

December 2010 / January 2011

Bumper design issue!

# ALD # FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers

"More art, less reviewers..."

*Under the light curtain this issue:*

Broadway lighting masterclass • The future of lighting control • Lighting for competitive drama • Winning designers' notes from the Michael Northen Bursary ... and much more...

Price to non-members £5.00

*Backstage on tour with 'Hairspray'.  
John Leventhall describes and illustrates  
the recent ALD members' meeting in  
Oxford on page 8.*

# More colour. Better light.



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# Rick's Relight

**V**alue. That word and concept has been very much in my mind this autumn as every show I have in the planning stages is at least 100% over budget, and this is well before the lighting requirements are included. Budgets are being squeezed, ticket sales expectations are being revised downwards, costs still rise and even the rate of VAT is going up.

How does lighting add and justify value to our production? As the creative team contemplates how to work within our tighter means it is just like the good old days when that phrase "we don't need scenery we can do it with lighting (*or projection, that wonderfully cheap alternative!!!!*)" is trotted out again. That is fine, I am happy to try to save money on wood, metal and all that goes with it, but it is curious how the means to do it with light do not seem to be in the budget either!

I am also spending more time making sure that everything that I hire (when I have the chance) is earning its keep, making a real impact on stage, and making sure that there is the opportunity to trim back and return hires after the production period for ideas that have not made the cut. While we all want to hire at a discount and return equipment expecting the list price as a credit, I hope that at least we earn a little more than good will from our suppliers who are facing the pinch just as much as lighting designers.

In these times the value of lighting designers being involved earlier, and more creatively, should be obvious. We can help solve design budget challenges, and should pitch in with solutions to make sure that the precious resources are not spent on something that looks useful in the model box but might not be necessary with a better use of stagecraft. Some LDs have built their careers and earned numerous awards by creating

a scenic environment out of some haze and a ¾ backlight, and more of us will be called to do so!

Speaking of awards, I am delighted that ALD has once again been able to sponsor Chris Davey's TMA award for lighting design and congratulations to him and the other nominees James Farncombe and Guy Hoare. The Exec believes that our lobbying to create this category and the sponsorship of this award given out by the producer's organisation is good value to our members in raising the appreciation of lighting design throughout the country.

We all know that like all aspects of production our fees will be decreasing in real value while costs rise, VAT increases, ticket prices go up, and the scale of productions aims remain the same. Keeping each other up to date by contributing to the **Fees Database** (forms available on the website) means that we can monitor and provide information about the latest version of

the going rate for design work both here and abroad.

Perhaps if our fees were a little higher we could spend more time on the creative saving of money instead of being the lighting poly-filler over what could not be afforded at the last minute round of cuts.

This issue of *Focus* has a very international feel to it. Our members are as likely to be working abroad as at home these days, and the sharing of information is even more important about conditions, equipment and local practices. The challenge of lighting design is the same all over the world even if the practice can be slightly different and I hope the ALD can continue to add value to your membership by sharing the experience of those who are working overseas.

My holiday wish would be this: in this age of value management—"Lighting designers should be better valued by our colleagues and producers". Happy Holidays and have a great 2011!

Regards, Rick 🍀



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# Flickering LED light sabres in the auditorium?

“Bah, humbug!” thinks a festive **Mark Jonathan**

As I write, grabbing moments between long technical sessions, I imagine you're all busy lighting those Christmas shows but don't worry it'll all be “behind you” soon. In the last issue I mentioned the tallescope issue, there doesn't seem to be any news yet but I recommend you get an armchair on stage and relax in it while the poor lighting technicians struggle up and down the scope in order to avoid moving it with someone at the top.

## 2011 - a minimum year?

Production plans for next year seem to be coming together more slowly than before as many organisations brace themselves for how they will manage government/arts council cutbacks. I can't say that the future looks rosy. I'm sure that there will be less work to go round. As ever, the

ALD does not recommend accepting the minimum rates quoted on the TMA/SOLT/Equity agreements. Earlier in the year, I mentioned being offered a standstill fee by a producing theatre. I objected on the basis that the staff had been given a rise and to the credit of the company concerned they complied with my request. I'm now seeing more examples of fees at standstill from one year to the next.

The problem I can see is that we are not viewed as a 'human resource' but a 'production cost' and at best the production budgets will probably be frozen. So, the fight to avoid a standstill fee will become harder. Unless the producer and staff are also subjected to the hardship of no pay rise then we should resist this too. We have none of the benefits that go with regular employment like the

regular pay cheque, holiday pay, sick pay and even pension contributions. The problem I have with lighting designers accepting standstill fees is that invariably the fee was low to start with and a standstill for a period of years will leave us worse off forever, unless the fees jump up when times get better to accommodate the number of years for which there was no rise. Duck! Before you get hit by those flying pigs...

## Those f-ing light sabres

Talking of flying pigs, it being the Christmas season, I find myself lighting a 'cool dude surfing genie' who of course has a magic surfboard (magic carpets being out of fashion). Getting the lighting right or the blackout dark enough for those effects to be set up has taken some negotiation. Can we turn off some of the MD monitors? Can the pit

lights be at a lower level? Can we lose all the backstage blue working lights? Such care was taken, such co-operation from all concerned. So, yesterday, was the 3rd sold out preview and it was ruined; it was the theatre's wretched merchandising that annoyed me last year but this year I'm incandescent with rage. The theatre wants to make money out of the kids so it sells a vast range of LED flickering light sabres and LED whirling things. Never mind the dark transformations being wrecked by flickering LEDs, it was impossible to concentrate on any of the story. The amount of flickering made me feel sick.

The theatre is well out of order selling this crap; by doing it they are sanctioning that it's ok for the children (and their parents) to completely distract the whole audience from what's going on stage. Then after the Christmas season is over we'll be getting cross with audience members who forget to turn off their phones – well, that's not nearly as bad



*MJ @ ScotOp with a talented ALD member: Daniel Murfin and his iPad apps*

as the experience I had in yesterday's matinee and the irony that it's caused by the theatre we are working for is shocking.

## Narrow minded broadband

Meanwhile, I'm back in the Jurys Inn. The hotel's fine but *please don't charge us an extra £10 a day for internet access*. We all need to complain to the hotel managements that do this. I recommend the City Inn which includes internet access.

### For the love of it?

There has been quite a lot of discussion amongst designers who sit on the Equity designers committee about jobs that are being offered for nearly no fee and how appropriate this is. I know if the designer is being offered nearly nothing then the LD will be offered even less! So, how does this fit in? When I complained about the fee on offer for a West End transfer the producer said to me: "Think of it as a labour of love."

"I love what I do, but I do it for a living!" I said sweetly while grinding my teeth. When I speak to recent lighting and stage design graduates they tell me how big an overdraft they have clocked up while at Uni and now when they find themselves being offered jobs for the experience, they say to me: "When will I start to earn a living?"

Looking back, I think all the established LDs will have done (or still do) lower paid jobs, it may have been to get experience, or to help a friend out, or to get to

work with a particularly brilliant, aspiring director or designer. I still find after all the years I've been working that something may come along that I'll probably do as an investment in the future. Like all investments, not all of them come to anything or, it may take years to get a surprising payback. Of course, it's easier to do a less well paid but exciting project if you have some well paid jobs as well; it's much harder for the newcomer. Each show has to be taken on its merits and you won't always get that right. I always wonder if I could have predicted how successful a musical featuring a collection of whimsical poems by T.S Elliot about feline psychology and sociology would have been.

### Talented LDs

I've just had a happy time lighting at Scottish Opera and that was certainly due to the great team that works there and especially the work of the brilliant lighting supervisor and ALD member Daniel Murfin. In his spare

time Daniel has developed a number of apps for lighting and stage management. While *Focus* tends to avoid product promotion I thought his inventions for use on your iPad or iPhone deserve a mention. ShowTool LD provides a comprehensive suite of lighting design and electrics utilities for theatre and film including a beam and power calculator, cut colour and wastage calculator, DMX to dip switch configuration calculator. He also has a Stage Management App on iTunes. Well done, Daniel!

Many congratulations go to Chris Davey who won the TMA Best lighting design award for 2010 with his designs for *Dial M for Murder* (West Yorkshire Playhouse and Fiery Angel) and for *Beyond the Horizon* (Royal and Derngate, Northampton). We should also hail the other nominees: James Farncombe for *Ghost Stories* (Lyric Hammersmith and Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse production) and Guy Hoare for *A Christmas Carol* (Birmingham Rep and

West Yorkshire Playhouse).

It may amuse you to know that at the TMA awards one producer said to me "Gosh, I've never seen so many lighting designers in one theatre. Why are you all here?"

"Well," I said, "Some of the LDs are here because they have been nominated and some more are here because the ALD has sponsored the lighting award." I added that this was only the 3rd year there has been a TMA lighting award and the producer was surprised that it was such a new award. I'm delighted that the TMA does now recognise the essential contribution that lighting brings to a production and I think

the decision of the ALD to sponsor these last 3 years has provided a really good opportunity to publicise the ALD to producers and the theatre world in a very positive frame.

Incidentally, I was asked if the ALD had any involvement in the selection of productions and the judging of the nominations and the answer is that we don't. What goes on behind those closed doors is a mystery but let's celebrate all the great lighting work that goes on across the land and how we do what we do will also remain a mystery to most people. Sending you seasonal greetings. 🍁

"happy time lighting at Scottish Opera..."



# John Wyckham - A Tribute

by **Richard Pilbrow** with **Ian Albery**

John, aged 84, late of theatre consultants John Wyckham Associates, died peacefully at Talbot View, Bournemouth after a long illness.

John was both a founder member of the Society of Theatre Consultants, and a leading exponent of the craft, helping to form the profession. His unfortunate struggle with Alzheimer's made it difficult to keep in contact over recent years.

I was saddened to hear of John's passing. He had a long and distinguished career. I'd like to remember John in his youth and heyday.

He was the brilliant lighting designer for Lionel Bart's great hit, *Oliver!* Sean Kenny was an eccentric genius of a designer, and John perfectly matched him with some revolutionary fine lighting. Without stage masking, with all the lights in view, it was

a breakthrough at the time. John also designed scenery and lighting for the hit revue *Beyond The Fringe*.

He joined Theatre Projects on almost our first consulting mission, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. With TP, he was the first managing director of our architectural lighting activity, Light Limited, with a most handsome Bentley Showroom in Berkeley Square. Our lives moved onto separate paths, but as a pioneer of the ALD, and the STC, as well as in his own practice, he made a great contribution to the professions of both lighting design and theatre consulting.

Thank you, John.

## **Ian Albery adds:**

John was great to work with and he did a wonderful job lighting *Oliver!* The budget for the lighting was minuscule



John Wyckham (right) with Richard Pilbrow, "sometime in the early 60s"

and virtually every lantern was relatively old in-house stock from the Wyndham Theatres Ltd. So John had minimal resources to do an amazing job with the pioneering revolving open stage set designed by Sean Kenny. As the Production Manager for Donmar Productions Ltd I subsequently had to recreate John's lighting design on

manifold touring productions around the world and the neatness and precision of John's lighting design made my job a relative joy (after two days/nights getting out/traveling/ getting in/fitting up the set) compared to what it might have been.

We worked together again on *Beyond The Fringe*. The show had been tried out at

Edinburgh and was entirely rewritten and directed. John had the unenviable job of having to design on a shoestring budget, a multi-purpose, do-anything set for a revue format show that neither of us had seen or had any idea what to expect.

A great guy. 🍷

# 4<sup>TH</sup> KNIGHT OF ILLUMINATION AWARDS

11<sup>th</sup> September 2011, London. Organized by:



## Registrations for the 4th Knight of Illumination awards – organized by CLAY PAKY, STLD and ALD – are now invited.

These are the only awards dedicated to professional lighting designers.

After the highly successful third year closed with the enthusiastically attended award-giving ceremony in London on 12th September 2010, the organizers are glad to announce that preparations for the fourth *Knight of Illumination Awards* are now underway.

They are open to UK-based LDs with a show performing in the UK between November 2010 and May 2011. In the theatre section it is open to theatre productions performed in the UK, though not necessarily designed by UK-based LDs. In the TV categories it is open to shows transmitted in the UK between June 2010 and May 2011.

### Nominations

The Awards for “The Knight of Illumination” will be nominated and judged by a panel of professional reviewers working in the specific categories, selected and coordinated by the STLD and the ALD.

TELEVISION: Light Entertainment | Drama | Small Studio | Events

ROCK: Stage events | Arena events | Eco Innovation

THEATRE: Dance | Opera | Play | Musicals

**Registrations close on May 31, 2011.** The awards ceremony will be held on the first day of PLASA 2011: Sunday September 11. **SUBMIT A SHOW!**

**Further information** about the event, the simple entry rules and assessment criteria are available at [www.knight-of-illumination.com](http://www.knight-of-illumination.com)

# Hairspray! The Tour

**John Leventhall**  
welcomed  
members to a  
regional meeting  
in Oxford in early  
October.

*If you have suggestions for other regional events contact [meetings@ald.org.uk](mailto:meetings@ald.org.uk) (that's really Will Evans, ALD meetings supremo, who will be delighted to hear from you!)*



For this ALD regional meeting, at the New Theatre, a select posse of members, associates and others congregated in the recently refitted house; now in plush red rather than the original blue and cream yet retaining the essentials of the original 1930s Art Deco design. We were treated to a fascinating insight into the technique of adapting and applying a lighting design to a major 1 year tour of UK 'Number Ones', originated on Broadway and the West End.

Our presenter and LD for the Tour, Alistair Grant (Ali), is a well seasoned practitioner in the art, technique and economics of touring big theatre shows and Broadway transfers. *Lion King, The Producers, Spring Awakening, and Sister Act*, to name him in recent years. His talk provided a fascinating



insight into the mindset and thought processes that go into adapting a production for efficient touring.

The first challenge on *Hairspray* was picking the bones out of a show with an 8 year history - "forensic lighting" as he terms it. In the West End rig he discovered a fair amount of it was used for just one moment and some didn't get used at all! Instant economies were obvious. Every unit had to justify its existence. For example, the 32 units on the circle rail were replaced with 4 Mac2000 Performances. Then there

was the need to translate American terminology into British parlance; Pipe versus Bar, Plot versus Plan, Trim versus Dead, Scaff Clamp versus Cheeseborough.

The bigger translation task was to merge the conventional show data from two ETC Obsessions into one Hog. Whilst two boards are great during the design phase, so that the slower and more painstaking programming of moving lights can happen in parallel with other work, it is complex and wasteful for touring. The disks that Ali inherited had a

direct line of descent back to the original Broadway programming! Conversion of data took a mammoth 3 days of headaches and sheer determination by programmer John Harris. But they triumphed and now a Hog2 runs the whole rig, moving and conventional.

Ali's prime objective was efficient touring. With just 2 or 3 week runs and Tuesday openings after a Monday fit up, the rig had to be super-efficient. He achieved this using an entirely automated rig overhead (on pre-rigged truss, travelling on custom dollies). Six short truss towers, which travel rigged and hang as 'earrings' to the main trusses, comprise the side ladders. There is a minimum of manual focusing needed (nothing overhead needs attention after rigging) and my impression was that a great deal of thought and

canny negotiation had gone into the final, neat result. The cheerful demeanour of Lee Jones, the Touring Chief LX [*standing behind Ali Grant in photo opposite*], and his crew gave credence to the effectiveness of Ali's eye for efficiency and economy.

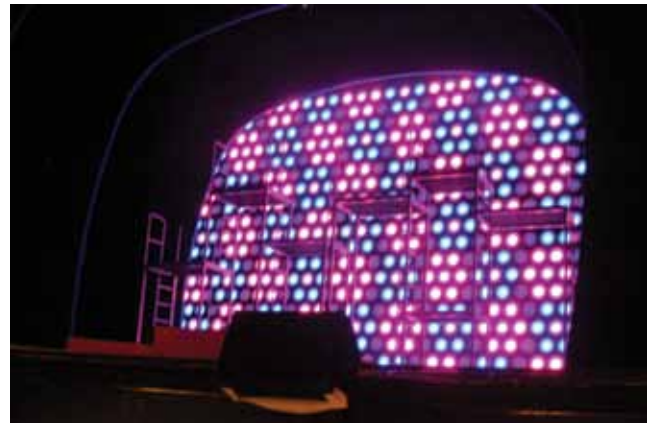
We moved backstage to look at the polka-dot backwall, which was another triumph of 'miniaturisation'. The original wall (evidently inspired by a 1960's American toy; 'Lite Brite' by Hasbro) was about half a metre deep, weighing 4 tonnes. The touring version with festooned RGB LED capsules behind a BP screen, controlled by a second Hog2, is just 150mm deep and weighs a 'mere' 750kg. The changing wall of brightly coloured 'dots' adds lots to the dynamics and pace of the show.

After the talk, we repaired to the Red Lion next door

for proper 'lubrication' of our networking. Stage Electrics, represented by Mark Burnett, kindly extended their hospitality to the thirsty company.

I mentioned we were a bit of a 'select' group relative to the numbers for West End and London meetings. You many members, associates and friends, in the fair regions of this sceptred isle, seem to be a bit shy! We would love to hear from you at [meetings@ald.org.uk](mailto:meetings@ald.org.uk) if you can suggest events and/or how to get more regional members to come along and meet each other.

Our sincere thanks go to Ali and Lee for their efforts in preparing the talk and demos, to Stage Electrics for their sponsorship and to Jon Robinson, the Chief LX of the New Theatre for his hospitality. 🍷





## Office Oracle

### News from Ian's production tent

Focus and more importantly the subscription renewals! The Oxford PO Box address will continue to run until the current payment period ends in June 2011.

Then it is the huge task of changing the address on all the letters, websites and directories we are listed in...

#### New Office Location

Sharp-eyed readers of the ALD members' E-Bulletins will have noticed that the ALD Office was closed for the first two weeks of November due to relocation. Family reasons have meant that I have moved from Oxford to return to the south coast some 20 years after leaving, and with that came all the upheaval and stress of moving. We are currently temporarily housed and so the Oxford address will remain active for the time being with it being re-directed by the Royal Mail.

There will be a new address in early 2011, hopefully in time for the next edition

#### Sponsored Student Scheme 2011

This corporate members' funded scheme for students studying at Conference of Drama School Colleges opened for applications at PLASA 10 in September. **The closing date for applications is fast approaching** and eligible students are asked to ensure that they get their forms sent to the ALD Office before the Christmas 2010.

Please note that even if you are currently a member of the scheme you will need to apply again to continue your

free membership through to April 2012. If you do not, your membership will revert to a normal student category and you will need to pay the annual subscription for a student (£25).

#### WL / ALD / CSSD Technology Showcase

##### January 28th Central School, Swiss Cottage from 2:30

Three sets of initials, loads of kit, plenty of opportunity to see the kit put through its paces in a theatre space, no heavy sales team, but lots of friendly faces.

And as if that were not enough, to round off the event there will be a chance to demonstrate your own superior knowledge of light, lighting and lighting people in the **second annual ALD quiz**. What could be better on the last Friday in January than mixing business and

pleasure just a short stagger from Swiss Cottage Tube?

The event goes up at 2:30, with formal demos scheduled on the hour until 6pm.

The quiz kicks off around 6:30, with questions on light, lighting and lighting people (and there are still opportunities to sponsor refreshments and prizes – hint, hint).

For more information contact Nick Moran at Central School ([nick.moran@cssd.ac.uk](mailto:nick.moran@cssd.ac.uk)) or Bryan Raven at White Light ([Bryan.Raven@WhiteLight.Ltd.uk](mailto:Bryan.Raven@WhiteLight.Ltd.uk)),

To reserve your place at the Showcase and/or for the quiz, look for the ALD social calendar on Facebook or Twitter.

#### Farewell John Roffey

John Roffey, who died on 13 October, was a theatre electrician who was born in Camberwell. He was a member of the crew at Sadler's Wells Opera during its heyday and worked on the legendary Flying Dutchman production. He shared chief touring electrician roles with

Roger Frith, and had a fund of stories on driving his three wheeler between dates in the snows of the late 1960s. Whilst still with Sadler's Wells, John worked on the electrical installation at the new Greenwich Theatre, before moving to become chief, and probably only, electrician at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama at its old theatre just off Fleet Street. He moved with the School to the new premises in the Barbican where he remained until his retirement.

#### Space and Light: Edward Gordon Craig.

A reminder about this free exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London on the pioneering work of Edward Gordon Craig laid the foundations of Modernist theatre design and continues to influence contemporary theatre designers.

Including striking woodcuts and set models, this innovatively designed display is the ideal introduction to Craig's work and legacy. Until 13 March 2011. 📌

# Diary Dates

## 24 December

Application deadline for Sponsored Student Scheme

## 2011

### 28 January

WL/ALD/CSSD Technology Showcase.

### 18 March - 15 April

UK Design for Performance 2007 -11, RWCMD, Cardiff

### 1 April

Subscription Payments due

### 19/20 April

PLASA Focus 2011, Leeds\*

### 15/16 June

ABTT Theatre Show\*

### 1 July

Deadline for subscription payments

### 11 September

4th Knight of Illumination Award\*

### 11-14 September

PLASA 2011, Earl's Court\*

*\*the ALD will have a presence at these events.*

# Contact us

The Association of Lighting Designers

PO Box 680, Oxford, OX1 9DG, UK Tel: 07817 060189

office@ald.org.uk www.ald.org.uk

## The Executive

*President:* **Richard Pilbrow**

*Chairman:* **Rick Fisher** rick.fisher@ald.org.uk

*Deputy Chair:* **Jason Larcombe** jason.larcombe@ald.org.uk

*Administrator and Treasurer:*

**Ian Saunders** ian.saunders@ald.org.uk

*Professionals:* **Mark Jonathan** mark.jonathan@ald.org.uk

*Equity Rep:* **Johanna Town** jo.town@ald.org.uk

*Corporates:* **Iain Quinn** iain.quinn@ald.org.uk

*Student issues:* **Jack Knowles** jack.knowles@ald.org.uk

*Meetings:* **Will Evans** meetings@ald.org.uk

*Education:* **Nick Moran** and **Scott Palmer**

education@ald.org.uk

## Committee members

**Andy Collier** andrew.collier@ald.org.uk

**Paule Constable** paule.constable@ald.org.uk

**John Leventhall** john.leventhall@ald.org.uk

**Declan Randall** declan.randall@ald.org.uk

**Tom Dexter Scott** dexter.scott@ald.org.uk

**Kevin Sleep** kevin.sleep@ald.org.uk

## Focus Magazine

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*Editor:* **Andy Collier** editor@ald.org.uk

To submit ideas for articles, information, correspondence, corrections and any comments about *Focus*, please email **editor@ald.org.uk**. Owing to space restrictions, we regret that we do not accept press releases for publication in *Focus*. However, Corporate members of the ALD may send press releases to the ALD office (office@ald.org.uk) so that they can be posted on the News section of the ALD website for immediate and wider coverage. Corporate members only may advertise in *Focus*, please contact the office for details. Editorial guidelines for authors are available on request from the editor.

*The opinions published within Focus are not necessarily those of the ALD. E&OE.*

# New Members

welcome to...

## Sponsored Student Scheme

**Central School of Speech & Drama:**

**James Kavanagh**

**East15 Acting School:**

**Vicky Phillips**

**Guildhall School of Music & Drama:**

**Laurence Russell**

**Lewis Urwin**

**Mountview:**

**Derek Anderson**

**Rose Bruford:**

**Anthony Doran**

**Martin Fenton**

**Luke Wallace**

**Maximilian McGill**

**Royal Welsh College:**

**Dani Bish**

**Jamie Platt**

**Staffordshire University:**

**Jonathon Cooke**

**Trinity St Davids:**

**Victoria Bull**

# My Michael Northen Bursary Submission

We asked this year's winner **Ziggy Jacobs** to share her lighting style for *Rememberance of Things Past*

Creating my submission for the Michael Northen Bursary was a labour of love, much like the design I applied with. The experience of expressing a piece of text, a feeling, a vision, through light is a rewarding one for me, and explaining that experience allowed me to examine my successes and pitfalls more carefully and to great effect since.

My confidence in the design and my measure of its success comes from how well each moment represented the intentions of the director and design team – each to varying degrees. Expressing this with a dense text, a shortened running time, and a dizzying number of walls, doors, and gauzes wasn't easy, but each challenged ended up acting as a sort of

creative sieve, allowing only the best and most necessary design ideas through. I'm a strong believer in taking one's inspiration from the show content first and foremost, whether it be music, movement, devised text, or a pre-determined script, and in coming back to that grounded source and first impression when the design path seems unclear. It was

at that base point, the physical parameters and aesthetic of the set, and the guidance of the director's vision that served as the stakes in my lighting design tent.

In the photo on the right, for instance, a complicated amalgam of intentions needed to be expressed – a sense of depth, a physical overwhelming presence of water, the continuing storyline of a relationship as well as its ever-present mystery. I spent time with the director and designer, pulling apart these intentions in order to understand them; time with myself and my paperwork to create an aesthetic plan to enhance them with light, and time with the chief, programmer, and crew to accomplish this with the rig. All of these things happen so quickly in the rapid, insular world of tech for each scene, however, that I did not fully examine the process until applying for the Bursary. I realized that a high-quality visualization would

have helped me to greater understand the capabilities of the rig and create useful pre-programmed palettes, saving valuable programming time during this scene's construction. One of the things winning this bursary has provided me with is the means to buy a copy of ESPVision, which I have since used to improve the same situation in my current work.

As a student, especially in this industry, there is nothing more valuable than knowledge and confidence. This award provides the opportunity to improve both through the process of applying itself, rather than only for those who win. I can't thank the ALD enough for facilitating this award, and for giving students like myself the chance to show you what we can do, as well as meet some of the designers who've inspired us in the first place.

To all of the students who are thinking about it – I highly recommend applying. What do you have to lose? 🍀





# Lighting for Competitive Drama

Who says *Focus* only features lighting for professional shows?

**David Ripley** sets the record straight.

Each year the Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA) holds a one act play festival across Scotland. With competitors from Orkney to the Borders the competition is divided into four regions; Eastern, Northern, Western and Highland. These are further subdivided into districts so that the festival is a knockout competition culminating, this year, in a final at Pitlochry Festival Theatre. The SCDA

works to promote all aspects of community drama throughout Scotland; as well as running the one-act festival they also offer advice and information from their base in Stirling.

I was asked by a friend from the village in which I live to light one of Fintry Amateur Dramatic Society's entries *The Love of Don Perlimplin and Bellisa in the Garden* by Frederico Garcia Lorca. The competition has strict rules.

These include the length of the piece as well as the time allowed for technical work. An adjudicator gives feedback for each show with those that make it to the next round given a further, private, session.

'Don Perlimplin' tells the story of the love of the innocent Don for a much younger woman and starts comically before darkening to a tragic finale. Iain Howie who as 'producer' not only directed the play but was also responsible for the set, props and costume used a simple expressionistic design that could be moved round by the Sprites who look on and comment upon the action. He was looking to me to indicate locations and time of day etc through lighting.

The first round was to be held at the Cowane Centre [far right], a small venue in an old Victorian ex-school

in Stirling. Prior to this an open dress rehearsal was to be held at FADS venue the Menzies Hall in Fintry. There has been a lot of work put into the hall, meaning it is well equipped with a Zero 88 Frog and 48 ways of Chilli dimming installed by Black Light There are a range of Selecon lanterns in a fairly static rig.

We had a three hour session to set up in Fintry including lighting and sound on the Sunday. As the rig was being shared between 3 shows (ours plus FADS other two entries) some of the rig had already been allocated. The set went in and I built the cues we had discussed on the afternoon. On this occasion I used the Frog's memories for playback.

The performance on the Tuesday night went well, although for me it wasn't a real dress rehearsal as I would

*Rehearsals at the Menzies Hall, Fintry.*



*The Cowane Centre, Stirling*

*Above right: The Don is cuckolded on his wedding night.*

*Below right: Don Perelimplin reveals to Belissa that he knows about her lover.*

*Show photos by Tony Flisch*

never have this rig again. However it was useful to see the looks that I would try and achieve in the competition proper and what the priorities were. Several key states became the things that the subsequent designs had to hinge around regardless of the equipment available.

Our tech time in the Cowane Centre was on the Saturday afternoon prior to the evening performance. We were last on that night, there had already been two previous evenings competition with 3 shows a night and this was being replicated across Scotland.

This was where I first became aware of the strictness of the rules and how seriously they are taken. I had been chatting with the local tech team from the Riverside Players and discussed my ideas and what was possible with the rig. I

had cut a bit of colour and one of them was about half way up the ladder and about to put the colour in when the Stage Director, complete with stopwatch asked us if our tech time was now started. All competitors are allocated exactly one hour to tech run the show. Although getting the set onstage is outside this time, apparently LX wasn't. So we waited until the stage was set then whipped round changing colour as fast as we could.

The Cowane Centre is equipped with a venerable Zero 88 Sirius 48 and 24 ways of dimming. The rig provided was nothing like the one I saw on my recce nor the one shown in the photos but as luck would have it seemed to do everything the show needed. As I was not familiar with the board I ran it as a two preset manual board, something I hadn't done for

an awfully long time. It took a while after the tech session to get my cue sheets in a state that worked, having to think about setting up presets, how much time I really had etc for the first time in more years than I care to remember!

During the show, which was of course the only time I had run the lighting at speed, apart from the pressure of ensuring cues were preset in time it was quite liberating to have direct access to channels and the ability to respond to the actors performances. The show went well and I was really pleased with how it looked overall.

Next came the adjudication, a quite nerve-racking experience but with a positive outcome as 'Don P' was placed second and progressed to the Divisional final to be held in the Bowhouse Community Centre in Grangemouth.





*The Bowhouse Community Centre, Grangemouth*

The Bowhouse has four overstage LX bars plus 2 bars FOH. Although it had the same number of channels as the first venue (controlled from a Zero 88 Jester) everything was paired across, greatly limiting directionality. Additionally, the rig consisted predominantly of shades of lavender so that the warm and cool washes I needed as a minimum were always struggling against the colour

in the majority of the rig. With limited time both in the tech session and with only 15 minutes between performances I decided that any kind of recolouring and repatching was impractical and so tried to get the best out of what I had.

Within the marking regime of the One Act Play Festival 15% is allocated to what might be termed 'production'. Once you have split this

between set, costumes, props sound and LX it means the maximum score of 3% for lighting was unlikely to make a huge difference so I resolved to just try and get what I could from what was already there. Once again I ran the board as a 2-preset. The trouble I had with the show this time was the domination of lavender in the rig. Every time I tried to get the cool wash to

dominate by dropping the rest of the colour to 50%, I was ending up with a ghastly sort of ruddy shade on the actors' faces and there was not enough of the colour I wanted to punch through. As a result I ended the show very disappointed with what I had managed to achieve, although overall the show went well with some of the performances improving with each round.

Once again we came second, and in addition, the show also picked up the *Say Trophy* for Stage Presentation and the *John Duncan Quaich* for Production. This once again got us through to the next round – the Scottish Final at the Pitlochry Festival Theatre.

#### **On to the final...**

When a group enters the SCDA One Act Play Festival

it signs an undertaking that it will perform on whatever dates are allocated and for FADS this is where the fun really started. For the final we were allocated the first slot on the first day – not brilliant in a competitive sense, but it was made much worse by the fact that our leading man wouldn't be available that day as he would be at his son's RAF passing out down south.

Once the date was confirmed a flurry of emails was exchanged between FADS and SCDA but to no avail; unsurprisingly none of our competitors was willing to swap spots with us. So as Plan B, Iain hitherto our Producer/Director was to step into the Don's shoes whilst Martin our ex-Don would direct.

Next was a recce to Pitlochry. SCDA had arranged a day with Pitlochry so we drove up on a Saturday morning for our meeting with Pete Appleby, the theatre's technical manager. That weekend the Red Hot Chillii Pipers were playing

so Ricky Smith from Clyde Productions was setting up their own rig on stage. Simon Wilkinson's festival rig was fully hung but unfocused.

Obviously we would be bringing in the set for the show, so all we needed was a set of black tabs midstage. These were vital as in one scene they need to close so that Don P and Belisla, who are celebrating their wedding night, can change upstage whilst the Sprites talk to the audience. They then open to reveal the Don in his night shirt complete with cuckold's horns - Belisla is not as innocent as the Don thinks.

Pitlochry didn't have a set of tabs nor track so this compromised our staging straight away. Once again there was a flurry of emails involved but with no obvious resolution in sight. Finally the Killin Players stepped into the breach and very kindly dismantled their installed Halls tab track and brought it with the tabs to Fintry. Pete Appleby arranged for

a border on the bar that the tabs would be hung on and advised on drifts. While this was all going on, the cast (and particularly Iain) were furiously re-rehearsing the show under Martin's direction.

To give Iain a chance to perform in front of an audience another show was arranged at Fintry, with The Killin Players presenting the show they had entered into

the one act festival as a double bill. Although FADS had performed *Men Should Weep* in the hall, the rig had not changed and my memories were still in the board. This meant I only had to sort out Killin's requirements, making it a fairly easy day for me. As the Pitlochry rig would be vastly different from Fintry's I didn't worry too much about changing things in anticipation of the final.

The day of the final we arrived in Pitlochry at the appointed hour to do our tech session, the set arrived, complete with tab track etc. As we had these extreme staging problems it had been agreed that rigging the tab track would not be part of our allocated hour and a half. The plan was to spend the rest of the afternoon prepping the tab track so that it could be rigged immediately after



# Lighting for Competitive Drama

## David Ripley

we had teched. During the afternoon there was much discussion of how the track should be made up and how much crossover was required etc. Eventually though, it was finished and ready to go.

On the SCDA form for Pitlochry I had scribbled down a fairly large and frankly cheeky list of what I would ideally need. To my surprise all this was available, thanks to Mike Pendowski and his team. As we progressed through the tech all the directional light I needed was to hand along with a gobo wash for the garden scene I had never been able to have before. I could pick out the cast using the VL 1000s and Revolution in Simon's rig which cleaned up many of the states. Once we had the LX in the board I then put on my sound hat to run through the sound cues. I would be calling the show

and operating the sound so once all that was done I went onstage where the tab track was being rigged. After a bit of faffing it was up and Kevin our stage crew gave the line a tug to open the tabs....

Disaster! First it wouldn't move, then as he pulled harder the track bent. After a post mortem it was decided to take the line out and have the Sprites operate the tabs manually. There was very little time for them to rehearse this before the house opened and they had to get into costume and make up.

At the appointed hour I went up to the box to cue LX and run sound. The first issue was that an announcement had to be made by SCDA. The CD provided hadn't worked so they were running it from a laptop. This meant as soon as the announcement was finished I was unplugging that laptop, plugging mine

in, setting the first sound cue and then starting the show. It was all a bit rushed and less than ideal. Unsurprisingly, the Sprites struggled a bit with the tabs, one of them getting lost in them at one point. Overall, the performance was not the best it had been.

We had to wait until the Saturday night to find out that we had not been placed. Later the formal scoring came through placing us 8th out of 8. Iain our director was browsing in Waterstones the day after the results when he came across a book on One Act Play Festivals by the adjudicator of the final. Amongst many pearls of wisdom was his opinion that it was impossible to stage Lorca's one act plays – if only we'd known!

Don P had one last show to do, this time in a small room in The Inn at Kippen (right). The owner is keen to

add a bit of culture to local life and staging *The Love of Don Perlimplin and Bellisa in the Garden* was one of his experiments. The room is basically a dining room complete with carpet. As the ceiling was at normal room height, the boxes from the set were ditched. We couldn't have tabs for the same reason so a curtain was rigged across an alcove to

act as the bed area. From my point of view I was down to hiring a small kit I could run from a 13amp socket. A quick look in Northern Light hire catalogue led me to their No 1 Lighting Kit consisting of 6 Selecon Acclaim F, two stands and T-bars plus a Zero88 Level 6 controller.

The two stands were tucked into the 'FOH' corners as the room was much wider



than it was deep. I gave myself a blue pair, a warm pair and an open white pair, all individually controlled. Because of the room shape I opened everything up then controlled the spill as much as possible. The position was more of a prosc boom shot as our 'auditorium' was just two rows.

We ran through the night before and were fed and watered by our host. I discovered that having each lantern on a fader, which was itself effectively a handheld unit allowed me to respond to the performance in a much more intuitive way. On show day the audience were having dinner before the performance so we went up at about 9 o'clock.

The show went very well and I found even with such a small rig that having control literally at my fingertips allowed me to nuance each

state once it was established. Of course this made the show unrepeatable as I was looking at the stage without referring to where the faders were on the board. I found this rather a liberating experience and as an operator I was much more involved in the performance than previously.

The show certainly worked in this intimate venue and certainly was enjoyed by our audience of diners once we had packed up food and drink was taken, again provided by the Inn.

#### **In conclusion**

So what did I learn in lighting a show under these conditions? I think each time I did the show it was fresh as I was dealing with totally different circumstances. Although in 'normal' touring there are changes there is still some control over the rig. In the one act play competition I

was presented with a fixed coloured rig. Add to that the limited time to not only tech and plot before the show but the fact of only 10 minutes between competitors made me re-examine what the show really needed each time we did it. I think I got down to the kernel of what the lighting really needed to achieve in order to support the performance and help tell the tragic tale of *The Love of Don Perlimplin and Bellisa in the Garden*. I found the accessibility of manual desks and the handheld 6 channel desk I used last really enjoyable, as I said above, allowing me to respond to the performance in a way I haven't done for years.

All in all I found this time a worthwhile and enjoyable experience and recommend anyone else who has the chance to be involved in such a project to take it. 🌸



#### **David Ripley**

*David Ripley runs cad4theatre, providing draughting services, training and consultancy to the industry in all things CAD. He is the author of 'AutoCAD – A Handbook for Theatre users' and runs the ABTT's AutoCAD distance learning course as well as teaching at several drama schools. He is based in the Campsie Fells above Glasgow (In a house – obviously!)*

*FADS impressive haul of silverware from this year's SCDA One ACT Play competition*



## Arcola is moving ... and it needs your help!

**Johanna Town** explains how this is a unique opportunity for every young theatre technician and student to get stuck in.

Last month I had the pleasure of being invited to Arcola's new temporary home in Dalston. "New" is not quite the right word as the New Arcola space is a run-down factory space quite similar to its existing building, with beautiful factory windows and bare brick walls, but not much else.

When the Arcola's fight ended to keep the lease on

their current building, which expired earlier this year, their innovative team got up and did what it always does and said, "OK, let's just move.." So they went out and found another empty factory space – and then gave themselves just 3 months to move in. The first show opens in January 2011, and their final show finishes in the old building at the end of December.



Am I surprised? No. The Arcola have never made life simple for themselves and because of this have always captured the admiration of its theatre audience and practitioners.

Going into the new building reminded me of lighting my first show at the Arcola, Out of Joint's *Macbeth*, in 2004. At that time the main studio space was slowly transforming into a proper theatre space, but downstairs was more or less untouched, and this was where we were going to start our show. It was exciting, challenging; it was hard work! I loved every minute of it and I learned to see outside the theatre box and embrace my environment.

Several years later I was back lighting *Small Craft Warnings* but this time the challenge was set by the Arcola team themselves:



the goal of lighting the show within their 5KW limit. Again, it was exciting and challenging and incredibly informative, as usual working at the Arcola, it always makes me look outside the theatre box.

And now, after ten short amazing years, this small fringe venue has surpassed itself in being at the forefront of innovation, both through its productions and in how the theatre can become something challenging – dramatically and technically – and it has managed to do all of this with little funding and a very dedicated small team of people.

Back at the launch, whilst walking around the empty shell of their new space, David Salter, their technical manager, was enthusing about what was going to be achieved; two theatre spaces to be completely fitted out, the movement of the old building to the new, the considerations still to be taken on board of being



Eco friendly with equipment and materials. On further questioning it was clear he was not going to get this done alone – he needed help. And then it came to me, how doing *Macbeth* in their early days had been so exciting, so informative; how it had taken me out of my comfort zone and compelled me to look afresh at how my original feelings about lighting a show with just 5kW had at first frustrated me but later had taught me new and exciting ways of approaching theatre.

So why am I writing this article? Well I want to encourage every young theatre technician / every student out here to volunteer some of their time between now and February to get involved in helping the Arcola. David has so much knowledge to share that to just have the opportunity to work along side him would be invaluable, to have the opportunity to build a new theatre even out of the old is such a rare an opportunity it should be grabbed in both

hands by anyone who has the opportunity to do so. To be honest I am quite jealous – this was a gift I wished I was young enough to grab hold of myself.

So to all young techies and LDs out there: email David Salter at [david@arcolatheatre.com](mailto:david@arcolatheatre.com) and give some of your spare time to this project. I can assure you that you won't regret it. Experiences such as these happen so rarely. I might even just see you there! 🍷

#### David explains there are two areas of work:

**1. General theatre fit-out.** We will be taking most of our kit from our current premises so there is preparatory work on over the next 2 months and then there will be a frantic period just before Christmas and then up to first night on 12th January. This includes lighting / sound / seating.

**2. We are planning a low voltage DC (probably 24V) lighting system for the whole building.** At the moment it is likely to be compact fluorescents for the general lighting (first floor offices & rehearsal rooms and dressing rooms etc, coloured LED for the foyer/bar and 'white' house lighting. Help needed with finding fixtures, lighting design and installation.

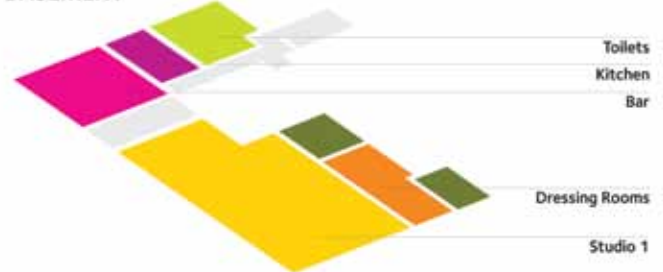
### FIRST FLOOR



### GROUND FLOOR



### BASEMENT



# But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

Shakespeare, ROMEO AND JULIET, Act 2 Scene 2

Thoughts on the future of lighting control for the designer, upon the occasion of the International Theatre Engineering and Architecture Conference, London, June 2010. **Richard Pilbrow**

Designing light upon the stage is so much about information.

Every lighting designer, who has ever been behind a production desk, has looked at the stage and wondered—with Romeo: “*What is that light?*”

Lighting is a process of imagining space. Space filled with light. Light that hopefully reveals in a meaningful manner: shapes, and gives form to performer and environment, creates atmosphere, and aids in telling the author’s story. To do this we employ batteries of lights to build a mosaic of three-dimensional light around the actor.

To control dozens or several thousand sources of illumination we employ

control systems that we expect to reliably manipulate intensity, perhaps color, beam shape, movement, and so on, and accurately repeat these “moving pictures” as we wish. Furthermore we want these complex multiplicity of lights to change perhaps many hundreds of times during a performance with the fluidity of “the speed of light.”

For as long as I can remember, I’ve been obsessed by the crudity of the information with which we’re faced, while lighting the stage.

Every light is given a number. Well, that’s better than my youth. “Fly-dip-up-right-green-15” was quite a mouthful. “592” is quicker. But, hang on! At least my fly

dip gave me an indication as to where the light might be . . . Unless it was feeding a channel on the other side of the stage—as it often was!

So, screen-fulls of digits try to tell me about my lights! My three-dimensional dreams of moving interweaving lights embracing the actors, are adequately represented by digits? *I think not.*

*Memorizing light with computers was a really good idea.*

At the first ABTT conference in 1961, I spoke of a control that would allow a thousand lights to travel to a thousand levels at a thousand speeds. Well, that’s done. But now they waggle too... A formidably escalated control challenge.

But I’ve been an Apple

fan since 1984. Steve Jobs: “an enabling technology.” I suspect the computer today is much cleverer. Can it not show me in real time what I really want to know about my stage? Allow me to concentrate on my art—not on technology. To me, numerals simply don’t cut it.

## Virtual Magic Sheet

A basic tool for many lighting designers is the ‘magic sheet.’ Usually, this is a simplified diagram of the lighting plan that identifies the principal elements of the lighting layout with clearly displayed channel numbers that allow the designer to quickly select needed channels without having to pour through sheaves of hook-up plots or pick out individual channels

from a large complex plan. Personally, while lighting, I have always used my lighting plan as my source of information. I’ve spent hours in the studio putting it together, and I know instinctively where everything is. The plan represents in my mind the complete ‘palette’ of all the resources I have. It is the literal visualization of all those dreams that have been fermenting in my head.

Eric Cornwell of West Side Systems, is a brilliant lighting designer and computer programmer who had been a friend for many years, since being a member of my design team on a long ago *Show Boat* in New York and London. He remains one of the most innovative of entrepreneurs.



*'A Tale of Two Cities' – view from the production desk.*

# Thoughts on the future of lighting control for the designer.

## Richard Pilbrow

He's a computer-Macintosh person—in other words, my sort of person.

I first employed his revolutionary piece of lighting software on a regional theatre revival of *Where's Charley?* It changed my lighting life. Virtual Magic Sheet (VMS), the program developed by Eric, creates an electronic Magic Sheet on a laptop computer at the designer's production desk, or anywhere in the theatre, driven via a Wi-Fi radio link to the DMX output of any control system. It provides a live visualization of the plot, *that changes in real time.*

The software provides "tiles" (perhaps 400-500 per screen, or up to 2,000 on a 27-inch large screen), each of which represent a channel. These can be laid out in any desired configuration, like a conventional magic sheet, positioning channels according to function, or area, or use. In addition each tile may have a descriptive written label—location or use—and may be in any color. So from the outset the lighting layout is represented onscreen by small, colored, labeled tiles.

As the DMX channel is raised above zero, each tile lights up to become a gauge—like a small pie-chart—that indicates level. The gauge will be colored representing the color in the instrument, so it is a vivid, miniature representation of the lighting onstage. A small triangular arrow in

the tile indicates a channel increasing or decreasing intensity. In the event of a channel's having a color-changing device (a scroller, for example), the actual color of the instrument will appear and change "in real time" on the screen.

I began using Virtual Magic Sheet for very simple layouts, and over subsequent years graduated up to the Metropolitan Opera with *The Sleeping Beauty* for American Ballet Theatre, and then to the extremely complex Broadway musical *A Tale of Two Cities*. In the theatre, Eric has often been sitting in close proximity to me, developing the software while I've been lighting.

"Richard," he'd say, "try this." And he'd hand me a memory stick... into my MacBook Pro laptop... and off I go with a new update.

The tiles have always

allowed far more information to be onscreen simultaneously than has the conventional numeric mimic. But VMS being able to change color, show intensity, level increasing and declining, is now supplemented by indication of every moving light's direction and color, and indications of the cue number, time, and the command line of the lighting control system. In addition, VMS can be linked to John McKernon's Lightwright software, which lists every relevant quality/parameter of each light. By touching a tile on VMS, the designer can instantly display the relevant Lightwright data.

Eric's latest upcoming version allows the designer to input other information, such as a scene synopsis with ground plan and elevations. On these can be added special channels that

might only used in one scene. Furthermore the potential now exists that VMS may actually be used to select and manipulate the light. Multi-touch screen-sensitive computer monitors will open new boundaries.

I see VMS as an important part of the future of lighting. Just as Lightwright has become the most ubiquitous lighting paperwork software in the world, I see the day when every designer will walk into a theatre, turn on his laptop, open VMS, connect remotely to the lighting control, and enjoy his own customized interface to his lighting onstage.

My estimate is that I can light a show with VMS, perhaps 25 percent faster than I ever have before. And faster is, I've always strongly believed, better. The stage is for actors to rehearse on. The faster we can light,



VMS in closeup



# Thoughts on the future of lighting control for the designer.

## Richard Pilbrow

the more rehearsal time is available and higher-quality performance arrives onstage in the end.

### A New Software Opportunity

For too many years I've been frustrated by the paucity of information provided by a conventional monitor. I've been seeking more information, but information that is immediately useful to me in the full crisis-mode of life in mid-tech-rehearsal.

VMS, while still a work in progress, gives me so much of what I want. For the first time, I'm instantly aware at every moment of what light I have on the stage. This gives me unprecedented confidence and the ability to work both smarter and faster.

So, for the International Theatre Engineering and Architecture Conference in London, I gathered together

Robert Bell of Shock Lighting, Sarah Clausen of ETC, Eric Cornwell, and fellow designer, our own triumphant Tony Award winner, Neil Austin, to talk about lighting control's future. We found that we all shared a belief that the computer power had much more to offer the designer.

In our discussions, we realized that the conventional control has already plenty of work to do: reliably driving our lights to their destinations, second by second, and night after night, without fail. Perhaps the concept of a separate interlinked software solution might be used to take information about the lighting onstage and present it to the designer in a far more accessible and useful manner.

Perhaps, at last, I could stop complaining about manufacturer's lack of enterprise in continuing to give us "pre-Windows-style"

numerical displays, and instead turn to independent software developers, to produce the "dream" display and interface that I, as an artist, have been seeking.

Change has begun. Several systems are introducing graphic displays. Jands Vista's timeline indicates how better move-control might be employed. (At last – I can hear some of my readers saying... the video editing industry has been there for decades). Many systems' color-picker capability seems at last to have caught up with my MacBook.

For me, VMS offers vastly superior information in far greater quantity than I've ever had before. And this can only be a beginning. In the computer world, information display and manipulation is rapidly changing. Touch-sensitive screen technology offers new opportunities.

Developments in open-source software being employed by control system manufacturers, and the spread of RDM protocol, will increasingly encourage third-party add-ons. Software designers are legion. This is a call for a new lighting design/software opportunity. These are yet early days . . .

Any good ideas out there?



*Extracts from this article will appear in A THEATRE PROJECT - An Autobiographical Story by Richard Pilbrow with David Collison, to be published in late 2010.*

*A full transcript of the conference session will be available from [www.theatrefiles.com](http://www.theatrefiles.com). For information on Virtual Magic Sheet see: <http://virtualmagicsheet.com>.*

# A Presidential Ceremony in Hong Kong

## Richard Pilbrow honoured

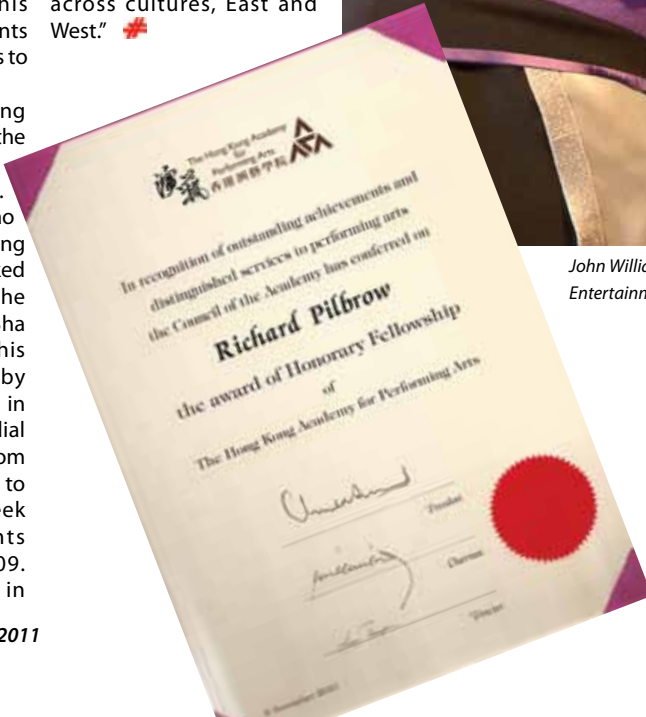
On November 8, 2010 in a ceremony in Hong Kong, Richard Pilbrow was conferred with Honorary Fellowship of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, for his “outstanding achievements and distinguished services to the performing arts.”

“I first travelled to Hong Kong in 1972. We opened the three-auditorium Hong Kong Arts Center in 1979. Designed with architect Tao Ho, it remains a very thriving institution. We then worked on concept design for the Cultural Center in Tsim Sha Tsui from 1979-1989. This was finally completed by others, but TP was called in in 2000 to design remedial stage engineering work from 2000-2005. I was excited to be invited to give a week of lectures to students of the Academy in 2009. TPC are now engaged in

projects across China. I am most honored to receive this privilege from such a distinguished institution that plays a leadership role in training theatre practitioners across cultures, East and West.” 🍀



John Williams, Dean of Theatre and Entertainment Arts with New Fellow

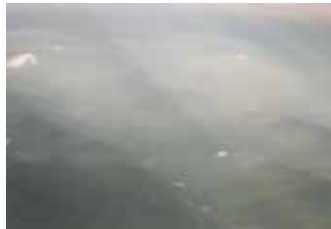


I'm just a /  
Broadway Baby. /  
Walking off my  
tired feet. /  
Pounding Forty-  
Second Street /  
To be in a show. /  
Oh... /

## The Broadway Lighting Masterclass 2010

**Edmund Sutton** was awarded the  
*Young Members' Bursary for  
Professional Development 2009*  
by Equity to attend.

I highly recommend the afternoon flight across the northern Atlantic Ocean as a prelude to a week in New York in the spring to discuss lighting. The rolling greens and browns of England and Ireland give way to the blue of the sea and the white of cloud. Then there is pack ice and the snow-capped browns and greys of the mountains of Newfoundland, in turn yielding to swathes of dark greens in the New England forests. The beautiful sunbursts through the evening haze as we approached Newark Liberty Airport were a reminder that we can only suggest the glories of Creation, not create them ourselves.



Having cleared customs in twenty minutes or so, I was dropped off by the bus a short walk from Times Square, a brightly lit space, flashing all sorts of different colours, like an extreme mixture of Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus. Having spent Sunday and Monday in the pursuits of the tourist, it was time, on Tuesday, to hear what the Broadway designers had to say.

### Getting down to business

In the well-appointed theatre at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts in Washington Square, **Jules Fisher** spoke on *'An Approach to Lighting Design'*. He was at pains, as indicated in the title of his lecture, to point out that lighting design is personal and so other approaches are equally as valid.

The quality of light is its own meaning. The art lies in the question 'Why?'

Lighting design is the mani-

pulation of the properties of light to do various things.

### 1. Communicate visually the meaning of the event.

We must acquire knowledge of how we see and how to control light physically to mould the three-dimensional void. The light must have a purpose; it must serve the play and the actor, not the contents of the stage.

### 2. Create illusion.

Tennessee Williams said that *"magic is illusion claiming to be truth"*. Theatre is truth claiming to be illusion. All art is an illusion to some extent and suggests reality. We can create an illusion that the audience will accept as reality.

Illusions carry mental and emotional information. We can put the spirit of a forest onto stage or the illusion of a man in a forest. We do not put a real forest on stage. *"There is no reality on stage"*, said Graciela Daniele, *"but the truth is there instead"*.

### 3. Evoke emotion.

When we see light, we perceive an emotion, often sub-consciously. With each moment to be lit, we should perceive the emotional thrust and reveal, rather than present, it. We must make it believable and support one belief with another. A degree of naturalism must remain or the mind will reject the image. Low sunlight suggests evening or early morning, not midday, for example.

### 4. Incite awe and wonder.

The theatre is a place to see visual explosions, where one can leave the mundane behind. Images and emotions from the theatre will last a life-time.

Jules Fisher's private design process consists of him searching for a common experiential core. He has several imperatives.

1. Make the work beautiful at every moment. As Pierre Boulez said, 'Elegance is never trivial.

It is an acute form of precision.'

2. Make it compelling.
3. Find the unobvious.
4. Reveal through contrast. Control the qualities of light – speed, brightness, and size, for example. The impact that the light has will depend on the culture of the viewer. Picasso's painting of *Les Femmes d'Alger* was a cultural contrast when it was first painted. Now we are used to the style of painting.
5. Provide variety. One of Fisher's techniques is to use several different colours at once, for example to light the skin, make the costumes stand out, and colour the shadows. The receptors in the eye are thus stimulated separately.
6. Beauty in simplicity. Einstein believed in making things as simple

as possible, but not simpler. Advertisements often use very simple images. It is thus easier to reject the unwanted noise. We can, however, control the noise. The mind wants regularity in randomness; order is comforting, but chaos is disturbing.

7. Do not design for other lighting designers; design for the audience.
8. Avoid having a style or recognisable features. Do what is demanded by the play.
9. Be prepared with images and ideas.
10. Light the shadows. The sky colours all shadows cast by the sun. We can control the darkness as well as the light.
11. Do something outside theatre; have experiences and feelings.
12. Study nature.
13. Cultivate good taste.

14. Stay healthy and give your all to the production. Do the best job possible, regardless of whether the play is good or bad. Keep learning. Avoid the easy solution to a problem and solve it in a new way. Ask, 'What if...?'

After refreshments, Fisher gave another approach. We can consider lighting as sculpting a luminous plasma. Think of the space as a volume of fluid with light values in the four space-time dimensions. Actors are glowing objects with different colours and other properties. Moving lights mean that we can morph the atmosphere and choreograph an entire lighting rig.

Fisher displayed a number of paintings, including some by Van Gogh, Klimt, Hopper, Vermeer, Goya, and Whistler. An exercise for the reader would be to go to an art gallery and ask of the paintings where the light is coming from, how

it interacts with the subject of the painting, and what mood it evokes. Then try the exercise suggested by Brian MacDevitt (over page).

He continued with a few miscellaneous thoughts.

**If anything changes, we have movement.**

*You must control every parameter that you can control. If you do not, you are not doing your job. Consider the simple black-out. Remove or mask any spilt light. Any light not falling on its job is wasted.*

**If I could only have one light for the play, what would it be? What is the best solution?**

Directors do not speak our language of light.



## The Broadway Lighting Masterclass 2010 **Edmund Sutton**

### Be courteous to the crew.

Broadway has very high standards; everyone is very good at their jobs. The producers are generally willing to spend the money to make the show good. As the theatre comes empty, anything can be rented to create the show. You can invent your own kit.

### Thoughts on space and time formed the final section of the lecture.

#### The actor and the production share the space, which is virtual, created by us.

Josef Svoboda said that dramatic space has the same qualities as a poetic image. The excited viewer will actively, rather than passively, experience the show. Theatre contains a visceral danger; the actor, or the audience, could drop dead. The audience can be

brought over the boundaries into the space, but if we see the lanterns, we see the edge of the space. With the revelation of the actor, we define the space.

Light is to space what sound is to time. Movement draws attention. Will the next beat of the rhythm happen?

Put together craft, technique, equipment, and the indefinable something that makes art non-intellectual to create something great.

**Brian MacDevitt** showed various pictures from which he had drawn inspiration. How do we communicate our, hopefully strong, point of view? He tends to use paintings to communicate his ideas to directors and to inspire and inform the lighting and set. The more we can draw inspiration from outside the theatre, the better we can make our practice of it.

An exercise for the

interested reader is to write one sentence describing the light in a painting.

#### How shall we compete with the bright flashing lights of Broadway (or Piccadilly Circus)?

Honesty and integrity are important in order to tell the story. Do not be afraid to stick to your original ideas. Do not let the technology get ahead of you. A new way to express yourself can be a very old way indeed.

**Peggy Eisenhower**, Jules Fisher's design partner, discussed 'Music in Lighting'. In theatre, we do not often observe real time; we distort it. We must have some sort of clock, and the whole show needs a temporal landscape. Eisenhower sees any change in rhythm as movement. We could use vocal phrasing as the basis of a sequence of rhythms to give this landscape.

As an example, and to

illustrate the timing of cues in relation to music, she considered Beyoncé's *If I Were a Boy*. Number the beats; hear where the stresses come. At the start of this song, the stresses are on the odd beats; then the drum kicks in on the even beats; and later the vocals take the stress back from the drum and return it to the odd beats. The piece is available on YouTube and the grid [below] shows the timings.

1 boy	2	3	4
1	2	3 just	4
1	2	3	4
1	2	3 I'd	4
1 bed	2	3 mom..	4
1 throw	2	3 want	4
1 go	2	3	4
1	2	3 beer	4
1 guys	2 ■(drum)	3	4 ■
1	2 ■	3	4 ■

When setting the 'go' point, things to consider are where the change in light starts to be perceived. Where the cue actually starts in the lighting desk is irrelevant; it is when the audience sees the change that is important. It is therefore important that the DSM knows the motivation for the cue and where to call it so that the cue starts in the right place.

A lighting cue is generally organic; our desks have fixed clocks, but as they become faster, the organic can be simulated by the inorganic by breaking down the curve of the lighting cue into smaller and smaller parts.

**Peter Kaczorowski**, a keen gardener when not in the theatre, pondered the question of why lighting design is so personal. We take a lot of skills that can be taught. Then we add a personal perspective, our own eyes, which are unique, and our world-view and opinions to all those of a group of others. A good illustration of this is the



*'Rusalka', Minnesota Opera. Projections: Wendall K. Harrington, lighting: Robert Wierzel. Photo: Wendall K. Harrington*

way that Brian MacDevitt draws inspiration extensively from pictures, while Peter Kaczorowski does not.

Just as a garden must be tended, and one must learn which plants will grow well together in which soil, so we can still learn whatever our experience or age. We must

examine why something works well or not and criticise our own work.

We must be familiar with our own lighting rig and know what is going on in the piece. It is a good idea to prepare a bag of tricks from which we can pull things for directors. It gives directors

confidence in yourself if you have anticipated what is going to happen next and have prepared something.

We are 'artists of occasions'. Every performance is an 'occasion' for the audience. To create this occasion, we must put our head and our heart together with those of the

director and other designers.

'If we can succeed in seeing the quality of the play, others will succeed in seeing it too,' wrote Robert Edmond Jones in *The Dramatic Imagination*, a book which Peter Kaczorowski considers essential reading for any designer in the theatre.

The inimitable **Wendall K. Harrington**, the *grande dame* of projection design, gave what was easily the most entertaining talk of the classes. Her serious points were surrounded by a great many jokes and anecdotes, apart from the many beautiful pictures of



*'The Grapes of Wrath', Minnesota Opera. Projections: Wendall K. Harrington, lighting: Robert Wierzel. Photo: Wendall K. Harrington*

her work that she displayed.

"The lighting designer is responsible for the colour of the show and the projection designer should work to that." That is not to say that the relationship should be one-sided. Robert Wierzel elsewhere pointed out that he and Peter Nigrini would tune various colours to each other's offerings in *Fela!*

How do we create our universe in the base colour of the show? "Hang a piece of gel in front of the projector." We can hang a dozen pieces in

front of the projectors to tune their colour to that of the lighting rig. Alternatively, we can hang five hundred extra pieces in front of the lights to tune them to the projectors. One of these options will please the producer; the other will not.

Projection glows in the dark; this makes it fundamentally different from a set, which reflects the light that falls on it. No play ever needs projection; the play needs the actor. It is an ephemeral pictorial addition on top of the set. It is not lighting or a gobo *per se*, but it can be

anything. If the picture that we are projecting is worth a thousand words, whose words are they? They should be the director's interpretation of the author's words. We must ask whether this image speaks the language of the play. Does the projection sound like the music? Does it contribute to a unified whole?

She then gave some practical tips on projection, emphasising the obvious but easily neglected point that projection designers like side-light and want light kept off the screens. Anything can be a projection surface. A complex but legible picture will disguise a set as the audience will look at the picture, rather than the surface behind it. Always put a black bobinette scrim down-stage of any rear projection screen. It will absorb bouncing light, sharpen the image, and darken the non-black-out of the projector. Projecting onto scrim from the front will allow performers to be revealed behind the picture with light. LED screens are not pretty in the theatre, unless they are diffused with a rear projection screen and bobinette.

A **manufacturer's showcase** took place during lunch. LED fixtures dominated. Robert Juliat showed their new AledIN, Philips showed the VLX and the PL-3. Altman showed an RGB cyclorama flood where a line of LEDs takes the place of a linear lamp. Prism Projection showed their Reveal Color Wash, which actively monitors the colour output and adjusts the driving voltages to allow for degradation of the active region in the LED.

## The Broadway Lighting Masterclass 2010 **Edmund Sutton**

**FELA!** was our evening's outing at the end of the first day. Choreographed and developed by Bill T. Jones, with whom **Robert Wierzel** has had a long collaboration, it tells the story of the Nigerian musician Fela Kuti, the creator of Afrobeat. The show opened at the National Theatre in London in early November. Opinion was divided by the production. It captured the spirit of Kuti's club in Lagos, the Shrine, perfectly, according to those who knew about it. It left others cold. Nevertheless, the many flashing lights served the production to create the mood of the Shrine.

Wierzel, **Marina Draghici** (designer) and **Jim Lewis** (book and additional lyrics) discussed the production on the morning of the final day at Sardi's Restaurant. Wierzel spoke of the challenges of working with Jones, a choreographer who only comprehends a design when it is in the space and only

starts to develop his work in the rehearsal room. There will be roughly a week to put into the Olivier Theatre what took months on Broadway. He and Draghici also commented that whereas in development, the entire interior of the theatre had been turned into the Shrine, in the Eugene O'Neill Theater, it was not possible to do that, so they made patches of wall extending into the auditorium to bridge the gap between the Shrine and the world of Broadway. Wierzel used LEDs and a large rig of moving heads to give a modern aesthetic to the 1970s' feel to tell the story to today's audience. It is a post-modern show in that many things happen at once and the audience must choose where to look. At certain moments, the focus narrows to emphasise certain elements, especially those concerning Kuti's relationship with his mother, a civil rights activist. The hardest thing

was to step outside himself and see the piece from the point of view of someone who knew nothing about the story.

Sardi's provided lunch, and then, after more discussion of light, we all went our separate ways. **Rob Halliday**, who had just transferred *Red* to the John Golden Theater for Neil Austin, took Rob Bell of Cast Lighting and me on a tour of the production, and round the wonderfully restored New Amsterdam Theater, currently housing *Mary Poppins*. I went to see *Red* the day afterwards. The lighting is simple but perfectly illustrates the major point: the lighting must serve the production. There were lanterns and dimmers. There were no moving lights, scrollers, gobos, hazers, or LEDs. Two actors told the story of Mark Rothko. It was a beautiful production.

After visiting the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, where the roses were in bloom, and, on the last day, the Frick



*The Charles Schwab Building, Madison Avenue*

Collection and Central Park, it was time to return to Great Britain through one of the best black-outs, over the North Atlantic, that you will ever see.

# The Broadway Lighting Masterclass 2010 Edmund Sutton

## LED vs Tungsten

One of the highlights of the Masterclass was the comparison of LED against tungsten lighting by **Don Holder**. He emphasised that we should not be seduced by new technology for its own sake. In order to use the best tool for the job, the designer must know how the tool works. It is also a good idea to choose one manufacturer for any given rig; the colours can more easily be matched. The differences between the primary colours, especially red, in the Mac 301 and the VLX were striking.

Holder has used LEDs for various shows. The Broadway production of *Spiderman*, currently in development, needs an extensive rig overhead. Various bits of moving set need to light up in various patterns. The answer is to use LEDs.

In the rig were the Altman Spectra Par, Vari\*Lite VLX, Martin Mac 301, the Selecon PL-3 (three VLX LED units), and the Robert Juliat AledIN with a gobo set against an ETC Source4 with an identical gobo. Time will tell which system dominates, but the AledIN was comparable to the Source4, with a very smooth dimming curve. The ETC Selador, in various versions, lit the cyclorama. In the pictures, the LEDs are on the left (stage-right); the tungsten rig is on the other side.



Left - **Comparisons**

LED SR; tungsten SL

top: Bright interior with gobos.

mid: Sunset

below: Night scene.

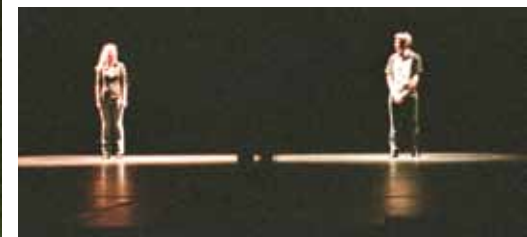


VLX vs Source4. LED white has a slightly green tinge.

This is felt, rather than seen. The LED source was mixed to match the HPL as much as possible.



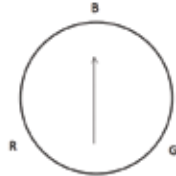
PL-3 vs. Rama



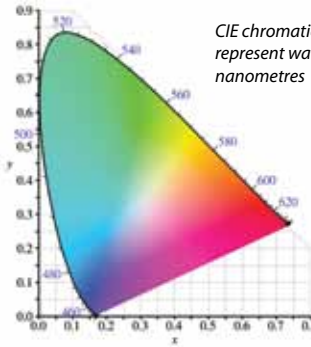
## The Colour Lecture

**Beverly Emmons** and **Clifton Taylor** gave their well-known lecture on the use of colour, a particularly interesting talk, I thought, given my background in Physics and the fact that I am an unashamed colourist in my own designs.

We can represent colour with a linear spectrum, which does not easily represent magenta, which does not exist in the spectrum, but is perceived by the red and blue cone cells in the retina being stimulated at once. It has been suggested that some people have amber cone cells. Alternatively, we can use a circle.



The CIE chromaticity space is a more accurate representation, although the blue region is known to be inaccurate. The CIE space is arranged such that the mixed light from two pure sources at any two points will lie on a straight line between the points. The position of colours has a considerable effect on how the stage looks. 🍷



*CIE chromaticity space : figures represent wavelength in nanometres*

*The figure stands out. What is white? White has shifted throughout the ages; candles, gas, carbon arc, lime, tungsten, HMI, and LED have all been 'white' at some point. The palest colour will be understood as white until it is really quite saturated.*

## Further Reading

- Robert Edmond Jones; *The Dramatic Imagination*; Routledge, 2004 (reprint); ISBN: 0-87830-184-3
- Delbert Unruh; *The Designs of Jules Fisher*; USITT, New York, 2009; ISBN: 1-933348-15-5
- [www.felaonbroadway.com](http://www.felaonbroadway.com)
- [www.wendallharrington.com](http://www.wendallharrington.com)
- [livedesignonline.com/masterclasses/bibliography-blmc/](http://livedesignonline.com/masterclasses/bibliography-blmc/)  
*A list of books recommended by the contributors to the Masterclass*

*Amber dominates cold blue. The amber comes from the front.*

*Putting the dominant colour behind makes the figure seem more three-dimensional.*

*The figure recedes into the back.*



*Open and Lee 203*



*Lee 201 and 200*





# My Michael Northen Bursary Submission

We asked this year's runner-up **Sean Gleason** to share his lighting style for *As it is in Heaven*

**M**y key aim for the piece was simply to experiment! At the time, as a second year lighting design student (at Rose Bruford college of Theatre and Performance), we were always encouraged to be as experimental as we dare, with the emphasis of our learning being the process rather than final product.

From the outset I knew both colour and composition were two key attributes I were looking to play with. Because of this I allowed myself extra time early on in my 'design process' to experiment and try new colours, and fixtures with contrasting colour temperatures to get the desired 'feel' I was looking for which I believe really showed and worked well within the production. I also believe that the overall composition and timings of the piece worked extremely well, and was only made possible by

preparation, always being one step ahead, resulting in more time to constantly tweak levels and cues.

I tend to be a very visual person, shying away from scripts and texts alike. I knew nothing about the subject matter at the start (an 1830's Shaker community) so I threw myself in at the deep end and attended as many of the workshops and rehearsals as possible to try and immerse myself in a 'Shaker world'. My initial design concepts came from a series of images that ultimately captured the essence of how I wanted the light to look and feel, and in particular a series of paintings by Edward Hopper.

I also really enjoyed the opportunity to work closely with the designer from the outset. She (Boinita Andre) herself had a great appreciation of light, and was very open and willing to experiment and respond to

my ideas and suggestions – and likewise, which ultimately led into the development of some very defining moments and images created onstage within the piece.

It was great actually giving myself the opportunity to look over a show (in some detail) and analyze and look at it in hindsight, something

I wouldn't ordinarily do in such detail. Its opened lots of doors already. Made lots of new contacts within the industry, its a great talking point, already come across several prominent LD's within the industry that have now seen my work, and know who I am through the submission.

I'd definitely recommend

other students to enter their work. I put my submission together in next to no time due to commitments on other projects, however documenting my work well in the first place paid off as I had access to most of the required work for the submission. 🍀



# Interactivity: it's a useful marketing tool. *Discuss*

An idea floated by **Eric Lund**

Having had some ideas that I thought might be of interest to the ALD and its members regarding our presence at trade shows, I thought I'd float them publicly. This led to writing a post on the ALD's internet forum (kindly hosted by The Blue Room here: [www.blue-room.org.uk/index.php?showforum=64](http://www.blue-room.org.uk/index.php?showforum=64), though you need to sign up first). It was very well received by other members so I thought I might widen the discussion and write something for these illustrious pages!

I had been thinking about the concept of interactivity and how it works so well in grabbing people's attention. At PLASA, for instance, those sound companies who let you put a pair of headphones on and do your own mix of the "silent musicians" up on their stage always draw me in and I wonder if we couldn't do something similar on

the ALD stand. Maybe when people walk past, the conversation could become: "are you a lighting designer?" "no""would you like to have a go at being one?". Then we'd no longer be just "preaching to the converted" – we'd be bringing people in and educating them as to what an LD actually does.

How would we do this? Well, we all know set designers, I'm sure, and I'm also sure we could find one who's willing to lend us a set model for a few days each time (we could get a different model for each show). Then all we need is 3 or 4 birdies and a couple of tiny profiles, say, coupled with a small dimmer rack with faders built in, plus a stack of pre-cut gels and some gobos and off we go. People can move the lanterns to any position they can find, change their colour, change their intensity and suddenly they're designing

light. If they get stuck and don't know where to start, then the ALD team on the stand (even if it's only one person) is there to help.

With our new interactive stand we are not only getting much more interest in the ALD but we're educating people as to what lighting design is all about. Did you enjoy using 3 birdies and 2 profiles? Just imagine what it would be like to have 60 par cans, 50 Source 4s and a couple of dozen moving heads? Oh, and you wouldn't just be creating one lighting state, you'd be doing a hundred or more. Think you could cope with that, or do you begin to understand why we need lighting designers?

When I posted these ideas on the ALD forum they attracted entirely favourable comments including: "I think this is a fantastic idea!" and "big thumbs up from me for this idea." It even attracted an

instant offer of support from a corporate sponsor, Peter Kirkup replying:

*"I have to say that I think this is a fantastic idea, and at Zero 88 we would happily endorse and support this with any equipment required. Hands on experience together with a knowledgeable designer is likely to be a big draw at the show, particularly if word gets around amongst those with budding enthusiasm."*


The idea was taken forwards with other suggestions from fellow ALD members:

*"I like the idea of a proper, old fashioned working exhibit, rather than wysiwyg - because people could actually fiddle with things. It shouldn't be too difficult to get the kit together and the models are probably also laying around. Maybe even a big TV and a video camera to point at the set too."* (Paul Johnson)

People liked the idea of keeping the kit simple and moving-light free to show colour-mixing the old-fashioned way and to allow manually moving birdies from one place to another to demonstrate the benefits of change of angle.

If anyone would like to comment further then the quickest way is to join the Blue Room using the same email address as you have registered with the ALD and add your comments to the existing thread. Feel free to knock the idea if you want to, and comments supporting it are warmly welcomed too! Oh, and if anyone feels they have ideas of their own about matters relating to lighting design, the same forum is the place to share them (another example of interactivity!). Come and join us over in cyberspace! 🍷

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