

February / March 2008

Associate Member
Special

ALD # FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers
"More art, less computers..."

Clownmaker, Redgrave Theatre Farnham, designed by Joe Vanek, lighting by Peter Hunter. See 'The Last Resident LD in England?' page 16.

In the gobo wash this issue:

The last resident LD in England? • Sixty seconds with Natasha and Hugh • Members' benefits • Lighting up weddings • Projecting heritage • Dance reviews by Louise Levene... and much more!

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Rick's Return

I was hoping to celebrate some of the ALD's 2008 initiatives but that has been overshadowed by the Arts Council's decision to reduce funding to many groups despite them getting an above inflationary grant. I joined other ALD representatives at the meeting convened by Equity to meet with the outgoing Arts Council director where he tried to explain the seemingly hasty and secretive workings of that body. The meeting was not impressed and a vote of no confidence was unanimously passed.

Not only does this affect salaried members of staff around the country, but also many of the companies under threat offer freelance theatre workers their earliest opportunities for experience. It is particularly galling that Exeter's Northcott, Bristol Old Vic, Derby Playhouse and The Bush in London have been threatened with major reductions in grants. I urge you all to join with other Equity members and the

ALD to protest at this sudden change in the national theatre provision by making your feelings felt at: <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Stop-the-Cull>.

"Continuing Professional Development" is common for professionals in business but it is a luxury we rarely afford ourselves. For the next few months you will see the call for papers for the Showlight conference in Glasgow on 16-19 May 2009 (see page 10). It brings together people who are passionate about light; how to use it, how not to use it, and how we might be using it in the future. It is a great opportunity to recharge and be stimulated, as well as being a huge amount of fun. I encourage you to join in, and also consider proposing a topic for a paper.

Another important date is the second annual Light Relief Day – April 24th 2008. Last year's inaugural day raised over £5000 from a group of international lighting designers who contributed a day's royalties

from their productions. We want to expand the way that individuals and companies can support the day. There are many LDs who can join in with royalties from tours, or other UK or international productions. It does not just have to be lighting designers who support the day. How about having rental companies donating a portion of the rental income, or the profit from consumable sales for the day? Or the LX department finding a fun way of supporting the day? The charity is there for all of us in the lighting industry (not just lighting designers) should we fall on hard times. Please remember not only to support Light Relief Day, but also to inform Light Relief at www.lightrelief.org.uk of people who might need our assistance.

I have just got back from a long and enjoyable period in Australia where I was lighting the new production of Billy Elliot. I enjoyed meeting other lighting professionals

in Australia and was proud to have been impressed by what the ALD was doing supporting LDs and encouraging interaction in this often lonely profession. The luxury of working on just one project so far away from home is a rare one for LDs. It does make me appreciate even more the rest of the ALD Executive who have kept things developing in my absence: meetings, Focus, improved contact with Equity, Stage Managers, the TMA (towards creating an award celebrating lighting design outside the West End), and new developments such as our participation in the Charities Buying Group (page 22) are just some of the many things members of the Executive and individuals of the ALD have been pursuing. Thanks on behalf of the entire membership for all the efforts and keeping the ALD such a vital organisation while I have been away.

Regards, Rick #



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PROFESSIONALS' COLOUR SUPPLEMENT

With Mark Jonathan

Apart from being hopelessly behind on my accounts, I'm just trying to get a grip of what I'm doing this year from the top of an empty snow covered mountain...

Travelling Light

It's a curiously calm start with three shows in a row at the ROH (Royal Ballet) which suits me as I have this passion for skiing. It will be followed by various dramas in the UK and some contemporary dance. But then a monster second half of the year with Finnish National Opera in Helsinki, opera in LA with Woody Allen and William Friedkin directing, a new full length ballet in Japan and, as a finisher, *Faust* at the Marinsky, St Petersburg. Not to mention *Beauty & the Beast* currently playing in Japan, *Sylvia* and *Sleeping Beauty* both going to the Olympics and Japan and *Nicholas Nickleby* about to go to Toronto. I think I have

to spend the next couple of months going to production meetings in LA, Helsinki, Chichester and Tokyo...

It's all about the art

But where's the art? Our editor is constantly haranguing me for ideas for articles where LDs talk about the art rather than the process of lighting. Is it possible? Are we into Stanley McCandless formula lighting territory here?

As a teenager, I hung onto the words of Fred Bentham and others who attempted to unravel the secrets of lighting in *Tabs* (I still remember warm washes of 3 or 52 and cool washes of 17). I went on 'to study' and to try and uncover the lighting secrets of many LDs – always looking for the hidden formulae and studying their techniques as I cut colour, focused or plotted for them. I think the truth is that 'the rudiments' or 'rules' or 'technique' exist as they do for musical composition in

harmony and counterpoint; for painting in perspective, and certainly in skiing. Mastering these techniques alone does not make a great composer, painter, or skier. What is also interesting is to see when painters or composers deliberately ignore the rules in creating their art or music. Similarly, you can see examples of LDs who may stick closely to known lighting techniques but achieve outstanding results, through to LDs who do completely 'crazy' things but also arrive at an outstanding result.

I think part of the art that isn't spoken about is how the LD responds to the action and the emotion expressed on stage and how the lighting 'travels' through the performance from one look to the next. For me, showing this as a static picture, as we do in a design exhibition, is very annoying because the lighting really can't exist outside of the performance and it can't

exist without the performers, in costume in the set with the music and the words. I remember being asked to talk about lighting and being given a stage and a rig and the jaunty invitation, "Show us some of your lighting states". So, while some journalists would have us believe that we selected 'Lee this' and 'Rosco that' and specified 'Vari-lite three-thousand-and-sevens' and that the brilliance of the design might be down to the equipment selected, the truth is that the great lighting designers should also be able to create art on 'Paule's desert island' with minimal resources.

Of course, while demonstrating outstanding artistic lighting outside of the performance is hard, so talking or writing about the art is also hard. We speak through our art form and don't necessarily write or speak about it. We are probably worried about sounding

'poncy' or shy of 'blowing our trumpet'. So, one falls back to the apparent formulae or 'systems'

that may be perceivable in the design. We also see that critics regularly fail to appreciate the contribution made by artful lighting and attribute the entire visual success to the stage design. This is changing, but only slowly. Maybe our regular critics' review pages may help raise our profile, so to say. In the meantime, our editor is keen to get articles on the art so get writing as well as lighting! #



Meetings

Rosco Professionals' Lunch

In the midst of various Christmas parties, drinks evenings and shindigs, the ALD professional members were invited to attend a lunch arranged by corporate member Rosco. Food and drink were supplied and the only thing asked for in return was a chat to various Rosco staff about our current use of colour, gobos and moving or animation effects and to offer thoughts on what we think the future may hold for us.

A smattering of LDs from the realms of theatre, TV and events were present, and were balanced by a number

of the Rosco sales staff to discuss the issues at hand. Our hostess, Rosco's Diane Grant, Director of Corporate Development, explained: "Our aim was to get more acquainted with the people who use our products on a day to day basis and to try and better understand their needs. We certainly achieved this but, just as importantly, we had a fabulous time! What was great was that none of the designers knew one another, plus they came from a variety of backgrounds which meant that everyone talked to everyone and that

discussion was lively. We will definitely be repeating the event later in the year."

The ALD would like to help our corporate members to reach out to the membership whether professional, associate or students, so if there is anything you can think of, then please feel free to contact the office to discuss ideas further, whether it is a product launch, R&D feedback or just a good old chat to your end users about customer service. A full meal is not necessarily required, some of us will turn up just for a warm beer and a packet of salt and vinegar! We would like to thank Diane, Ron and Rosco again for organising this enjoyable event.

Hawthorn meeting

On Friday 18th of January ALD members gathered at Hawthorn's London offices to examine, play with and hear about Rosco's new line of Roscolux Gel. Although

available in the States (in a slightly different form) for many years now, it has been hard to get certain colours in Europe. In addition to releasing the range in Europe, Rosco has also added a few new colours.

After some nibbles and general chatting we listened to David Lapham and Steve Ramos give a quick talk about the history of Roscolux and the difference between their deep dyed gel and surface coated gel (in a nutshell, less fade and better resilience to marking and damage). Also the new Roscolux range comes in full (1.2m) sheets instead of the Supergel 'half sheets' we're all used to.

Then it was time to get hands on with a rig of Source Fours and 650W Fresnels provided by Hawthorn's hire dept to put the new colours to the test. Hawthorn had set up a blacked out area of their warehouse complete with white cyc, blacks, coloured

panels and a flesh toned mannequin (complete with Hawthorn logo t-shirt!) for us to throw light at. We all had access to try any colour in the Rosco range and mix as we chose. I think we all found new favourites and new colour combinations. It really was a joy to just 'play' with proper lanterns from different positions and experiment without fear of criticism or a deadline. Maybe that's something that all LD's should be able to do more often? #



One of Hugh's favourites, The Three Musketeers at North Shore Music Theatre, Boston – July 2007. Director: Francis Matthews, Designer: Lez Brotherston, Choreographer: Dennis Callahan. Photo: Paul Lyden.



“Sixty seconds with ... Hugh Vanstone”

Sum up your career to date in a short sentence.

Showed early promise; lately in tatters.

What are the three favourite shows you have lit and why?

The Unexpected Man, because I loved the fluidity of thought in the writing: it was a very poetic piece, so I tried to make the lighting similar. The New York production was probably my best piece of work. *Mary Stuart*, because it's an amazing play and featured a knockout cast and team in one of my favourite theatres (Donmar Warehouse). And *Bombay Dreams*: once again, I didn't get it right until New York but there it was absolutely spectacular. How often do you get to light 30 dancers in an onstage fountain that shot so high it wet the borders?

What were the worst and best moments of your career?

There have been more gut-

wrenching nightmares than I'd care to remember. The highlights are all those times – often very modest moments – when I think “I can't believe I get paid for doing this nonsense”.

Where are you now?

North Shore Music Theater in Boston attending rehearsals for a new production of *The Three Musketeers* written by my partner, George Stiles. You see: I told you my career was in tatters...

What is your favourite theatre/space?

Any theatre in Sydney because it's my favourite city and I appreciate any excuse to go there.

Where/what would you most like to light?

Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* in a Victorian found space in London.

If you weren't a lighting designer what would you be?

Unemployable. Although I might go for something in the deck chair attendant line...

Where would you rather be right now?

On holiday. Can you ever have too many?

What is your favourite colour?

Blue

If you were a colour what would it be?

Burned out.

If you could scrap one piece of kit or one tradition or part of the job from every theatre in the world what would it be?

The hours! They're so antisocial... What's wrong with 10-6 and weekends off?

Which part of the job do you enjoy most?

The meal breaks. Oh, and the travel, when it's to nice places with plenty of time off. And I very much enjoy colouring in the symbols on my plans.

Which part of the job do you enjoy least?

Focusing. God it's boring.

If you were going to light a show on a desert island (accepting that it had a rudimentary theatre and power!) what three things would you take with you?

I'd do it in daylight so I wouldn't have to light it. Therefore I'd take an endless supply of cocktails, antipasti and a butler. That way I'd enjoy the show, watch the sun set and be completely out for the night!

What keeps you awake at night?

I don't think we need to go into that here.

What common piece of kit would you be least likely to find in one of your rigs?

I'll use anything I can lay my hands on usually. I really can't think of anything I'd not use.

What/who have been

the major influences on your work?

Maurice Marshall at the Northcott, Exeter for basic grounding in 'how to get a show on' and Andrew Bridge for his brilliant use of colour and teaching me how not to become the victim on a musical!

What's the most useful thing you have learnt as a lighting designer?

That on the theatrical evolutionary scale I'm only one step above a trained chimpanzee so my job's only safe until the price of bananas drops!

How would you like to be remembered?

Why? Is someone planning my imminent demise? Anyway, fondly please. And absolutely no show tunes at the funeral.

Thank you.



Grand Receptions

Prompted by our call for some feedback on what's going on with our Associate Members out there in lighting land, Nigel Lewis replied by letting us into the secrets of enhancing wedding receptions with a little theatrical magic.

There is a moment in every theatrical production which is the point of no return. The opening night; the audience are in place, beginners are nervously waiting in the wings, the stage manager gives the first cue, the houselights fade out. The LD is watching from the box or some such place and at this point no matter what happens – a lamp pops, a special isn't quite right, a focus doesn't look quite right, or an actor don't get their mark – there is nothing the LD can do. Of course, changes can be made for tomorrow's show, but this adrenalin-filled, nerve racking moment on the first night is highly addictive and I am addicted to it.

That was one of the motivations behind setting up Light My Wedding.co.uk.

Every production I run at a wedding is an opening night but in this case if I get it wrong I have ruined the most important day of a bride and groom's life, let alone the families'.

So how do I avoid a complete nervous breakdown? The answer has to be planning to an excruciatingly pedantic level. Brides tend to arrange the flowers, ceremony and food before thinking about lighting; in fact, lighting tends to be the very last thing on a bride's mind! Therefore, by the time they come to me, the wedding 'theme' has been set and I need to fit in with it. It is like being asked to light a show a couple of weeks prior to the opening without attending any production meetings or rehearsals. I have to imagine most of it,

and be prepared to be utterly flexible.

Preparation

My first meeting with the bride (and sometimes the groom, bride's mother or other relative), is often the only face to face meeting I am able to get. Therefore it is imperative that I obtain the maximum amount of detail from that one meeting. I always meet at the venue so I can get a feel for the space and the atmosphere, iron out any technical problems such as the get in and get out times and how the bride views the space. Brides tend to be the driving force behind décor and decisions.

On meeting the bride I try to grasp an idea of how she thinks and what reaction she is looking for in the guests when they walk into the

reception. Does she want 'wow', or a sophisticated, more formal air? I then need to look at colours – what colour tablecloths and tableware are being used? I recently arrived on the day to find the tablecloths were black and where the crockery was originally to be gold, they had been changed to black. Not the best reflective properties and a sudden need for purples entered the equation. Colours used for chair backs, drapes and even food has to be considered; chicken in a cream sauce served on a white plate does not look quite so appetising when lit in L088 green.

Design

Once I have collated all these facts, I head back for my home office where I plan every detail of what I require

on the day and work out a tight time schedule. Timing is crucial as a get-in may only be four or six hours and a lot of equipment has to be set up. The get out is normally cut very fine and has been as short as an hour before extra charges are poured on at often alarming rates.

Then there is the bride, her dress and her makeup. I tend to light the top table using softly focused 1kW Fresnels from both front sides, this allows me to bring out the sheen on the dress and sculpt the bride's face. The light intensity at the top table is marginally higher than the rest of the room and this helps guests to see the top table from anywhere in the room.

Performance

When the speeches start the house dims on a 1 min slow



fade as the top table comes up and tightly shuttered profiles are used to centre attention on the speech maker. I warm the profiles with L763 Wheat or L103 Straw to take the strain off the guest's eyes (which could be turning red by now with all the wine!)



The majority of the units are on stands and tend to be Source Four, CCT Freedom with break up gobos, a variety of par 56, 64, 36, Strand Fresnels and my lifesavers – Pulsar Chroma 200 floods. Eight Chromas can fill a room with vibrant colour that can be adjusted at the console in order to get the balance and texture right.

Overall, it is usually a 20 hour long day and even though I have an excellent rigger who puts me to shame, it is physically and emotionally exhausting. #

STOP PRESS

Olivier Award Nominations for Best Lighting 2008

- HAIRSPRAY designed by Kenneth Posner at the Shaftesbury
- THE LORD OF THE RINGS designed by Paul Pyant at Theatre Royal, Drury Lane
- MACBETH designed by Howard Harrison at the Gielgud
- WAR HORSE designed by Paule Constable at the National Olivier

SHOWLIGHT 2009 – Good quality speakers wanted!

With just over a year to go to Showlight 2009, the organisers are now on the hunt for the most important element of the event – the speakers, whose contributions make Showlight the most stimulating and rewarding event in the lighting diary.

Taking place at Pacific Quay in Glasgow, in the most high tech TV studio in the UK, the Showlight 2009 conference programme will explore tomorrow's technology as well as look back at what has been achieved in the worlds of theatre, film and TV, as well as concert and architectural lighting design. The major part of Showlight is devoted to presentations – from 15 up to 45 minutes – by working lighting people, and the organisers are now inviting ideas from lighting designers and directors, scenographers and equipment manufacturers – although sales pitches are not welcome!

Seven main topics have been chosen for broad interpretation: as well as papers on innovative lighting designs, the organisers hope to have speakers on subjects such as Special effects, The future and the past and I tried this and it didn't work – which could prove to be the most useful paper presented!

Papers that stir lengthy debate can be discussed in more detail over morning coffee, lunch and dinner, as speakers do not simply give their paper and depart – at the heart of every Showlight is the opportunity for delegates and speakers to meet and mingle during the social events which make Showlight so special. Previous events have seen such august speakers as Ken Billington, who won a Tony in 1997 for his lighting of Chicago, Per Sundin and Ola Melzig, who have provided the lighting design for the Eurovision Song Contest for

many years, and innovative Director of Photography Roger Simonsz, from the world of film and video.

Showlight 2009 takes place in Glasgow, 16-19 May 2009. If you would like to make a contribution in the form of a paper, email: papers@showlight.org before the end of May 2008. Companies wishing to take an exhibition stand, or anyone wishing to register as delegate, should email info@showlight.org. #



Letters

From Francis Reid

Dear Andy, December/Jan 08 was a very nice issue, full of interesting goodies. Reading my piece, I immediately discovered a major boo-boo (my boo-boo, not yours). Wider angles have to be, of course, at the bottom of the booms and not at the top. It will be interesting to see who spots this non-deliberate mistake! #

From Jim Woodley

Dear Andy, You could have warned me you were putting my letter in the SAME issue as Francis's Panto Thoughts!!! I did turn into a Francis Reid Clone after all... my ideas and suchlike on Panto are identical to young Francis's – hey ho. Also loved his last word on moving lights “*I wanted improved Panto magic – the Choreographer wanted a Disco!*” Sadly, I'm with Francis on this one – I **will** do the odd bit of disco stuff on the occasional song, if needed, but that's IT. Oh, and I'm sure Mr. Reid has the same opinions on disco-style lighting – have the board op play with bump-buttons and the like; NOT give it over to pre-programmed chase sequences – bleeeeeeeagh. I do rather enjoy now being one of the grumpy 'Old Guard' of LDs: “Oh yes I do”. Now, if only I had the Class and Gravitas of Robert Ornbo – ahh, but then I'd have to be all sweetness 'n' light (no pun intended) – notice, I didn't dare refer to Bob Ornbo... #

OFFICE ORACLE

Latest news from Ian's production desk

Arts Council Funding

Equity Press Release:

Theatre industry declares no confidence in Arts Council

In a packed meeting at the Young Vic Theatre, London, today (9 January 2008) representatives from across the England's theatre industry declared they had no confidence in the work of the Arts Council England (ACE) and its proposals to cut funding to more than 190 arts bodies from April this year.

The meeting, organised by Equity, was addressed by Peter Hewitt, Chief Executive of ACE, but his attempts to explain the rationale behind the decisions taken by the funding body were rejected by an audience of almost 500 at the standing-room only event. The gathered audience of performers, creative workers and representatives from many of those theatres facing cuts were particularly angry about the very brief consultation period (just five weeks which

included Christmas and New Year holidays), the secrecy with which the proposals had been produced and the failure of the Arts Council to make explicit the criteria by which some theatres had been chosen over others.

Amongst the speakers were actors Malcolm Sinclair, who criticised the culture of over-management of the arts, and Patrick Malahide who criticised ACE for lacking a coherent intellectual strategy and actor/director Sam West, who made an impassioned plea for a number of smaller companies whose work would be curtailed by these cuts.

Addressing the meeting, Christine Payne, General Secretary of Equity, welcomed the extra money the government had made available to the Arts Council over the next three years, but said: "We have a right to know how that money is being spent. We are extremely concerned about how these

decisions are being made. Who are the judges? And what criteria are being used? There appears to be a distinct and perhaps deliberate lack of involvement from professional theatre practitioners in the decisions process currently used by Arts Council England. The process is not open, it's not transparent, there is no dialogue with the theatre community."

"Unless Arts Council England not only listens to the concerns of people here today but actually takes action to respond to them then the credibility of Arts Council England could be fundamentally and possibly irreparably damaged. We demand a thorough review of the process and procedures used by the Arts Council in reaching funding decisions, and until that review is completed the status quo should apply and the current funding process should cease."

The meeting ended with a vote of no confidence in the Arts Council England moved by veteran actress Miriam Karlin, which was passed unanimously.

Downing Street Petition

Petition the Prime Minister to support the industry by joining the growing band of people who have no confidence in The Arts Council. At the time of sending this information there are over 1200 signatories.

Nearly 200 arts organisations, including 37 theatre companies, have been told they are to lose all revenue funding from Arts Council England, in the bloodiest cull in ACE's 61-year history. The move to axe subsidy completely from 195 organisations, for most from April 2008, is leading to threats of closure and redundancies across the country. Not only will this deprive many areas of any cultural output but also ghettoise diversity

and create a more divided and less integrated society when this public money should be doing the opposite.

The petition will close on 31st March 2008.

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Stop-the-Cull>

Out and About with the ALD in 2008 – see you there!

The trade show season will soon be upon us and we can now confirm that the ALD stand will be all spruced up and present at the following shows:

AC Lighting North Trade Show, Royal Armouries, Leeds, 29-30th April

PerformTech Trade Show, Royal Scottish Academy of Music Drama, Glasgow, 28-29th May

ABTT Show, Royal Horticultural Halls, London, 11-12th June

PLASA, Earls Court 1&2, London, 7th to 10th September



You will see some information about the AC Lighting North Show on **Page 29**, and details about other shows will be available as we get it via email and other editions of *Focus*.

Charities Buying Group

Just before Christmas we launched a new benefit which is available to all ALD members in conjunction with the Charities Buying Group (CBG) and Leonard Cheshire Disability. For those of you that do not receive ALD news by email, the scheme is explained on **page 22**. The executive would like to thank ALD Development Representative John Leventhall for all his hard work to get this scheme up and running over the last 12 months. Please have a look at the CBG website to see if it can help you with discounts and offers on a wide range of items. We hope to be able to announce some more similar schemes in the future.

Fees Database Feedback Form

The ALD has started to create

and maintain a database of current fees being paid throughout the industry. This will help the Association to assess the trends and fee levels to assist future lobbying campaigns, as well as creating a resource that members can call upon to request up to date information. Please note that only contributing professional members will be able to call upon the database for reference.

A form was sent out to professional members via email in October. If you are a professional member not registered to receive ALD news by email and wish to receive a copy of the feedback form, please contact the office.

The more extensive and accurate the submission, the more useful it will be in the future. Submitted information will be treated in strictest confidence and no attributable reference will be made to an individual's return.

You are welcome to submit any information relating to shows you have worked on during 2007 retrospectively,

and in the near future we hope to be able to offer the feedback form as a download from the website should you have misplaced the original file.

SBTD Collaborators at the V&A

A brief reminder that the V&A Museum continues to present the Society of British Theatre Designers' Collaborators Exhibition in Galleries 103 to 106. The ALD joint exhibit is present showing the work of a dozen members from various scales and projects from 2003 to 2007, as well as a handful of lighting designer exhibiting in their own right. The exhibition is open until the end of the year and shows a wide diversity of designs from UK designers on shows both here and abroad. #

Welcome to our new members!

Professional Member

Finn Landsperg, Norway.

Associate Member

Gavin Hogben, Cranbrook, Kent.

Leighton Thomas-Burnett, Caerphilly.

Andrew Thompson, Coventry.

Student Members

Tim Gill, Basingstoke.

David Elliot, Ilford.

Didrik Paulsen, Liverpool.

Sponsored Students Scheme

Central School of Speech & Drama: James Bentley, Scott Carter, Robert AJ Coxall, Jessica Glaisher, Daniel J Hill, Lewis Smith, Frithjofur Thorsteinsson, James RD Valpy, Hadyn Williams, Leo Woolcock, Adam J Young.

Guildford School of Acting: Daniel T King, Tom F Webb, Andrew D Whiting, Peter Winter.

Rose Bruford College: Ben Mansfield.

RSAMD: Gemma Patchett.

University of the Arts, London: Seb Blaber.

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To submit industry and corporate press releases (Corporate Members only), please send them directly to the ALD office (office@ald.org.uk) and not to Focus so that they can be posted on the News pages of the ALD website for more immediate and wider coverage. Contact the office to arrange advertising in Focus. Editorial guidelines for authors are available on request from editor@ald.org.uk.

The opinions published within Focus are not necessarily those of the Association. #

Dates for your diaries

All year!

Collaborators at the V&A, London

12th March

Deadline for Focus copy April/May

26 – 29th March 2008

Creativity and Employability Conference at LIPA

1st April 2008

2007/08 Subscriptions Due

24th April 2008

Light Relief day

29-30th April 2008

AC Lighting North Trade Show*

12th May

Deadline for Focus copy June/July

28-29th May

PerformTech exhibition, RSAMD Glasgow. www.performtech.org.uk.

11th & 12th June 2008

ABTT Show 2008 *

Clay Paky awards for "The Knight of Illumination"

1st July 2008

Deadline for Subscription Payment.

12th July

Deadline for Focus copy August/September

7th – 10th September 2008

PLASA 08 *

May 2009

Showlight 09 – Glasgow

* the ALD will have a presence at these events.

Keep an eye on www.ald.org.uk/diary for more information on these and other events and members' show openings. If we have missed any interesting events in this list, please let us know!

A Designer's Bookshelf...

We invited ALD Fellow and well-known bookworm James Laws to settle down with a cup of Ovaltine in front of a winter log fire and review two new books on lighting design.



Performance Lighting Design

How to light for the stage, concerts, exhibitions and live events

By Nick Moran

This 240 page tour de force covers everything about stage lighting that other authors would spread over several books. So, is there evidence of shoe-horning, has anything been missed out, and who will benefit from reading it?

Nick Moran has a busy career in many fields of lighting design from fringe to West End and stadium rock, besides his day job as lecturer for lighting design at Central School of Speech and Drama. He started lighting with the Huddersfield Thespians, so it is fair to say that he has met lighting in all the situations that we are likely to meet it and that he has an applied knowledge of best practice in the largest venues.

His years in teaching have

given him a framework to hang the logic and protocol of lighting on, whilst keeping the essential love of the art and the respect for the craft. He credits his students with “making me think harder than ever” and many of us in mid career will find that we have been missing out on some aspects of technique that only an academic approach can reveal. This book really does enable anyone from the first year student to the established lighting designer to learn and improve. Because of the depth of coverage and the detail, it will be a classic in years to come.

Projection, in all its myriad forms, is becoming more prevalent in productions, with a whole new species of designer credited in some cases. I found the pages on digital lighting or visual media on stage most revealing and I hope we can all escape

the tyranny of the projection screen. The author rightly questions the rectangular intrusion into settings and the “not quite black light that most video projectors emit, even when the image is black”.

Moving lights are introduced as a lighting option very early in the book and they make frequent appearances throughout it. There is a very fair assessment of their worth, (especially in the context of global warming), to bring us up to date with current production and energy saving debates.

There are acres of wisdom on production interaction and safety and the responsibilities of the LD to the production, mostly with respect to drama. The other art forms are covered, but not perhaps as much as you would expect from the subtitle.

The only perceived omissions from the usual text

book chapters on process would be case studies but the reader is constantly urged to discover more by lighting more – and, after 212 pages, you are confronted with a post production evaluation chart! Your own lighting is where you find out what you've learnt and Nick Moran's mighty work will certainly help you to do the best job possible. #

Performance Lighting Design

Nick Moran

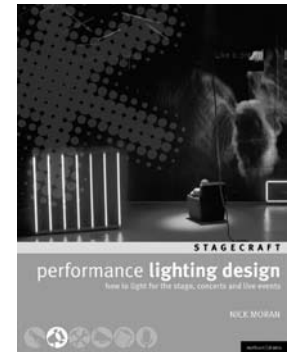
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The publishers, A&C Black, have offered us a generous discount. ALD members can purchase the book for just £14.99 (RRP £19.99) and with FREE p&p by calling Macmillan Distribution on 01256 302699 or emailing direct@macmillan.co.uk, quoting offer code GLR U64 and ISBN 9780713677577.



The Handbook of Stage Lighting

Neil Fraser & Simon Bennison

The authors have combined the experiences gained in their differing lighting careers to write this comprehensive lighting primer. Neil Fraser is a long-term RADA lecturer and is now their director of technical courses. Simon Bennison studied at RADA and Yale and is lighting manager at Covent Garden. So, how have they combined in their Handbook and who would benefit from their instruction?

The first thing to say is that the writing and chaptering gives no indication as to who wrote which parts and there are no jarring changes of direction or style. The assumption is that the reader is starting from scratch and wants to learn the whole gamut of stage lighting, up to but not including moving lights. These are covered and dismissed in a very few paragraphs and this approach may yet provoke an early revision for any

future edition. However, for the moment, it is an indication that the readership base will be early year lighting students and amateurs who want to improve or bring some order to their techniques.

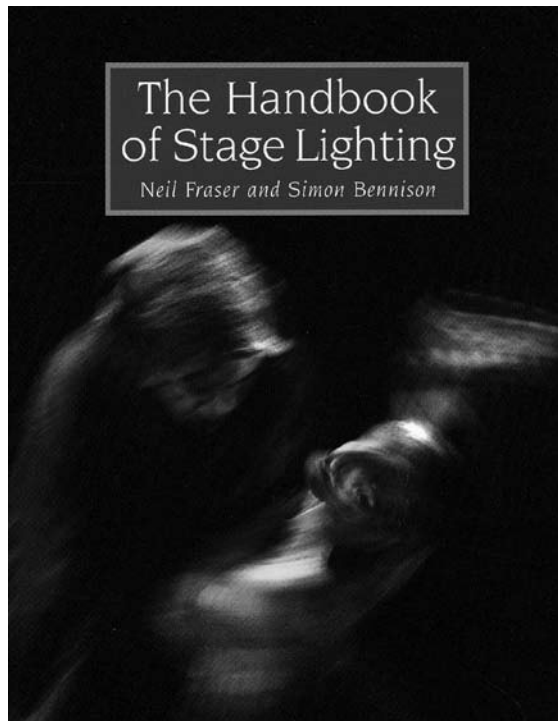
Most people could benefit from reading certain chapters; for instance I learned a lot about colour mixing and the way that Rosco, GAM and Lee filters can each find their niche. It is good to have colour swatches shown, complete with coloured shadow beneath, but you must allow for how printed and projected colour differ. The colour discussions arose through varied case studies and, in these, the very few illustrations to show how the detailed changes of light worked in practice do not always credit the lighting designer or contrast the changes. More pictures, to show the flow of the productions, would have been welcome. However, the contrasts in lighting practice and conventions between drama, ballet and opera are well made.

The technical side of lighting, the nuts and bolts of optics, is covered, with mixed results. Whilst the explanation of PAR sizing was in error (PAR lamps are sized in eighths of an inch, not

twelfths), the explanation of the Fresnel lens was probably the best I've seen.

The whole system of theatre production is carefully laid out in a neat and accessible way. This book will be welcomed

as a realistic introduction to stage lighting, with a credo for these overcomplicated times: less is always more. As the fiscal reality of the 2012 'cultural' Olympics looms, this has a strange irony, as well as the ring of truth.



The Handbook of Stage Lighting

Neil Fraser & Simon Bennison

ISBN 978 1 86126 8570

The Crowood Press. www.crowood.com

£18.99

The publishers are offering ALD members 20% off the price of the book and postage. This equates to £18.28 in total including postage. To take advantage of this offer, please telephone Crowood on 01672 520320 quoting "Focus readers' offer".

The Last Resident Lighting Designer in England?

“Having read the great article about Jo Town in the last *Focus*, and hearing that ALD membership numbers were creeping towards the 2000 mark, I thought it might be interesting to comment how my job has changed over the years”, says Peter Hunter.

Starting at The Redgrave...

When I was appointed Lighting Designer and Chief Electrician at the Redgrave Theatre in the late 1970s, I thought I was on my way to achieving my life’s ambition. I had emerged from LAMDA three years before with a firm conviction that lighting design was where my future lay, and that if a bit of sound design came my way while I was at it, that would be no bad thing either. It seemed to me that being resident in a producing theatre was the route that I wanted to take.

At that time, there was a network of what were still called repertory theatres where technicians could

develop their skills, and I was able to take full advantage of the situation. The Redgrave produced around 16 shows a year in the main house, and the two electricians lit them and provided sound for all of them, in addition to operating every performance and maintaining the electrical systems. Minimal budgets meant very little hiring, so the most was achieved using the theatre’s stock equipment. Nonetheless we were able to effectively present a very varied programme ranging from classics to new writing, and from farce to musicals.

...and on to Salisbury

After a few years, I moved on to Salisbury Playhouse, where I still work, and for a while the mixture continued as before. The design work was still done in-house, which established a very productive relationship between set and lighting designer. Then things began to change. The resident design department was closed down, fundamentally

altering this relationship, and, after a few years and a major restructuring of the management, a new Artistic Director announced that lighting design would now be split 50-50 between resident staff and freelancers. I was quite happy with that idea at the time, as it seemed to be a reasonable balance, and would still give junior members of the electrics department a chance of lighting design from time to time. Some very talented designers came to light shows and I enjoyed working with them and seeing their varied approaches to the work.

Changing times

However, over the last ten years or so, the situation has changed considerably. With all set design and a great proportion of direction on a freelance basis, the proportion of freelance to in-house lighting design is now about 80% to 20%. While it is a credit to the ALD that there are so many gifted

lighting designers out there, I am now lucky if I design one show a year apart from pantomime, and previous Chief Executives made it fairly obvious that these were the shows that they didn’t really care too much about – “cheap as chips” was one description for last year’s treat. One of the by-products of being resident for a long period is that some plays have a habit of coming round again. The next one I’m lighting is one which I delegated to an assistant about fifteen years ago!

I fully appreciate that in these days of “enhancing one’s national profile” and “excellence of product” it is a difficult job to satisfy the requirements of the funding bodies. I also understand that everything must change, but with around 300 lighting designs behind me, I believe I still have something to offer. I know that I chose the relative security of being resident to the risks of life as a freelancer, but it would be nice not to be

thought of as the one who can do panto or the occasional box set because there’s no money in the fees budget. Not all managements are as enlightened as the Royal Court’s, and I really think they are missing a trick. If the members of their technical staff have the skill and the interest in being part of a creative team, surely it makes sense to encourage that some of the time rather than to use them exclusively as a service industry? It keeps up their interest and makes them feel involved in the productions.

Learning through experience

With my Head of Department hat on, for many years we have been attracting a high calibre of lighting and sound technicians in junior positions (for very little money) by offering some opportunity to design. A lot of them are now working freelance or are actually teaching lighting design. Where would they be without having had that

chance? If you cannot offer that opportunity, your field of suitable applicants is very different. Should I now be employing people with purely technical skills? And would they come to places like Salisbury for the money we are able to pay if they can earn more as a freelance or venue technician? Producing theatres are now very thin on the ground in the UK, and even with funding continually

under threat, we seem to be in an era where every production has to be seen to be on a huge scale. There's not much sign of cutbacks on stage at the moment, except possibly in finding money for technical staff and keeping the building watertight and looking good.

I wouldn't want you to think this is just a bit of ranting from a bitter old cynic. I've had a great time for the most

part. I've thoroughly enjoyed the experience of being around the freelancers who have worked here and some stunning lighting has been achieved. I've got a huge amount of satisfaction from my own design work, not least on the occasion when Michael Northen, having observed my multicoloured cyc using six silhouettes, commented wryly to his students on an ABTT lighting design course:



“Of course no commercial management would let you hire that equipment to use so extravagantly!” How things have changed!

So, you may ask, why the title of this article? To find out whether you think that there is a place for someone in my position, poised somewhere between being a designer and a technician. I've no idea how many of us there are left, how much design you get to do and what you feel about it. Why not let the Editor know? #

Lighting by Peter Hunter.

Left: You Never Can Tell, Redgrave Theatre Farnham, designed by Joe Vanek.

Above: Biloxi Blues, Salisbury Playhouse, designed by Kit Surrey.

Over page: Jumpers, Redgrave Theatre Farnham, designed by Joe Vanek.



Projecting Heritage

Jonathan Dawson-Butterworth is another of our busy Associate Members who used his experiences from a Deep Purple tour to project onto the exterior of his church.

Some months ago, at a meeting at the church I attend, it was suggested that it might be an idea to open the church buildings as part of the National Heritage Open Days. The church buildings are an interesting mixture. One is now the church hall and dates from around 1901, and a newer sanctuary was built in front in the 1970s. I suggested that we could

use projection onto the front wall as a way of promoting the Heritage Open Days. I was slightly surprised at how positive the reaction was so I looked into the practicalities of making it happen.

Back to the fundamentals

After a few informal enquiries, it became evident that it would be impractical to obtain

the projector from one of the companies I usually work with due to the short duration of the event and location, but a friend, Andy Smith of AndyCamAV offered to help, and money was donated to hire the projector for a night. At this point people suggested the projection should be done in December due to the longer hours of darkness, but I had to point out that December was somewhat late for an event in September!

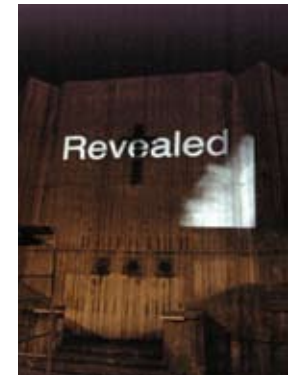
Great – got the projector, the surface to project on, but what is it going to project? Well, my suggestion was a picture of the inside of the sanctuary showing how it differs compared to the outside. The original concept included a pair of blinking eyes looking out with text appearing beneath as a way to draw people's attention, but how to do it? My only dealings with video imagery

prior to this were using media servers, so knew I was about to embark on a huge learning curve. My armoury consisted of my Apple Powerbook, Vectorworks, a cheap video editing program called MediaEdit Pro (which I'd bought to edit a video for MBox quickly on a Deep Purple tour last year) and the Mac bundle applications of iPhoto and iMovie HD. I looked on the web and

found royalty-free video clips galore, but only if you bought them. This was a problem as I was doing everything on a voluntary basis and had no money to spend on clips. So, therefore, I had to create every piece of content myself.

Creating the imagery

The first discovery I made is that animating images when you have not got a proper





animation program is hard work. Frame transitions are a great help but nothing substitutes for animation. I reckon that if I were an expert with Vectorworks, I could probably have come up with a way of animating, but the best way I found was drawing an image, exporting it to MediaEdit Pro and then copying the images to make multiple frames. Long drawn out it may have been, but it did the job. My PowerBook got upset by something – a software update or similar decided to cause havoc in the midst of creating the content. So after numerous crashes during rendering, I reinstalled the Mac OS. Now we were back to how it should be, every application working as it should and no file corruption during rendering. Just the slight problem of nearly filling the hard disk whilst playing with creating footage!

Playing with iMovie, I found the built-in effects for text were great for our requirements – clichéd but it got your attention. So I made pieces

of footage in MediaEdit and then imported them to iMovie to stitch them together and add text. Another idea I had was to have a hand pass across the building revealing an image. How could I do this without any library clips available and without a video camera? Well, after a little head scratching, I came up with the solution, place a black T-shirt on a chair for a black background, borrow my mother to provide the hand moving over the T-shirt and use my mobile phone to video the image. I was worried that image quality would be too low but got a great result when the video was bluetoothed into the laptop and loaded into iMovie. A simple transition and the word “revealed” was indeed revealed! The digital camera and camera on the mobile phone were great for the still images as well.

Two more hurdles appeared with the exterior wall chosen for the projection: what dimensions should the footage be and accommodating the cross. The wall is 32ft high by

24ft wide which is not ideal for 16x9 or 4x3 format images, but I decided to go for 4x3 at 24’ high and put black borders on every image (except for a few which I deliberately left full size to avoid missing detail). Having just purchased a laser measure, I measured the size of the cross and its position in relation to the edges of the wall. I imported a picture of the front of the building into Vectorworks and then accurately drew the cross and superimposed black borders to ensure every image I used would be in the right place.

With most of the content complete, the next issue was how to output the final footage to the projector. I had thought we’d have to transfer from the Mac to Andy’s PC to run on Powerpoint. Then I thought of an Apple program I had but never used called Keynote, which, it turns out, is very similar to Powerpoint and so this meant I could now make the exact final footage before the day. After some measuring and discussions with various people about lenses and

projector positioning, Andy and I decided on a 1 or 0.8 lens which meant the projector could be safely placed in the church car park.

The result

The big day – 1st September 2007 came. Evening started to arrive and so Andy and I placed the 7,000 ANSI lumen projector on top of his small scaffold. Then as the sun started to set, the projection gradually appeared on the wall. Our calculated position for the projector was slightly out, so after a little shuffling of the scaffold we were in place. Angle had been a concern to me and unfortunately, we couldn’t get the keystone exactly correct – mind you, it was quite a harsh angle of projection and we couldn’t go too high or the projector would have obstructed people’s view of image on the wall! A tiny adjustment to line up my cross position with the real cross-position and we were off! We ran the projection from just before 8pm until around 11:15pm. I was concerned that the

imagery may distract vehicles at the junction opposite, but thankfully, there were no accidents – a few cars took rather a long time to make their turning though! Many passers by looked, some stopped and a few just went blindly on their way! A group of students passing by said we should have had music as well, suggesting the Star Wars theme as the text disappeared to infinity. One person was seen to narrowly miss walking into a bus stop as he was so interested in what he saw.

Was it a success? Well we don’t know if anyone came to the open days as a direct result of the projection – no one said they had, but no one asked if they had either! Those who saw it made positive comments and one of the church members was told of the eyes looking from the building when he was buying a newspaper! There has already been the request can we do it again – we’ll see! Next little job is doing something about the floodlighting. #

A New Partnership for ALD Member Discounts



Just before Christmas, those of you who open your e-mails before deleting them and don't have the junk mail filter turned up to the "reclusive hermit" setting will hopefully have read the newsletter announcement from the ALD and the Charities Buying Group (CBG) announcing a wide range of discounted goods and services available to all classes of ALD members. John Leventhall explains...

How did this come about? It was at my first tentative visit to an ALD executive meeting a couple of years ago, that the subject of discounts on goods and services came up. Mark Jonathan, traveller extraordinaire and (as a result of living on LDs fees for years) a doyen of thrift and reluctant use of credit card, raised the subject.

"What happened to the discounts we used to have on hotels and stuff?" he remarked, casually, from the depths of the sofa in

Rick Fisher's flat. He had slipped into a supine position, arms folded over chest, eyes hooded with ennui at the tedious administrative business of the day. "Wasn't there someone who used to get money off car hire and stuff? What happened to that?" There was a mumbling from others that this had lapsed for the lack of someone to maintain it. "But, wait!" Mark riposted, suddenly sitting up and, seemingly randomly, fixing me with a gaze from (I noticed) his compelling pale blue eyes piercing out from an otherwise gnomish visage, "the ALD should be offering discounts to members or at least spreading the news of good rail deals and such? We need someone to do that!" The intensity of his gaze increased ... the room shimmered slightly and I felt a tad nauseous. Little did I know that the old warlock's spell had been cast. My destiny was ... discounts! The slight nausea was just the effect of Rick's tea-making!

Hapless sap?

Being too dense to notice, it took several of Mark's pointed remarks over the next few months for me to twig that 'twas I, the newbie, hapless sap that I was, trying to be in some mysterious way 'useful' that was the target of the fluncheon from the Professional Representative and thriftmeister par excellence. "Sod that for a lark!" thought I. "I haven't got time to be begging largesse from firms who supply LDs with goods and services." But, unaware that I was inextricably bound by the spell of Mr. Jonathan, the archmage of influencing, I began to think about it, little by little...

Some 'market research' conversations with LDs and self-employed ALD members (who are the majority of our association) made it clear that discount on lighting and sound sales and hire was not the point at all. What members wanted was cheaper prices for stuff that they buy in the course of running their

businesses, homes and life in general. Hotels, transport, stationery, IT services, telecoms and energy stood out as areas that members needed a few economies to help the struggle to keep profits favourable.

I figured that there must be a way to organise the provision of ALD member discount benefits without giving me a full time job. The key thing was that they should be self-organising! So I began looking for a 'middle man' to 'outsource' them. I found that the market for providing 'employee benefits' was thriving. Incentives (i.e. commissions) for sales staff and the like - "Sell 40,000 hook-clamps and win a holiday in Ibiza or a state-of-the-art coffee maker!" were not really relevant to LDs.

Middlepersons

But eventually I came across the CBG that offered just what LDs need - money off goods and services and no hidden costs. The CBG

was created because smaller and middle sized charities and not-for-profit organisations (NFPs, like the ALD), buy large quantities of goods as a whole industry but could not get worthwhile discounts as individual organisations without lots of effort finding amenable suppliers. So Leonard Cheshire Disability took up the crusade a few years ago and formed the CBG to amalgamate the buying power of the NFP sector to gain suppliers willing to offer some discount for access to this sales channel. The CBG became providers of solutions to help the Third Sector (charities) to make cost effective buys and created criteria of value for money and service for the suppliers who benefited from the extra sales. With around 2,000 member organisations, the CBG saves buyers time and money in searching for good prices. As our dedicated account manager at CBG,

Graham Loftus, says, “There is no need for NFP buyers to keep ‘re-inventing the wheel’ to organise purchasing when all you have to do is join the CBG and let us help you reduce cost. We are delighted to have the ALD on board and hope that members will find many ways to take advantage of our deals”.

When I approached them, the CBG were happy to grant CBG membership to the ALD as a NFP organisation. So, all ALD members can take advantage of the ALD/CBG discounts. It is free and only a mouse click (or two!) away. There are no hidden costs, no spam and no obligation to take any offers or deals or use the service – but you should! Why? Because when you buy, a donation from the profit from your purchase goes to Leonard Cheshire Disability.

Leonard Cheshire Disability

Leonard Cheshire Disability which supports disabled people in Britain and 52 countries, is the largest voluntary sector provider of

disabled care and support services in the UK. In the last year, around 21,000 disabled people in the UK used Leonard Cheshire services and 1.4 million hours of care were provided to enable disabled people to live in their own home. Day services were provided to 1,570 people. There are 2,100 places in Leonard Cheshire residential homes. 720 people holidayed at Park House Hotel on the Sandringham Estate, a hotel specifically for disabled people and their families. Over 7,000 members of staff are employed with around 3,000 volunteers in the UK.

Leonard Cheshire Disability exists to change attitudes to disability and serve disabled people around the world in the widest context. Services include care homes, supported living, home support, day services, resource centres, rehabilitation, respite care, personal support, training and assistance with looking for work. The charity campaigns for; Inclusive Education – promoting disabled children’s



right to education; Livelihood Programmes – enabling people with disabilities to become independent; Health & Rehabilitation – supporting everyday living; Training and Research – at home and in post conflict and post-disaster countries.

How do you use the new ALD member benefits?

So, how do you enrol for CBG services? Just look at your e-mails! If confused, log in to the ALD site and follow the link for the new Members’ pages on the left hand menu (www.ald.org.uk/login.php) or contact Ian Saunders (office@ald.org.uk) or me, John Leventhall (john.leventhall@ald.org.uk) or our account manager at CBG, Graham Loftus, on 0800 195 3010 who can assist you with finding deals and the CBG

members’ area (Please quote ‘ALD’ when you call).

What are you waiting for? Order your printer cartridges or one of the many budget priced hotels or something from the Argos catalogue with additional discounts! We need help with the new pages dedicated to Member benefits that have been added to the ALD website – remember to log on to the site first and then navigate to www.ald.org.uk/members/benefits/CBG. If you know of a discount or benefit that we can add to the ALD range of benefits – even if it’s just a hot tip such as a particularly cheap rail or air fare or good hotel you have stayed at, please let me know (john.leventhall@ald.org.uk) and we’ll add it to the website for everyone to take advantage of.

Lastly but not least(ly) I would like to hear from Members who use CBG – do let me know what you bought, how easy it was and whether you thought you got good service and value. #

PRO'S PLATFORM

Tim Routledge steps onto our soapbox to ask: WYSIWYG...Timesaving or Timewasting?

Like a large number of freelance designers and programmers my planning tool of choice is WYSIWYG. I have been a big advocate over the years both in fulltime employment and as a self-employed person. The software is not cheap even for the most basic 'plan' versions, let alone the full version used for pre-programming and visualisation that I invested in. For years the software was sold using the title 'save time, win jobs' and indeed the creation of plans was speedy and the visualisation side was great for the occasional job when you needed to impress to win a show.

But in recent times a number of issues have come to light that are making the product harder to use for the regular jobbing designer – and this is the reason for this open letter to you the members of the ALD. I wish

to gauge current views on the product to hopefully highlight to the manufacturer, Cast Lighting, that they really are not looking after us, the customer. Let me share my experiences and hopefully you can air yours by return and start a dialogue for what we need here in the UK.

Since release 18 of the product (we are now on release 21) the product has become increasingly unstable and crashes can occur when doing even the most simple of operations. So much so that even switching from drawing mode to printing layouts can cause it to crash. Sometimes it is not even possible to open a drawing as it crashes instantly – this can occur either with a recent drawing or with old archive drawings.

This leads to another problem that I have discovered: the system does not like older drawings that

you may have drawn four or five years ago. I quite often find myself at a venue at which I have designed shows a few years previously. Opening an old drawing and adapting it for a new show causes huge problems as the old versions are simply not as compatible as they should be or claim to be. Surely this way of working is what most if not all LD's adopt? Redrawing a venue each time is not 'saving time'.

The next problem is the way that Cast creates its library of fixture symbols. When they add new fixtures into the software on each release, the symbols get re-indexed and therefore picking a Source Four from your user's fixture list can give you a Pixelline symbol instead. Indeed, within WYSIWYG you can save a .wyt template file with your layouts, keys, title bars, fixtures etc, all saved

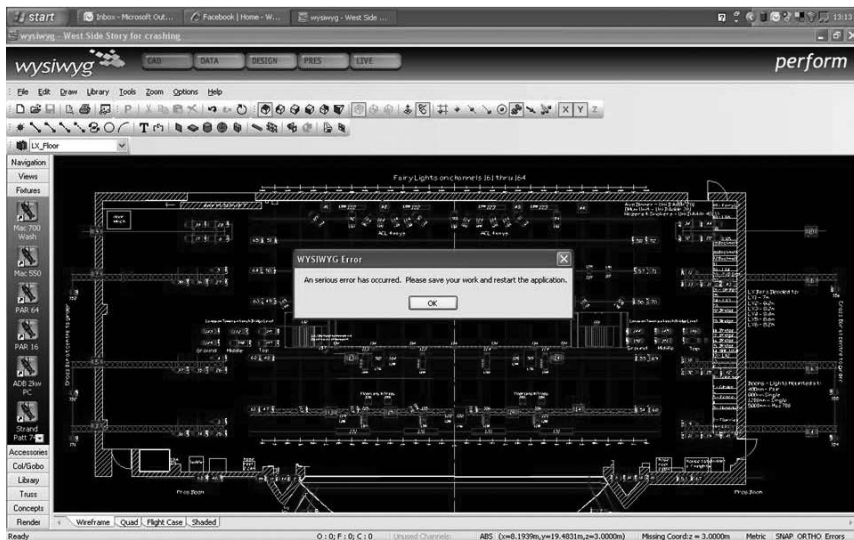
so that when you create a new drawing most of the time-consuming setup has been done. This becomes pointless if the symbols are incorrect – again, not saving time.

Another issue is one of both time and money – a big bugbear of a lot of my freelance colleagues. Regular users pay a subscription for software updates, which you do not need to pay if you are happy with the version you are using. It just means you don't get any new fixture libraries or features. However, if you stay out of the subscription service and a client or colleague sends you a plan in a higher version you can't open it. Cast Lighting advises you to simply ask the originator to save the drawing as an earlier version. However, nine times out of ten this doesn't work successfully. So essentially, Cast Lighting is ensuring that those who use



the system on a daily basis have to continue the costly subscription service. I was in a situation one evening that my subscription had lapsed and in order to get a design out in time I had to call Cast overnight and pay online to open a drawing on a piece of software I had already spent thousands to use. And to cap it all the software subscription has risen this month, which to me is at a time when it is becoming harder to use, not in complexity but only in stability.

Newer versions boast that AutoCAD .dwg file imports are now easier than ever,



but in my experience this is not the case. Importing CAD can take time and almost always causes crashes, and it doesn't matter if all items within the CAD drawing are exploded and simplified. For a large number of my designs the basis is a .dwg drawing from a venue or designer. In another recent project I had to email a drawing to tech support at Cast Lighting as I had lights that simply wouldn't

work whilst connected to a desk – the answer was to delete as many elements of the CAD drawing as possible to make the lights work. As I deleted CAD objects more and more lights came online – this is not what I bought the software to do.

The crux of my argument is that I believe that the developers have lost sight of how we the regular users in the UK use the product.

The majority of the time we all just need to get a decent plan out to our teams; it is the exception not the rule when we 3-D draw everything, render pretty pictures and pre-programme the show. In an average year only 20% of my work involves using the whole system, the rest of the time I just want to get a plan out, and nearly all the time it is becoming a frustration. I use a variety of computers for

my work, mostly high-spec. My dedicated visualisation machine is incredibly powerful so I am sure it's not the hardware at fault. I know a number of other users with similar problems, and I would really like to hear your experiences, good or bad, so that together we can try and make the system as usable as possible for us all. My views on these problems with Cast, both in email and in person at PLASA, have largely been dismissed as being an individual case, so hopefully together as a group we can try and get a message across. I want to help us all save time and money. #

Please send your views to tim@timroutledge.co.uk

Tim Routledge, Lighting Designer & Moving Light Programmer

www.timroutledge.co.uk

Professional Member of the ALD #1291

“Sixty seconds with ... *Natasha Chivers*”

Sum up your career to date in a short sentence.

A massive, self-taught learning curve, at times stressful but with many jewels along the way.

What are the three favourite shows you have lit and why?

Dirty Wonderland for Brighton Festival/*Frantic Assembly* which took place in a 30's hotel which was about to be renovated into apartments. The audience wandered through ghostly rooms following the action.

Encore for The Ballet Boyz because it was my first large-scale dance and I loved having to design the whole space and having a decent budget. We had a beautiful 10m wide line of pixel line LEDs upstage. It felt more like being a visual artist than a lighting designer.

A show called *Tiny Dynamite* directed by Vicky Featherstone (who is amazing to work with) with my favourite company *Frantic*

Assembly and designed by Julian Crouch. They have trusted me to do my thing and encouraged me to be bold. It was a magical show and I loved my work on it.

What were the best and worst moments of your career?

Best: winning the Olivier award this year and standing on Park Lane calling my family/friends to tell them. Worse: my first big relight. I didn't sleep the night before because I was terrified and there was a couple in the next room at the B&B having sex all night.

Where are you now?

At my house in Dulwich.

What is your favourite theatre/space?

It's a hard decision but my favourite theatre is the Lyric Hammersmith because of the staff. My favourite space as audience is either The Royal Exchange in Manchester or Belvoir St in Sydney. As

a lighting designer I love Sadler's Wells, The Royal Court and The Lyric.

Where/what would you most like to light?

I'd light to light a piece in a forest/outdoor location, for a band/musician I love (Bjork, Goldfrapp-ish) and something interesting in one of the big opera houses... probably Sydney.

If you weren't a lighting designer what would you be?

A sculptor or photographer.

Where would you rather be right now?

I'm happy where I am at this moment. Second choice would be walking on a big beach... or at the tea hut on Southwold beach having a great conversation.

What is your favourite colour?

Yves Klein Blue.

If you were a colour what

would it be?

People tell me green so I'll go with that.

If you could scrap one piece of kit or one tradition or part of the job from every theatre in the world what would it be?

I would make tech week days stop at 8pm. People could prepare for the next day and get a proper break so work would be more productive and life more civilised.

Which part of the job do you enjoy most?

Any lit rehearsal where the rig is doing what I want and more, and I get a chance to kick ideas around.

Which part of the job do you enjoy least?

Focusing when I have to shout over construction and leave half the workers on. I recently worked at The Royal Court where focusing is silent and people actually apologise if they make noise.

Bliss!

If you were going to light a show on a

desert island (accepting that it had a rudimentary theatre and power!), what three things would you take with you?

A bag of my favourite colours so I could change my mind, a couple of Pirouettes with scrollers (don't care what people say!) and Jon (Clark) to program because he makes me laugh and is too busy on his own designs to work with the likes of me anymore.

What keeps you awake at night?

I've just lost a close friend suddenly so that in recent weeks... normally not much really. I love my bed.

What common piece of kit would you be least likely to find in one of your rigs?

Non-tungsten moving lights... I haven't got my head round mixing the different sources yet.



What/who have been the major influences on your work?

Rufus Norris and Katrina Lindsay who I ran a company with for five years in the 90s. I'd had training at LAMDA but they taught me so much about making theatre in a wider sense, following your own

instincts and being an artist.

What's the most useful thing you have learnt as a lighting designer?

Give yourself options, manage expectations and be clear (with all the right people) about what is/isn't possible.

How would you like to be remembered?

As a lighting designer – someone who worked hard, had talent and style but treated people well. As a person – someone with a big lust for life and a big heart. #

Statement Of Regret at the National Theatre, London. Photos by Keith Pattison.



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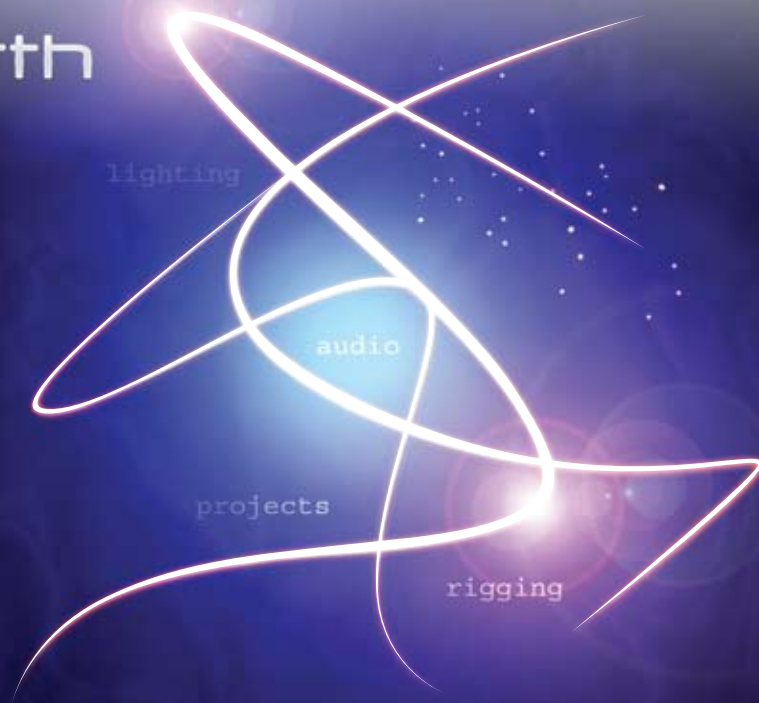
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ALD on parade at the A.C. Lighting North 2008 Tradeshow

Building on the success of last year's A.C. Lighting North Tradeshow, which saw attendance levels up by 30%, the 2008 show takes place in a new exhibition hall with 40% more space to provide an increased exhibitor line-up and visitor capacity.

The event takes place on 29th and 30th April in the Saviles Hall at the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, which is adjacent to the original location and now the city's largest exhibition venue.

As well as accommodating the show's expansion plans, the improved facilities also enable the organisers to provide the main exhibition, complementary theatre seminars programme and buffet lunch with a bar and dining area all within the same hall.

The A.C. North Show has become an essential industry event for buyers in the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland,

providing these regions with a definitive showcase of today's entertainment technology market.

Full show details will be confirmed in the coming months, but visitors can expect the same popular format, including exclusive 1st UK showings of new products, the latest innovations from over 70 leading brands, one to one demonstrations and technical advice, and some exclusive 'show-only' exhibitor deals.

Visitors will again have a unique opportunity to go behind the scenes on, and discuss the production of, some of the most innovative entertainment projects with today's leading industry experts in this year's free guest speaker seminars programme.

Exhibitors will include an even wider range of theatre, concert, film and TV lighting, audio, rigging and associated equipment suppliers from A.C. Lighting's one stop shop

of leading entertainment technology brands, and representation from many of the key industry associations and publications.

Show admission is free for registered industry visitors and includes entry to the seminars

and free buffet lunch. Pre-register to guarantee your admission by calling A.C. Lighting Ltd on 0113 255 7666 or go online to www.aclighting.com/tradeshow.

A.C. North 2008 will be the last trade show organised

under that name by A.C. Lighting. Immediately after its close, PLASA Events will take over the management and ownership of the event and will look to build on the strong regional platform established by A.C. #



Johanna Town's EQUITY update



Q: ALD, BECTU, EQUITY – should we be members of these three organisations or not? A: ...

Well the ALD is a no brainer, social networking, access to an excellent website and a body of people publicising the good, the bad and the ugly of the lighting world. Everyone reading this will be an ALD member but how many of us are members of a union?

Personally I started work in Thatcher's Britain and with it came the demolition of the big bad unions and closed shops. I have spent most of my working life working under a BECTU contract negotiated every year by an organisation I never contributed towards – shame on me. I did join once when I needed public liability insurance and then let it lapse – again shame on me.

So why am I the ALD Equity rep? Well, five years ago I was asked by the Exec to represent the ALD on the Equity Theatre Designers

committee and I thought it was time I gave something back to the ALD – so I joined Equity. Again, as my role as lighting designer, I had spent years of my working life working within an Equity Designer's contract, the fees were always ignored and the rest of the contract was no more than I would expect from my agent's negotiations.

So, you are probably wondering by now why I am your union representative, seeing I haven't been promoting the use of a union so far! But I have been swayed since I joined and now I do think we should all be members of a theatre union. If you work in theatre or the performing arts you should probably be a member of Equity – and this is why I have changed my tune.

It was once explained to me that being a member of a union was like having car insurance. Would you go out and drive your car with out insurance? NO.

Now with my car insurance I get perks – free legal aid, emergency breakdown cover and a complimentary de-icer each year. So with Equity I pay my insurance and I get perks – free legal aid, personal liability insurance and a complimentary diary.

Now, if I had a car accident I would get legal help to sort the whole thing out. Well in November I had a 'crash', a crash with the management of Derby Playhouse where its forced closure led to non-payment of fees. However, Equity's legal department were on hand and before they were allowed to reopen the theatre all Equity members had to be paid in full. And as with my car insurance the fees paid out to me were far greater than the premiums I had paid in.

My next experience was last week – an event only made possible by a union the size of Equity and its members. As I am sure you are all aware just before

Christmas the Arts Council proposed funding cuts of nearly 200 arts organisations – now these cuts effect us all, actors, designers, lighting designers and technicians and our only strength against these cuts and future cuts is the resources and body of people behind the union. Five hundred people attended the meeting at the Young Vic and Equity was able to call on Peter Hewitt the Head of the Arts Council to respond to these cuts at the meeting. As you have seen from the ALD emails and newspaper reports the union is making a difference and helping smaller arts organisations that otherwise would not have been able to fight the battle alone.

And lastly, as your representative on an Equity committee (with a few other prominent ALD members), we are beginning to make changes and move our contract into the 21st century. It is not going to be quick

but I cannot stress how much quicker it might be if the union served a larger body of set and lighting designers. Why should the union put its 'neck on the line for us' when it has to negotiate contracts for actors and stage management, a much larger group. They are not going to rock the boat for a few individuals with SOLT & TMA, so as a group if we want to see more change, our numbers must increase.

In my opinion, at no other time has it been more important, than now to make sure Equity is a big enough, strong enough union to be recognised by the government and other arts bodies. And within its own organisation, help us to help you, by joining now. #

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Mark Morris Dance Group performance of Mozart Dances with lighting by James F. Ingalls. Photo: MMDG/Stephanie Berger.



Lighting dance

We are delighted to welcome the dance critic of *The Sunday Telegraph*, Louise Levene, with her view of lighting designs for dance.

Whenever the Paris Opera is hit by one of its regular fits of industrial action the ballet company usually contrives to carry on regardless, performing three-act classics on a single set, in practice dress beneath one, unvarying lighting plot. The show goes on (after a fashion) but the management is fully aware that ballet is more than just music and steps and that without sets, costume or lighting you have a demonstration, not theatre. The makeshift, blackleg performances are applauded for their pluck – but everyone gets a full refund just the same.

Classical ballet

Lighting for classical ballet is a deceptively unassertive business. The audience might be dimly aware when the lights cool down for the vision scene or blaze brightly for a triumphant pas de deux but

the many subtle changes that echo the drama and colour our response to it tend to pass unnoticed. It is only when things go horribly wrong – or spectacularly right – that the untrained eye begins to appreciate the scale of the lighting designer's contribution.

Lights don't just make ballet dancers visible: they tell you who to watch when; they tell you how to feel about what you see. On the most mundane practical level, it would be hard to follow the complex mimetic action if there were no spotlights to announce an entrance and lead the eye through the drama. Ballets like *Sylvia*, *Giselle* and *La Bayadere* are performed on huge stages in vast Victorian theatres and without a little guidance the first-timer viewing from the gods will find themselves bewildered. Even seemingly trivial glitches can

play havoc with the audience's understanding: "Which one's the Princess?" asked an anxious tot at one recent *Sleeping Beauty* matinee when the lighting wasn't all it should be. Forget to shine a spot on an eavesdropping villainess and whole plot twists are played out in vain. Omit the light that pinpoints a star's entrance and you deny them that old-fashioned flurry of applause when they first join the dance. Alicia Markova was perfectly happy to improvise if she had to – the indomitable British diva once danced *Giselle* at a Filipino baseball stadium in the crossed beams of US army searchlights – but bungle her followspot in a regular theatre and the backstage air was blue.

Lighting means closeup

The spotlight – the lighting equivalent of the close-up – is a vital expository tool but

subtle shifts in the intensity, colour and direction of light have a far greater role to play, setting the scene just as vividly as any backdrop. Many of the most memorable sequences in classical ballet – the white acts in *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*'s ghostly Act II, the ethereal Kingdom of the Shades scene from *La Bayadere* – rely very largely on the lighting director's skill for their atmosphere and fragrance. The trick is to suggest darkness using as many watts as possible, with lighting that reinforces the trajectory of the ensemble and which illuminates the space around the dancing bodies so that they seem to glow in the dark. That said, no designer should be afraid to flood the space with light when the occasion demands – Mikhail Sokolov's sunny, no-nonsense work for the dazzling finale of

the Bolshoi's *Don Quixote* at the Royal Opera House last August wrapped the dancers in sunlight, making sure that we didn't miss a step. Contemporary choreographers tend to fight shy of bright light but Mark Morris's collaborators bathe his dancers in a holy glow – James F. Ingalls's sublime work on the recent Mozart Dances at the Barbican enhanced the movement just as surely as Morris illuminated the music.

Such joyous, unaffected lighting is a far cry from the ionised, post-modern approach seen in 1980s William Forsythe works like *Impressing the Czar*, revived by the Royal Ballet of Flanders at last summer's Edinburgh Festival. Here the dancers lurk beneath a vicious overhead glare, their legs and feet uglified by distorting shadows,

unrelieved by angled light. Most designers have moved on from this glum, intruder-light aesthetic but the fashion for subdued stage pictures lingers on in contemporary ballet and dancing in the dark has become something of a cliché. No one wants to see every step performed in a brash, Ziegfeldian glare but mixed programmes of short work all danced in emergency lighting can make for a monotonous evening. Almost all of the pieces in Christopher Wheeldon's heavily-hyped visit to Sadler's Wells last autumn were artily underlit. One twilight ballet is moody and mysterious: three feels a lot like bedtime.

Modern dance

Contemporary ballet and dance companies depend increasingly heavily on light alone to colour and define the space. Russell Maliphant's work invariably relies on Michael Hulls to shrink the stage to a manageable yoga mat of light in which he and the French star Sylvie Guillem can thrash out his meaty miniatures. Other dance lighting is more proactive still. Israeli dancemaker Hofesh Shechter used light to create involving dance theatre from essentially pedestrian movement. In *In Your Rooms* repeated blackouts allowed the dancers to fast-forward magically around the stage,

creating sight gags and accelerating the development of relationships.

Sometimes the dance quite simply takes a back seat, relying on designers to create photogenic tableaux that will hold the audience's interest (even when the choreography has little hope of doing so). Thilo Reuther's painterly work on Sasha Waltz's gimmicky underwater *Dido and Aeneas* and Chang Tsan Tao's luminous contribution to Cloud Gate Dance Theatre's *Wild Cursive* (both at Sadler's Wells) were the saving grace of some very average evenings.

Gotta have a gimmick?

The 1890s dance lighting pioneer Loie Fuller based her entire career on the exquisite effects to be obtained with thirty yards of silk and some strategically placed electric light and there are still moments in contemporary dance theatre when technology takes centre stage. Klaus Obermaier's *Rite of Spring* used computer software, a single dancer and

several hundred pairs of 3D glasses to create stereoscopic projections in the surrounding air. A textbook case of a fabulous gimmick in search of a choreographer.

In Australian Dance Theatre's *Held*, which toured Britain last spring, the photographer Susan Greenfield, past-mistress of synchroflash, strolled among Garry Stewart's dancers, snapping them with her trusty Hasselblad and relaying the results onto two huge screens. These blink-and-you'd-miss-it moments had the same thrilling sense of suspended animation you see in the best touchline

photography, catching the performers during the 1/500th of a second when they reached the apex of a jump, or seemed to lift a colleague by the ears. The moves in between may have been corny and repetitive but Greenfield's flashbulb had spun straw into gold. #

Louise Levene has been dance critic of The Sunday Telegraph since 1998 and was formerly dance critic of The Independent and The Independent on Sunday. She is one of the three judges for the Clay Paky 'Knight of Illumination' lighting awards (see back page for details).



Wild Cursive at Sadler's Wells by the Cloud Gate Theatre of Taiwan.



*Sasha Waltz and Guest: Dido and Aeneas at Sadler's Wells.
Photo: Sebastian Bolesch*



*Mark Morris Dance Group performance of Mozart Dances with lighting by James F. Ingalls.
Photo: MMDG/Gene Schiavone.*



Sasha Waltz and Guest: Dido and Aeneas at Sadler's Wells. Photo: Sebastian Bolesch





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