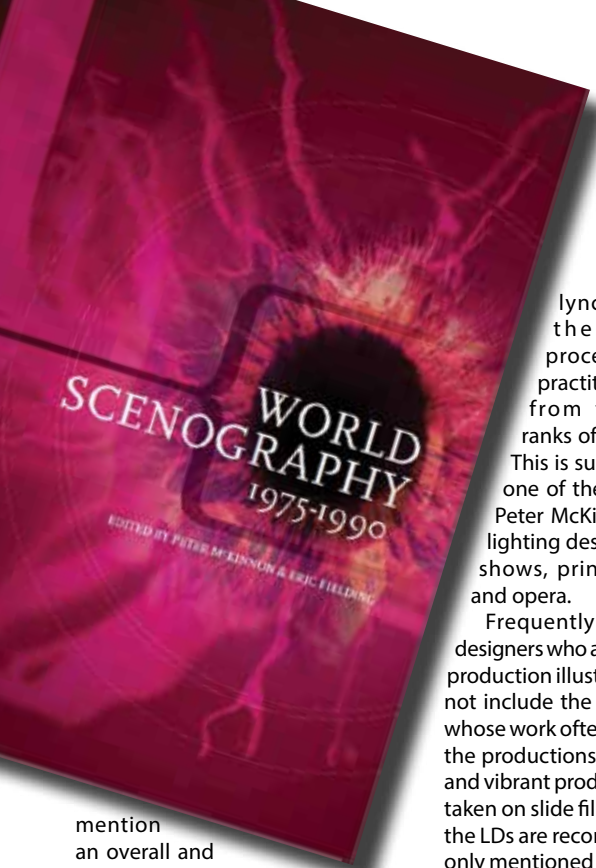
The authors assume that their readers understand this concept. They use their introduction to show the method of production selection for the book, via Associate Editors and Contributing Researchers, each with geographical responsibilities which, between them, do fully cover the globe. Somehow they have achieved the unenviable task of whittling down the thousands of productions and events that cover a design revolution, so that over 400 productions are covered at the average of about an American Quarto page each.

The criteria applied and the overall achievement are admirable. The editors have sought the groundbreaking productions, introducing the era with, (from the UK), the *Rocky Horror Show* and Hockney's

Glyndebourne *Rakes Progress*. They progress through *Cats* to *Metropolis*, to the Commonwealth Games Auckland 1990 Opening Ceremony Cultural Display, which pointed the way for these events to become major production numbers. The visual assembly and display are superb.

There are design minutiae which we would never otherwise see, such as exquisite costume sketches from Mexico, Japan, you name it. The introduction mentions the on-going convergence of design styles, worldwide and it looks forward to the next volume, covering 1990-2005, when East & West Germany are united and computer-aided design becomes commonplace.

However, the Editors do not



mention
an overall and
world-wide trend for
1975-1990; a trend that it amply
illustrates but (literally) under-
acknowledges. That is the way
lighting design has become a

lynch-pin partner in
the scenographic
process, leading to its
practitioners' emergence
from the anonymous
ranks of back-stage toilers.
This is surprising, given that
one of the editors, Professor
Peter McKinnon, worked as a
lighting designer on some 450
shows, principally for dance
and opera.

Frequently in this book, the
designers who are credited with the
production illustrated in the text do
not include the lighting designers,
whose work often wins inclusion for
the productions, via the wonderful
and vibrant production stills, mostly
taken on slide film during this era. If
the LDs are recorded at all, most are
only mentioned in the index credits
in the back. Even Josef Svoboda
(who only has one entry) is credited
with Set and Costume Design for
Odysseus (1987) in the main text
but with Set and Lighting Design

in the index. Oddly enough, New
Zealand seems to value its lighting
people more than most. In the
period 1975 to 1990, lighting design
found a worldwide vocabulary and
it enabled scenic design to move to
a level of freedom unseen before.

We have reached the 1980s in our
series of ALD50 history celebration
pieces and it is clear that we had
a coherent and organised lighting
community in the UK, with a voice
to represent practitioners. Where
are Richard Pilbrow, Robert Ornbo,
David Hersey, Andrew Bridge?
They were all producing world-
class cutting-edge scenographic
lighting internationally in the years
1975-1990 and they are not given a
single text design credit between
them, despite some of their key
productions featuring with good
illustrations.

Sometimes, even more
exasperatingly, the lighting designer
is praised in a review within the
text and is still not given a formal

heading credit for lighting. This is
the fate of David Murray, LD for *The
Fall of the House of Usher*, Australia
1990.

The 1990-2005 volume will cover
what is to us very recent history.
It will be instructive to see how
lighting is handled. The contributors
and editors have no lack of creative
imagination, so here's a suggestion
for them when next they convene:

***Imagine looking at these
groundbreaking designs under
working lights.***

I don't want to be negative about
a very important pictorial and
descriptive record that gets many
things right, is laden with detail
and which continues a major series
on design history. But it should be
read in the knowledge that the
contribution of lighting designers
is not fully embraced... so far.
Perhaps it will all work out as the
story unfolds in the next volume,
from 1990 onwards. Will we join the
dance? 🍷

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