

June / July 2007

Professionals' Special

ALD # FOCUS

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

The Emperor's Clothes, lighting: David W. Kidd, photo: Temelko Temelkov. Feature article on page 16..

Under the sidelight this issue:

**Subsidised theatre fees campaign • Sidelight concerns on stage • Finding work
• Lighting in Bulgaria • Photographs for publication... and much more!**

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Rick's Rant

The way lighting designers work is changing. As theatres try to share the ever-increasing cost of production and managements are less willing to take risks on totally unknown projects, more productions are enjoying a future life. This raises some challenges for the creative team and for lighting designers in particular.

Since we are not top of the theatrical 'food' chain, our involvement in the creation of a performance is often taken for granted. After all, this is the primary goal of the ALD – to raise awareness of what we do. Tours or second productions get booked without checking on a designer's availability or the suitability of venues to recreate the performance the producers plan to tour. Inadequate budgets seem endemic to

these recreations.

In the last two years, I've been aware of many cases of lighting designers unhappy with touring arrangements for their successful work. Sometimes it is the lack of physical or financial resources; sometimes producers don't want to ask the original lighting designer to recreate their work but somehow expect it to be in the skips with the costumes, or they want to replace the lighting designer. This is why the ALD Rider has a really important clause relating to the right of first refusal if a production has a future life. It should form a part of every contract or letter of agreement even if you don't use the rider.

Recently a leading actor (around whom the show was based) refused to do the job unless the creative

team was kept intact when a play transferred overseas. Not surprisingly the team stayed



together and the lighting designer went on to be nominated for a prestigious award. But if the creative team is not united in insisting to be kept as a unit, overseas producers will often use numerous excuses to break it up. If the team is strong these pressures can be resisted. If not, some parts of the team may be left behind but if your contract includes the right of first refusal then at least your rights are clear. While no contract can ensure a designer is kept on a project when not desired by director or producer, at least their responsibility is set out and a negotiation has to take place.

This brings me around to one of the events that happened in the last few weeks. #

... *Continued over page.*

"Why should anyone consider it a luxury to have 'Breakdown Cover' in case a producer wants to ignore your contractual rights?"

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Rick's Rant continues....

There was the launch of a joint campaign by the ALD with Equity and BECTU about low fees in the Subsidised Repertories. We all know that on rare occasion a minimum fee is offered. Now ALD members have the backing of their union and BECTU (which still represents some members who have been given design duties while working under BECTU contracts in theatres) to turn down fees that represent less than half of the combined set and costume design minimum fees. In almost all categories this represent a reasonable increase of the negotiated

minimums of the Equity/TMA agreement. We should welcome this as another approach to unacceptable low fees offers.

While ALD research proves that these minimum fees are rarely paid, we now have added backing to make sure that no one should be working for these rates in Subsidised Rep. We need to stand together to make sure that we all turn down work if the fees are below those in the chart. Let the ALD know if you are offered fees below the rates. If we stand together conditions will improve.



BECTU
BROADCASTING
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THEATRE UNION

Why join Equity?

Increasingly I feel it is essential. With shows having secondary lives more often, Equity can be useful

at making sure that your rights are protected and their legal back up is free. Try and get that sort of advice privately – very expensive!

It was pointed out to me that you would not think of driving without car insurance and probably some sort of independent breakdown cover. The less good the car, the more that sort of insurance is necessary. The same is true in the theatre. The less good the producer, the more you may need the back up of the union. The ALD has intervened in a number of cases like this in the last year, and is committed to doing so, but all the designers involved found that Equity's involvement was also very useful. It's a good investment of £95 if you pay by standing

order and one that is naturally a tax-deductible business expense.

AGM

I am sorry that design commitments in the USA keep me from attending this year's AGM on the 13th of June. I will be there in spirit while I am working in Santa Fe. One item I would like to draw member's attention to is the level of subscription to the ALD. They have not changed for the past five years and while our finances are sound through growing membership, that cannot continue indefinitely. Constitutionally we need to give a year's notice before they are revised. This will be discussed at this year's AGM with a proposal to raise them for the year 2009. #

Have a great summer.
Regards, Rick



| April 2007 Fees | Set & Costume | Lighting | 50% Fee |
|-----------------|---------------|--|-----------|
| MRSL 1 | £3,238.00 | £1,209.00 | £1,619.00 |
| Tour | £3,238.00 | £1,685.00 this fee is okay it's greater than 50% | |
| Studio/Workshop | £1,377.00 | £579.00 | £689.00 |
| MRSL 2/3 | £2,372.00 | £660.00 | £1,186.00 |
| Studio/Workshop | £1,143.00 | £527.00 | £572.00 |

Professionals' on the level – Mark Jonathan (and friends...)

Some of you will have heard about concerns raised about the use of side lighting. Let me try and explain the “Equity Side-light issue” ...



Opera chorus members took out an Equity ARC* Motion and the exact wording is:

“The growing use of intense side lighting is of extreme concern to choristers working in opera houses. There appears to be little or no academic research available on the effects of powerful side lighting on the eyes of choristers, particularly during the exit times from the stage. Opera productions tend to utilise highly creative lighting designs which can be problematic to those working on the stage. This Annual Conference asks the Equity Council to find

ways of investigating means of research and linking up with existing appropriate industry bodies with a view to establishing a code of practice for the use of side lighting in opera houses and elsewhere.”

I was asked to advise Equity on certain issues and in turn I have asked the membership for comment. Thanks to all the professional members who responded with thoughts and ideas. A number of you have written saying how essential sidelight is to your designs and I certainly agree that we will be sunk if we can't use side lighting; that said we must do everything we can to ensure the safety and health of our performers.

I understand that this

issue was raised by a chorus member at ENO who went to the optician and was asked if she had spent a lot of time in the sun as her eyes were showing signs normally attributed to the effects of bright sunlight. She hadn't been out in the sun, but instead, inside an opera house. Hence, Equity has agreed to commission scientific research. A number of our members have offered their services but they do also need an eye specialist to ensure the research is effective.

In the meantime, I was interested to hear from Paule Constable who told me that when she was lighting at the NT recently, using powerful TV light sources, she asked the actors to wear sunglasses during the technical as she felt

that they would be subjected to the light for longer periods of time than in performance. Paule said she thought it was regrettable that this issue had gone so far and that as LDs we should ensure that a dialogue does exist between the stage and the production desk.

Followspots in Germany

I was lighting the Staats Ballett in Berlin a couple of weeks ago and it's not the first time that a principal dancer has arrived on stage and complained that the followspot and the side light are too bright. I don't think this is about internal damage to the eye though, it's simply the dancer feeling insecure about where the floor is and I usually end up reducing the level of offending lights and

increasing the overhead light. I've discussed this problem with a number of dancers at the Royal Ballet but in the end, while they often 'grin and bear it', I'd prefer them to feel comfortable in the stage lighting. The truth is they feel most comfortable in a rather low level and bland lighting. I raised an eyebrow in Berlin when they told me that their artistic director, Vladimir Malakhov, who is also their leading male dancer, will not allow followspots in his productions. I used them and the ballet staff whispered to me that they preferred this as they could see the performance better.

Light proximity in opera

Returning to the opera chorus issue I wonder if this about

* Annual Representative Conference. The Representatives are elected by Committee and Branches.



people standing still and perhaps to close to a light source for too long? It also seems that care must be taken over the exit and possible close proximity of lights. We certainly should ensure that we are not

causing extended periods of discomfort. Paule Constable says that we should be watchful for performers who look directly into light sources and Helen Morley adds:

"I think it's also worth

asking the academic doing the research to consider whether the subject is looking directly at the light source or not. An actor is usually looking at another actor or out at the audience, so the light source is in his peripheral

vision. When this is not the case, it is usually possible for a performer to deliberately look above or to the side of a light source. A ban on sidelight would be worse than performers having to wear sun-glasses!"

David Holmes wrote to me and said:

"Anyone who stares at any light for any length of time will find it uncomfortable – the key is to not look at it. I occasionally have to rebalance scenes for actors finding a low-angle key-light irritating (never straight sidelight) and am happy to do it within reason. In reality how often do casts have to spend long periods of time facing directly offstage and not toward the audience?"

In my opinion it is all about contrast, if a scene is lit in other ways too (allowing easier orientation and less contrast to the eye) then performers rarely notice; bright sidelight on alone can cause trouble on occasion. Nevertheless, if the issue is calmly brought to my attention during tech then a gentle word and minor adjustment solves the problem."

Flick Ansell says:

"Well I would love to know on what basis the 'damage' is, the human eye has an exceptional range

of capabilities. Exactly what parts of the eye are they saying are damaged by sidelight? There is a debate about glare – broken primarily into two types – discomfort and disability glare and there is a horrific equation to get the ‘answer’. The simple calculations I offer also does the maths for you. It gives one a glare rating that can then be assessed against human comfort levels. If they have a case at all they would probably use this method... I always have said one person’s glare is another person’s sparkle! But sparkle doesn’t as yet have a formally recognized way of assessing it – although there are people trying! I’m sure the chaps here at DHA Designs would have a word or two add on this topic. The main thing is to establish exactly what their case is. After all nothing is brighter than the sun and you can’t ban that!”

So, let’s hope that some sensible way forward can be established. I have already been disappointed to find that the American

opera houses with AGMA agreements have banned use of all haze, apart from dry ice. For me that heralded an end to atmosphere. So I was pleasantly surprised to find I could use haze in New York although we did get a number of visits from the local fire brigade, as the theatre’s fire alarm was so sensitive.

German taxes

Moving on: I mentioned working in Germany and I wondered if any other LDs have ‘cracked’ the German tax system? Although I got the right forms signed by the UK tax inspector which means that income tax isn’t deducted in Germany but other taxes are, I’m really hacked off that the Germans levy a VAT charge on fees paid and deduct this from the fee. Worse still, they add up all the peripheral costs like flights and hotels and show this as additional income and deduct a further tax on this. So the more expensive the flight the more tax they take. That seems quite unfair, as the number of times one

has to go for meetings or the length of time one has to stay is not something that we can control. Anyway, beware! I wonder if we should get a tax specialist to give us some advice?

Breakfast with the Inland Revenue

Of course, I try and claim all these things as expenses. As a freelance designer I find I often have meetings with creative teams at my home as this is where my office so I also have assistants working there as well. I’ve always thought people work better if they are fed. So, depending on the time of day, I have served everything from breakfast to dinner. I asked my accountant to clarify what I could claim against tax. The reply came back that the Inland Revenue would allow the tea bags! I was thinking of claiming rather more than that. Meanwhile, away from home, if I have an assistant working for me and pay for his meal I can’t claim it but if he pays and puts it in his invoice I can. I think the truth is when

we are in production and under pressure we just pay out. While you may be able to claim legitimate expenses in your annual accounts there are times when I think I might be better off if I just stayed at home in front of the telly.

English Taxis

I’m tired of arguing with managements about whether I can take a taxi to the station when I have a lot of luggage. I realised recently that if I didn’t go to the gym I wouldn’t have been fit to get my luggage from platform 15 to platform 5 at London Bridge. Set designers tell me that when they have an argument about this they point out that they were carrying a large model box. I find that by the time I have my laptop, paperwork, score and scripts usually for more than one job I can easily be in excess baggage if I’m flying. My latest solution is to hand in a box file or two at the end of the job and tell the management to “Fed-Ex” the files back. We say in the ALD Rider that we do expect taxis to and from home to airports

and hotels. I find considerable resistance to this in European houses so in this situation it’s essential that the fee is large enough to cover these expenses.

Maybe it’s a sign of my age that even “popping up” to Birmingham for meetings or rehearsals can be tiring and that after a long day, travelling back on an overcrowded train can leave one feeling exhausted at Euston and the final tube and train can be just too much. Anyway, I send you greetings from the production desk at Chichester. #

Organum ad Libitum

John Leventhall reports on an unusual meeting of reminiscence and research into the performance of lighting – the ALD Meeting at Rose Bruford College, Sidcup 18th April 2007

On a sunny April afternoon about 20 guests gathered in the lighting labs of Rose Bruford College where Nick Hunt – Principal Lecturer in Lighting – hosted this fascinating time-warp back to post-war Britain when the theatre industry was undergoing seismic changes in funding, style, management, buildings and lighting equipment.

Born in a flea pit

Our guides were Nick Hunt, Joe Aveline and Jim Laws who talked about the journey of the Bristol Old Vic Light Console from the rationing and austerities of 1947 to its current appearance at Rose Bruford. The rebuilding of post-war Britain needed optimism from the 'New Elizabethans'. The fledgling, year-old, Arts Council was commencing the subsidised public theatre explosion of the 50s and 60s.

The Bristol Theatre Royal (which Wikipedia describes as being 'in decline' and which Joe described as being an 'utter flea pit!') was being refurbished as a provincial home for the London Old Vic Company. The re-born, re-named Bristol Old Vic became Britain's first subsidised theatre – at a 'generous' 10% funding! The refit included a revolutionary new remote control lighting system – the Light Console – commissioned via its inventor, the legendary Fred Bentham from Strand Electric. It was this very control board that was the centrepiece of our meeting.

Revolutionary lighting console

Nick set the scene, describing how the Light Console arose from Fred's ingenuity and his quest for 'playability'. The Light Console was to make possible his passion

of 'colour music'; it was a sort of indoor 'son et lumiere' (which never really caught on). Fred spotted that the Mansell Clutch – a device for motorising the drive of a dimmer lever – combined with the organ stop grouping system of the Compton Cinema Organ company could deliver the sought after automation. Over a period of about eight years in the 1930s, the Light Console was born. It was considered so revolutionary that the mandarins of Strand didn't give it their blessing until 1940 for the first installation in Lisbon, Portugal.

The Light Console took the technology of lighting from huge mechanical boards needing three or four operators to economical remote control which could be located where a single operator could efficiently manage hundreds of circuits

and actually see the stage... theoretically! In practice these boards were often sited backstage with no front view (as in the Bristol Old Vic).

The Light Console 'organ' controlled the selection of resistance dimmers to lock on to motor-driven shafts. Varying the speed of the motor controlled cue speed. Each channel was selected by a stop-key on the console, coloured white, red, blue or amber. Each master group consisted of twelve keys, three for each colour allowing dimmers to be moved by pressing the colour master key to get Blackout, Raise/Dim and Full-on/Raise. Dimmers had both series and short-circuiting contactors (i.e. 'flash' or blackout circuits). Pedals and other keys gave 'Reverse'; Remainder-dim and 'General Move' move functions. Pistons selected pre-programmed groups of circuits.

The good old days in Bristol and the end of an era

Joe Aveline then took up the tale, giving us some nostalgic reminiscences of his long stay at the Bristol Old Vic and of the stoic, indigestion suffering, chief electrician who operated the board throughout its entire time at the theatre.

Joe reminded us that in those days, plotting the lights meant writing down each dimmer action and level as 'state plots' (programming then was what the artistic director did to choose the shows). Often up to several hours were then needed for the board operator to work out a practical way of moving from one cue to the next, rewriting it all as 'running plots'. This was necessary even though





Joe, Nick and a rapt audience.

reaches its real meaning for us today.

Performing the lighting

Nick had been researching into the history of control. He explained that in the era of the Light Console and the many manual control boards that followed, the operator was engaged in the timing and flow of the production. Operators needed skill and dexterity, moving often hundreds of levers to reproduce cues in synchronicity with the action (or at least promptly to the green cue light!). A Light Console required particular skill. Joe pointed out, on a



Jim Laws shows the first lighting control plug in the UK. Although the Console could be taken from the stage perch and replugged in the stalls, in practice it never moved.

the Light Console was the first 'memory' board – at least for selections of channels (circuits in those days!).

When Joe joined the Bristol Old Vic in 1957 the last ever Light Console was already two years old and eventually the Bristol Old Vic consigned the Light Console to the scrap heap. James Laws then recounted how the board was sent to a proposed Theatre Museum in Bournemouth and how it languished in a leaky container for years until the museum project was dropped. One phone call to Jim and he took it away. This triggered a mission of paramount importance for

the passionate archivist of ancient lights and he loaded up the console and gave it a snug home in Beccles until Nick got in touch some years later. This is where the story



Joe Aveline and Nick Hunt – Reminiscence and Research personified.

Light Console: "Where you have been is as important as where you are now, or the cue you're doing next!" In today's world, 'one button' operation of recorded cues, which always exactly reproduce the LD's instructions, offers far less engagement in the task.

In the course of his research in 2000, Nick secured from Jim the 'loan' of the Bristol Old Vic Light Console to Rose Bruford. Amazingly, he and his students have restored it, varnished woodwork and all, to working condition...

but with a twist! The electric switched output of the board has been linked to a MIDI interface. By this means the action of the desk can be realistically emulated by a computer programme. The action of the giant Light Console electro-mechanical dimming system complete with delays, inertia and temperament is reproduced on modern dimmers. This means that today's students (and some of us old fossils) can experience the 'playability' and performance of yesterday's control systems.

Colour music replayed

And so we squeezed into the adjoining studio for a demonstration of colour music, still experiencing the heady days of Rationing and Reviews. Students Stewart Lawson and Richard Sterzaker had prepared a miniature set and lights and proceeded to give us a live 'Colour Music' performance on the Light Console.

Despite the 'experimental lash-up' of the Bruford lighting lab, the adagio paced performance, mistakes and all, was really rather lyrical and magical,

flowing light around the model set to the music of the Prologue to Wagner's *Parsifal*. We all broke into a round of spontaneous applause when it was finished.

Stewart, currently studying the work of Adolphe Appia, was asked how it felt to perform live and 'un-programmed'. "You really feel part of the action," he enthused. "Even in this little room with a small audience there is exposure, performance, tension and nerves. I can well imagine how the operators felt when they were part of the action and connected with the

performance... I should have been taking cues from a conductor. There's also the feeling of designing as you operate. And if things go wrong you can sort it out."

After a bit of hasty set change and refocusing of the model stage, lit with a dozen or so luminaries, Jim gave us an 'ad lib' using a model of the set which, on a larger scale, used to be the centrepiece of the Strand Electric demonstration theatre in King Street, Covent Garden. Good thought, that!

What made this meeting delightful and fascinating was the mixture of history and personal reminiscence. But there was one other person who really made the occasion memorable – Brian Legge. Brian's titanic experience spans the whole post-war period of Stage Lighting and his role at Strand Electric gave him first hand knowledge of the key people, key installations and equipment. He added huge richness to the meeting with his encyclopaedic knowledge and atmospheric memories of the 52 Pale



In performance.

Gold-tinted world of the Light Console theatres.

We had a fine time! This fascinating meeting should be repeated. If Nick does it again, I suggest you programmers and board ops book early.

Here was a chance to visit a bygone era with huge relevance that holds up a very critical mirror to our practices and techniques today. #

All photos courtesy James Laws.



Stewart Lawson at the mighty console.



The model of the original Strand Electric colour music set.



OFFICE ORACLE

Latest news from Ian's production desk

Congratulations abound abroad!

It's the season for US nominations and we are proud to extend our congratulations to the following ALD members: **Paule Constable** nominated for a Tony Award – *Best Lighting Design of a play* for the National Theatre's 'Coram Boy' (reproduced on Broadway by Nick Simmons). **Jason Taylor** nominated for a Tony award for *Best lighting of a play* for 'Journey's End'. **Howard Harrison** nominated for a Tony Award – *Best Lighting Design of a musical* for 'Mary Poppins'. **Mark Jonathan** nominated for the Drama Desk *Outstanding Lighting Design* for 'Prometheus Bound'.

At the Outer Critic awards in New York, three out of four nominations for Outstanding Lighting Design have gone to UK LDs. Many congratulations to Neil Austin for *Frost/Nixon*, Paule Constable for *Coram*

Boy and Howard Harrison, *Mary Poppins*.

The Michael Northen Student Design Bursary 2007

The Michael Northen Bursary 2007 will be awarded by the ALD in conjunction with ETC and The Mousetrap Foundation. The Bursary was set up by Michael Northen shortly before he passed away in 2001. It takes the form of a £500 prize awarded to a student who shows exemplary talent in lighting design. The award is to be judged on a project that the student has produced within the past academic year. Until 2004 this award was in conjunction with the White Light Bursary. The ALD now supervise the organisation and presentation which seems fitting as Michael was a founding member of the ALD and a previous President. The fund has now been transferred to 'The Mousetrap

Foundation', an organisation committed to supporting young theatre practitioners. In conjunction with The Mousetrap Foundation the ALD now awards the bursary each year.

Applicants are asked to submit work showing the development and processes of a successfully realised lighting design performance project. The project must have been completed at some point during the last 12 months (July 2006 – June 2007). Materials such as photographs, storyboards, plans and any other work the student feels appropriate can be submitted, along with a 500-word synopsis of the project detailing the processes used to realise the lighting design. The entries will be judged by a panel of industry professionals. Last year these included Paule Constable, Mark Jonathan and Natasha Chivers.

Once again, we are grateful to ETC for sponsoring a runner up prize of £250. Mark White, ETC's regional manager for UK and Ireland, who is also one of the judges,

said: "This Bursary has always attracted entries of the highest level and ETC is delighted to encourage students in this way."

It must be emphasised



that this is a design bursary and the ALD is not looking for wonderful project management or equipment lists. The submissions will be judged on an imaginative design and creativity in lighting. The Bursary Award is open to all students and not just ALD members. The Michael Northen Bursary Award winner will receive £500, the ETC and ALD runners up will both receive £250. These three submissions will be displayed on the ALD stand at the PLASA show in September 2007. Submissions must be received at the ALD office by Monday July 1st 2007

Judging will take place during August 2007. Submissions should not be larger than an A4 envelope. Entrants may submit work in an electronic format (CD) but it must be printable and in a common format (i.e. Word, Excel, Jpeg's, Bitmaps). If electronic entries cannot be viewed by the judging panel then the entry cannot be considered.

Send entries to: Michael Northen Bursary, Association

of Lighting Designers, PO Box 680, Oxford, OX1 9DG

ABTT & AGM

A reminder that the ABTT Theatre Show at the Royal Horticultural Halls in London is on 13th -14th June and the ALD will be in the Assembly Hall on stand number 50. It is 'over the road' from our pitch last year and is downstairs at the entrance to the café. Slim members welcome as the stand is only 1m deep (lit by linear TH lamps?). Details at www.etnow.com/abtt2007

As announced in the last issue of *Focus*, the 2007 AGM will once again take place during the ABTT on Wednesday 13th June, the first day of the show, from 2.00pm to 4.30pm in the same room as last year in the second floor conference room of the Lawrence Hall.

STOP PRESS... Member's news... from Jo Town

"Dear Andy, I don't know if I am too late for this month's edition, but I thought you might like to know that after 17 amazing years at the Royal Court I am leaving in the Autumn to join the long list of other LDs out there in the world. So that's the news. JO"

2007/08 Subscriptions

The process of matching payments to members is still ongoing so if you have not received an acknowledgement to a standing order payment yet, I do apologise, but like British Rail we are getting there!

If you do not pay by standing order, have had a statement requesting payment, but have yet to send us any money, then please note that this will be the last copy of *Focus* that you will be receiving. The deadline for payments is July 1st 2007 (students can slip a cheque for any outstanding subs into their Michael Northen Bursary entry!). If you are unsure whether you owe anything, please feel free to contact the office or stop by the ALD stand at the ABTT show where there will be access to the database. #

Dates for your diary

13th & 14th June ABTT Theatre Show*

13th June ALD AGM

1st July Deadline for subscription payments

12th July Next Focus Deadline

9th to 12th September PLASA 2007*

* 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!

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Professional Members

Andy Purves, London. **Christoph Wagner**, London.

Associate Members

David Lapham, London. **Rick Worringham**, Bath.

Student Members

RSAMD: **Susan Kirkwood**. **Lesley Neilson**. **Susan Scott**. RADA: **Jonathan Coulson**. Central: **Daniel Bond**. Rose Bruford: **David Murray**.

Corporate Member

Clay Paky – Italy: Clay Paky is a world-class reference brand in the sector of professional lighting systems. Products include moving body and moving mirror projectors, colour changers (also for outdoors), followspots, projectors for display and architectural lighting.

**Coming up in the August/
September issue of Focus: 3-D
pre-visualisation techniques
using scale models and scale
lighting • Lighting the Sydney
Harbour Bridge • Lighting Lab
on London's South Bank • Roots
of the ALD... and much
more!**



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Focus Magazine

ISSN: 1364-9299

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ALD at A.C. Lighting North

The ALD was pleased to be part of the A.C. Lighting North Tradeshow in Leeds (1st/2nd May) which saw the biggest uplift in attendance levels since the event began – attracting over 30% more visitors than last year. As well as providing a definitive entertainment technology showcase of over 70 leading brands for buyers in the Midlands, North of England and Scotland, the event also served as a platform for many exhibitors to unveil their new products to a UK audience for the first time this year. Initial feedback has shown that visitors continue to welcome the show's combination of one-stop-shop technology showcase and relaxed, informal atmosphere. Thanks to all members who came along. #



Nigel Lawson-Dick signs up a potential professional member Adrian Wilkinson, as jazz singer Miss Nancy Hunter looks on.

VectorWorks Workshop

On Sat 28th April the ALD held its first Vector Works training seminar with Alex Wardle at the Young Vic in London. Will Evans was there.

Alex has been using Vector Works for many years now and knows it pretty much inside out and more importantly, knows it from a lighting designer's point of view.

Nine professional ALD members attended, some were complete novices with the program and others, like me, use it on a daily basis but "still don't know what this button does". It was a great opportunity for those who had never used the programme to try it out before maybe buying it and for more experienced users to gain a better command of the ins and outs of it. It also proved to be a great meeting opportunity for professional LD's who rarely see light of day, let alone each other!

We would like to plan more of these seminars as it was felt that we barely managed to cover the tip of the iceberg that is VectorWorks. We have also been offered support and training facilities from ALD corporate member and VectorWorks' UK distributor *Computers Unlimited 3-D Design*, so keep checking the email bulletins from the office and we'll let you know when the next one will be. #



VectorWorks seminar at the Young Vic. Katherine Williams and Nick Moran in conversation with Alex Wardle.

VectorWorks Forum

Computers Unlimited has set up a UK VectorWorks forum at <http://members.boardhost.com/3ddesign> as part of its new-ish UK VectorWorks site at www.vectorworks.uk.com. It would be great if members could post queries here so that the replies remain for posterity. This will also be monitored by CU and they will alert US software gurus if there are tricky technical queries. If lots of Spotlight use materialises, CU will split the threads off into a separate Theatre/Spotlight forum.

Strange happenings in Scarborough...

What were all those students doing in Scarborough? We sent ex-student and sympathiser Will Evans to infiltrate.

The week from 30th March to the 5th April was the National Student Drama Festival up in Scarborough. I had the pleasure of attending on behalf of the ALD to tell students about the association. I didn't really know what to expect so I kept an open mind. What I discovered was a full-blown theatre festival spread over four sites in the town, all run by students and recent graduates. I was met at the train station by Anna Cole, this year's technical director and given a whirlwind tour and brief history of the festival. It started over 50 years ago to showcase young theatrical talent of Britain's universities and it's now expanded to include seminars and discussions on all walks of theatrical life from directing to stage management, acting to lighting design (and the ever popular pyrotechnics seminar!)

Each year a team of professionals is there to comment on and give guidance to the students on various disciplines. This year's lighting design 'mentor' was Colin

Grenfell. His job was to offer advice to students lighting the shows, often their first lighting design ever, and to host a few seminars on the world of lighting and how students can take their talents further.

I joined Colin on the two days I was there to chat to some students about lighting design and breaking into the technical theatre world. On the first day we had a talk with a handful of students, who were mostly on the crew for the festival, about where to go next with their studies and how some lighting designers have found their way into the business. This year all of the shows were from 'traditional' universities, so no drama schools were present. In many respects this was refreshing as the students were largely self-taught and very keen to gain experience any way they could.

On the second day Colin hosted a more formal (and more advertised) talk about lighting design to around 40 students and participants. Although we went into less

detail about the industry, I still felt the students got a very good idea about what it is to be an LD and how lighting affects the performance. It was interesting to note we also had a few directors from some of the shows in the audience, and they were interested in finding ways in which lighting could enhance their shows and how they could communicate their ideas effectively to a lighting designer.

I was impressed by the standard of work both on stage and backstage, and the enthusiasm and commitment from the 70-strong backstage crew was startling. I will certainly be aiming to go back in following years and would encourage student members of the ALD to get involved in this fantastic event. The organisers are often crying out for lighting designers to light shows that haven't got an LD and it has been noted that these shows can suffer because of it, so if your interested, put your name down and head up to Scarborough next year! #

Sofia's Fairy Tale

As is often the case, a lighting designer is called at the eleventh hour and invited on board a project where even the clearest of crystal balls would fail to foresee the wondrous tales ahead. So sit back and relax as David W. Kidd tells a tale of the tales he'll never forget...

For me, the fairy tale was *Hans Christian Andersen's* – a new ballet double bill of the *Red Shoes* and *The Emperor's Clothes* by Norwegian choreographer Christine Sundt, part of the National Ballet of Bulgaria's repertoire at the National Opera and Ballet House in Sofia to mark Hans Christian Andersen's bi-centennial.

Set and costume designer Bruce French gave me a call. Could I make a meeting later that day? I rushed over to meet Christine and Bruce at his Brick Lane studio and they took me through the modelbox and both ballets. The score was to be a new working of Grieg's Lyric Suites and Norwegian Folksongs and Dances for *Red Shoes*, and Bach's Brandenburg Concertos and

Orchestral Suites for *The Emperor's Clothes* performed by Vasko Vassilev's Laureate Orchestra.

Then came the discussion over timescale. The whole thing was to open within three weeks. The generous fee and conditions were agreed soon after. I flew out to Sofia to join Christine and Bruce for a recce of the theatre the following week, having viewed the rehearsals on DVD and some groundplans to draw a draft lighting plan. "By the way," they said, "the first preview performance will be recorded for television, so can you look after that side of things too?" Thinking back on past television work, I agreed, with certain conditions. Fortunately, the video was to be for Chrissie's promotional purposes only.

On arrival at Sofia, I was met by the first of our translators, Chris, who spoke perfect English – in American – having studied in Chicago. He was to be with me for all of my technical meetings, focusing and lighting. A very personable and likeable young man, he said he was looking forward to working with me and knew nothing of technical theatre, in fact, nothing about theatre at all.

As we travelled to the theatre in the city centre through Soviet-looking streets, shambolic yet beautiful with the golden onion domes of the orthodox churches gleaming in the autumnal sunshine, I considered the few weeks ahead; still blank pages in my mind, waiting to be filled like an empty diary. But Chris had just helped with

the first entry! What on earth would focusing be like?

Introductions all round, including the Director of the House, Sylvia (an elegant slim lady of advancing years and ex-dancer), Company and Stage Manager Stefan (bespectacled, middle aged, full bouffant hair, suntanned), and Petya, Christine's assistant and another translator. Then the most important person for me: Dimitri, our Chief Electrician.

I was given the tour. Supposedly built in the 1950s, it had the air of being very Edwardian, 1,500 seats or so and as you would expect, on a grand scale everywhere. The musty smell was that of an old rep theatre, again from the 50s. The whole experience was like being in a time warp. Grand staircases

David W. Kidd

David came through the ranks of theatre electrician, from carbon arc followspotting as a teenager in Wales to Chief Electrician in the West End. Throughout this time he was engaged to light shows but finally he grasped the nettle in 1993 to become freelance.



backstage and marble arches of a pinkish brown colour suggesting past grander times. Once on stage, I looked up into the fly tower and could barely make out the three lighting bridges. The stage floor was shockingly bad with boards, uncovered in the wings, that were certainly more than 50 years old. In the huge stage left wing there were three large pallets on rails for shifting scenery on

and off – or at least that's what they did years ago when they worked. It resembled a

railway marshalling yard with buffers and signals.

My imaginary blank

diary pages were filling up fast as we sat down with Dimitri for our first lighting meeting to see how the next few weeks were going to work. The translations were successful. Dimitri broke occasionally into English. He was certainly polite and very keen to ensure I was looked after. As the ballet was to fit into the repertoire of the House, including the

Opera season, it was clear that I had to work with very limited resources. Going through the equipment list, I wanted details of equipment marked *decoupe* (profiles) and, as I was to be very thankful for later, *Svoboda*, named after the great Czech scenographer (a bank of bright par-like fittings, giving a broad backlight wash – in this case mid to downstage).

There were many old and large parabolic beamlights, mainly FOH and first bridges, PCs (of Russian make) and a very few old profiles, mainly positioned on the side perches with six Pani-style slide projectors.

I wanted to confirm that I would be given the facility for substantial crosslight, four or five bays of ballet booms in cool and warm, with shin



A monochrome feel was needed to enhance any splash of bright colour.



The moveable towers were not very moveable! Photo: Temelko Temelkov.



The T Spot gobo focus was not desirable, but I was persuaded to keep them in.
Photo: Temelko Temelkov.

busters. Sylvia, the House Director appeared very excited by this, suggesting this basic ballet lighting requirement was not a usual occurrence. “No problem,” Dimitri said as his head nodded. A Bulgarian who nods his head and says ‘no problem’ usually means the opposite, I was told later by translator Chris.

Dimitri viewed my draft plan and announced that this would be fine. He said I could refocus anything I needed except all the FOH positions which had a general ‘fan out’ focus which he illustrated. He asked if I would supply all the colour on my return as filters are hard to source in Bulgaria. “No problem,” I replied honestly.

That evening, Christine, Bruce and I were guests to see a Gala entitled *The Pearls of Opera and Ballet* presented by both the National companies we were to work with at the theatre. The opening scene from *La Traviata* was something to behold. Rigid, old-fashioned operatic staging, reminiscent of 1950’s amateur operatics, was jaw-

droppingly tired. The ballet excerpts, however, were a breath of fresh air. But the whole thing was lit in what appeared to be Cinemoid 65 and 5. Blue and orange pretty much all the way! The performers could not be faulted. Singers and dancers alike were good, but it was plain to see – the National Ballet and Opera Companies of Bulgaria desperately need investment and fresh thinking. Choreographer Christine Sundt is beginning this process. It was through her own fundraising that *Andersen’s Tales* was going ahead. It was a learning curve as much for her and Bruce as it was for me. We left not downhearted, but indeed rather fired up that our production would be fresh and something Sofia would definitely applaud.

So that first evening after the Gala, I was taken out by Christine and Bruce, as I was to be every night during my time there, wine and dine in wonderful inexpensive luxury. So I had to forgo any internal illumination, even company tremendously, even

sharing the same digs; the Red House, a combined art gallery, cinema and meeting place for artists, poets and thinkers, with rooms to rent. And WiFi!

Bruce’s design for both ballets included three portals of maroon, textured with autumnal colours, a full cloth of the same design upstage. *Red Shoes* involved two monolithic off-white towers, intended to glide into certain positions by the ensemble as part of the choreography. This was the first of the major upsets. They were built to withstand nuclear fallout! Bruce immediately pointed out (with translator) the potential problems. They also had to open out to reveal the archangel and the cobbler’s shelves. Both required lighting from within, such as the red shoes lit in their own compartment, but with the movement of the towers it would have to be from its own source and controlled via radio DMX, an unobtainable luxury. So I had to forgo any internal illumination. For *The Emperor’s Clothes*

the towers were positioned permanently upstage with added architectural elements. The additions were baroque style panels, along with candelabras and large screens. Unfortunately these were painted more in a commercial pantomime

style. Bruce was not pleased and this appeared to be the beginning of many huddled meetings and raised voices.

The lighting brief for *Red Shoes* was to maintain a monochrome feel in keeping with the costume design, shadowy and noir-ish, helping

to emphasise any splash of bright colour, such as the red shoes themselves. *The Emperor's Clothes* in contrast, being comedic, was to be bright and warm, also reflected in the colourful costumes and powdered wigs.



'The Red Shoes' concluding moment. Photo: Temelko Temelkov.

June / July 2007

The Emperor's shadow play. Photo: Temelko Temelkov.



I returned to the UK for five days before the main production period commenced. Bruce emailed me during this time – regaling stories of set build woes and of the wardrobe department using the cheaper materials instead of the wonderful

silks that were stored in the labyrinthine basements and unseen for years, but Bruce finally got his way and the costume department excelled.

On my return, the day before fit-up, I was briefed. I brought much more gel than

needed, and more again. Dimitri's eyes lit up and he was visibly excited by the gift of plentiful colour. I also had some home-made gobo style break up slides, made from good old blackwrap, to fit into the Pani projectors to provide some break ups onto

the towers for *Red Shoes*.

I arranged to visit the theatre at about 11am on my first morning, two hours after the fit up was due to commence. We were scheduled to start focusing later that day after the electrics rig. As I walked on the stage from its entrance up left, I saw a solitary figure standing down centre, speaking into his mobile, on the empty, bare stage. If there was tumbleweed to be found, it would have passed over at that point. As I approached, Bruce looked at me with

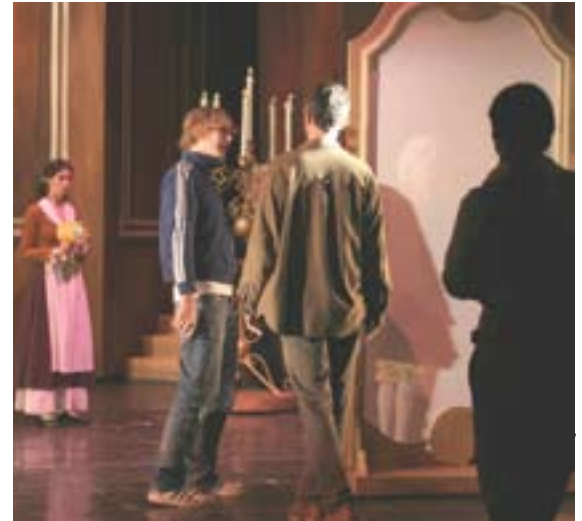
forlorn eyes. "It's going to be a long day," I said to Bruce. As always, he raised a chuckle.

Then action: stage hands entered one by one until it swarmed. The brand new 'Marley' vinyl ballet floor was starting to be laid. But wait! We shouted (no translator this morning). The stage floor was unswept which would have left massive lumps all over the place. But this was not the crew's responsibility. No, that was the cleaners' job – the army of very tough looking, portly

A pleasing shadow in 'The Emporor's Clothes'.



Dancer in background awaiting her cues with the flashlight. Photo: Temelko Temelkov.



ladies with headscarves who one saw occasionally sitting in the staff café smoking and drinking pints of lager at 9am. But there wasn't one to be seen at this time, so Bruce armed himself with a broom and started to do the job instead. He was stopped immediately with threats of industrial action.

wheels eventually replaced the original ones and skirts fitted to make them look less ungainly. Arguments ensued, and Chris, our translator for the day, refused at times to translate into English for fear of offending us. We insisted that he must do so as I'm sure they would want us to understand!

"The lighting brief for Red Shoes was to maintain a monochrome feel in keeping with the costume design, shadowy and noir-ish, helping to emphasise any splash of bright colour, such as the red shoes themselves. The Emperor's Clothes in contrast, being comedic, was to be bright and warm, also reflected in the colourful costumes and powdered wigs."

After lunch, part of the towers were built off to the side and eventually one cleaning lady turned up with the smallest dust pan and brush, fag in mouth. The new floor was eventually laid, only to reveal, for some reason still unknown to today, the rehearsal grid as marked in the rehearsal room and the house revolve, which we weren't even using.

The towers were too heavy and rucked up the ballet floor, made worse by the rough floor underneath, so larger

Eventually the portals were in place and Dimitri and the electrics department were ready to focus the overheads. Luckily, my day went comparatively well and Chris got to know the language of focusing remarkably well. Dimitri was issuing instructions to a distant chargehand. At times I thought he was quite annoyed with one, shouting "Wanker! Wanker!" tersely into the radio. I discovered the chargehand's name was 'Venko'.

The following day I was told not to turn up until 2pm, when the booms would have been rigged and these were the final items to focus. I did have some reservations about these, a vital part of ballet lighting, of course. My fears were realised as I entered the stage. Instead of what I was promised, I

saw four bays of a variety of lamps on a variety of stands. Some profiles of unknown origin, PCs and Fresnels. But they were coloured correctly! After some debate, I could not argue with Dimitri. In broken English, almost pleading, not wanting to go through the translator he explained this is the best they could do with no money. The rental of such booms were out of the question due to cost.

Since the fall of communism in the region, capitalism has stifled any funding into the

arts. In particular, Dimitri and his crew were all too aware of the shortcomings and on reflection, their determination to get *some* sort of crosslight for me by dusting down old lamps was to be applauded. In contrast to designer Bruce's situation, I felt almost humbled by the arrangement of old and bizarre lamps that I now had to focus.

Knowing exactly what I wanted, Dimitri focused, tweaked and adjusted, even getting Chris the translator focusing. Remarkably, with such a mish-mash of lanterns, it didn't look bad at all.

In all, I refocused most of the rig to provide what would be a downlight wash in open white (quite warm of course!), Lee 119 Blue and Lee 193 Rosy Amber lighting the maroon legs and backcloth in similar colours including Lee 106. The crosslight was open white shins, Lee 161 for cool and open white for warm which looked like Lee 152 at check.

I particularly needed to get a window gobo pattern onto the two towers for the church

scene. The only two available *decoupe* would be the newest lamps in the building: 25 year old T Spots! Probably the unfriendliest gobo lantern you could get. It was crucial to get the towers into the correct position for the focus to work. Not wanting a literal image anyway, the T Spots provided something quite opposite. I was going to cut them because, in my opinion they looked rather awful, and there was no guarantee of the towers hitting their marks anyway. I was persuaded otherwise!

For lighting later that day, I decided it would be far quicker if we all decamped into the control booth at the rear of the stalls, avoiding cans, being easier to communicate with the translator, but also avoiding what they called a production desk – a small wooden thing that looked like it came out of a Dickensian classroom, or something that Scrooge would sit at counting his money. I think it had an ink well.

Control was, compared to everything else, cutting edge!

A Strand 530i. Operator... not cutting edge. A crew member I had not seen previously, but had been sitting in this booth watching everything I did from day one. His name escaped me, too difficult to pronounce, but with his frame, look and spectacles we came to the same conclusion: It had to be Uncle Bulgaria.

The Emperor's Clothes required a little shadow play with the emperor supposedly looking at himself in a cheval mirror. The frame was gauzed and needed backlight. However, providing a light at the exact position was going to be a problem. Wheeling a lamp on a stand would have looked bad, even though the lighting state would have been low. One option was to use something hand-held. Dimitri came back with a high lumen flashlight. The beam width was perfect and a dancer was recruited to hold the lamp in a still but stylised manner and instructed when to turn on and off the lamp. Luckily there were obvious points in the score to do this.

I was in that control booth for the next four days, along with Christine, Bruce, Dimitri, Chris the translator and Uncle Bulgaria. All the Bulgarians smoke. Chain smoke, especially at work. No areas barred. The marble walls backstage were probably a very pretty light pink at one time, the brown tint being nicotine. We all suffered from sore throats by the end of the week. Even in the rehearsal room, cigarette smoke prevailed everywhere.

"At times I thought he was quite annoyed ... shouting "Wanker! Wanker!" tersely into the radio. I discovered the chargehand's name was 'Venko'."

I lit the ballet in groups and the process was quite simple without the complications of movers. But we had one person missing; surely Stefan the company stage manager should be putting these cues into the score?

With this revelation, another oddity rose its head. The shows here weren't often called by numbers. Probably 'blues up' or 'oranges down' I surmised. Stefan was far too

important and full of himself to do such a task – time to recruit a lovely young musician chap from the orchestra, named Kamen who volunteered to call the show for the LX. With perfect English, a willingness to learn and an immediate understanding of the job at hand. Fortunately for me, the resident orchestra was not used for this production as Vasko Vassilev's Laureate Orchestra had recorded the score in the UK. A resident live orchestra would certainly

have added to our woes!

Technical rehearsals stretched the good nature of choreographer Christine to its limits. She had to re-block pretty much the entire *Red Shoes* due to the cumbersome nature of the two towers. I can't say I know any choreographer who dealt with the problems with such ease and humour. Then at the 9pm wrap time, the three of us were off to another

wonderful restaurant, a bottle of wine, de-brief and de-stress ourselves of the day, and yes, even a cigarette!

The following day brought a new set of problems. It was dress rehearsal and first preview day. Fine, except that it was also television rehearsal and recording day on top of this. I had put this to the back of my mind, reminding myself of what Christine had previously told me that the recording should not interfere with the general process. "The TV director would like to meet you". "Oh," I said wearily, and was introduced to Viktor. He put me at ease, stating he didn't want to override my work, then proceeding to ask me for this, that and the other. Immediately I saw problems when my monitor was put online. The contrast was considerable for *Red Shoes*. There were no problems with *The Emperor's Clothes* as it was more bright and warm. The lighting for *Red Shoes* had to carry the narrative, maintaining the monochrome and shadowy feel and I

insisted this should remain. Thus the red portals and backcloth disappeared due to contrast. Victor wanted them lit more, but after some negotiation, he was persuaded that losing the red surround with the ballet looking more like a black box helped to differentiate the two ballets. As is quite often the case, a fluke had turned into a positive and as there was a paying audience in, I managed to keep the whole show looking not too 'cranked up' for recording purposes. After all, the recording was to help promote the show in its entirety, including the lighting. The increased Svobodan backlight helped to lift the dancers out from the depths of blackness in *Red Shoes*. All the additions for the TV recording I added onto the submasters, not to upset the recorded show already on disc and to avoid confusion.

After the show, Christine and Victor wanted half an hour to do some close-up shots. This went into an hour. The crew, suspecting that this was

not for promotional reasons (even I had my suspicions at this point) walked out. My two followspot operators left, the crew left, but my trusty Dimitri and Uncle Bulgaria stayed. After more negotiation on Christine's part, a payment was promised and they returned for work. It all wrapped by 10.30. I was relieved this day was over more than anyone, especially as I was assured that the TV recording was for promotional purposes only and not for broadcast.

The following day was the final dress rehearsal, as I wanted a run with the proper lighting. That evening was the world premiere of *Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales*. In attendance were the Bulgaria Interior Minister, Ambassadors from Denmark and Norway, plus many of Christine's friends and family.

A great success and wonderful comments from all those who had previously abused us including Mr. Popov, head of the Opera and Ballet companies, who had

criticised its contemporary staging, voicing many disparaging comments during the technical rehearsals. Christine, Bruce and myself, plus many within the organisation took this to be a great compliment, as they realised this was the start of staging new and exciting works. Christine's work with

the dancers was outstanding as were Bruce's costume designs.

I thanked Dimitri and mentioned that all the relevant paperwork, focus plot and cue synopsis would be sent to him. Uncle Bulgaria made notes of everything that they needed. Dimitri said he had everything already,

but I sent them anyway, expecting the show to lose its lighting quality once into the repertoire; hence my insistence on being billed as 'original lighting designer'. Happily, Christine viewed the shows a few weeks later and told me the relights were as true as she could make out.

Without the good nature

of Christine and Bruce, what could have easily been a job from absolute hell, turned into a likeable challenge which might start the tide of change at the Sofia Opera. And get Dimitri and his crew a lighting rig he deserves – sans T Spots! #



Chalfont St Giles, Bucks

Andrew Dixon is used to lighting ephemeral situations in theatre but here he combines modern technology with over 40 years of creating images for lighting a church.

Many churches are illuminated with enough light for reading, often from lights which can have very odd colour characteristics and disturbing glare. Worship is perfectly possible without any help from a lighting designer but we do have the skill to assist the congregation's concentration.

Using the latest technology a priority is to ensure power consumption is reduced to a minimum. High efficiency, long life discharge and florescent lights are ideal for buildings that are open for long hours, but churches seldom are. Tungsten sources offer a great range of good quality lighting instruments, and dimmers can extend the life of the bulbs and provide methods of creating various lamp combinations to match the changing uses of the venue. Architectural control systems are getting very sophisticated

and advances made with bright, dimmable LED lamps will eventually combine good aesthetic performance with environmentally friendly qualities. Low energy lamps are ideal for ancillary rooms and exterior lighting.

Exterior lighting

The churchyard at Chalfont is almost completely hidden from road lighting so I had a black canvas to work with. There are two access paths and a particularly pretty south porch to consider but bollard lights could be at risk from vandalism so I resorted to lamp-post lighting. After some research and after working with DW Windsor, who provided visuals and a light distribution diagram based on photos and groundplan, I settled on a Victorian lamp-heads with 35W 3000K Ceramic Metal Halide lamps. CMH gives an



The tower floodlights are run via a solar clock which turns them on at dusk and off again at a set time.

Andrew Dixon

Andrew has had a career in lighting design for BBC TV programmes. His hobby has been lighting in the theatre mainly at Questor's in Ealing. Through lighting events in churches he has recently become involved in relighting them permanently. www.adlight.co.uk



almost tungsten colour but with less yellow and a hint of pink – the results are certainly very pleasing!

As for flood lighting, I suggested lighting only the tower as it can just be seen at a distance over the surrounding buildings. We are now required to keep light pollution to a minimum so lighting any more of the building would be wasteful. Here I used 150W CMH Meyer spot lamps and to minimise glare I buried two fittings in

the ground. The west end also has an attractive door, which looks quite pretty lit by two PAR 20 ground lights. The South Porch is lit by a number of waterproof birdies with GU10 bulbs (to save using transformers). The same lamps light down the north side of the church to allow access to the vestry door. The tower floodlights are run via a solar clock which turns them on at dusk and off again at a set time. The access lights are controlled via simple fish-key switches at both entrances to the churchyard and at the vestry door.

books, at an angle that causes minimal shadowing or glare. Many churches are lit with uncontrolled floodlights that produce plenty of downlight but too much distracting glare. Although it adds to the cost I try to design in some redundancy so that if one bulb blows it's not essential to replace it immediately. This is more important where maintenance access is difficult.

The worship leaders can be considered as 'performers'. The congregation needs to see the eyes of those speaking to them in order

localised dimmer control and is provided by narrow spotlights from the most appropriate angle possible.

Now for the "pretties".

Many artefacts have been added to parish churches

over the centuries and today's congregations like to see them. They needn't be lit during worship but visitors need to see them clearly. In Chalfont's case the artefacts include hatchments (diamond shaped boards

based on the coats of arms of deceased rich folk) and fine 14th Century wall paintings. Preserving paint pigment is vitally important with historically sensitive material, so heat and UV light have to be minimised – enter the

"Many churches are lit with uncontrolled floodlights that produce plenty of downlight but too much distracting glare."

Lighting for the congregation

I had to consider what the building is being used for – prayer book Anglican services, up-tempo modern chorus based worship, reflective candle lit prayer time or concerts, plays, exhibitions?

I provided lighting of 150 lux onto the congregation's

to hear them properly and speakers need to be brighter than their surroundings. If I can provide backlight to make them look more three-dimensional then I do. Backlight can also be useful to light music scores – concerts often get performed at the front of the nave. Lighting for pulpit and lectern are under



Birdies lighting the hatchments with LEDs on the frescos.

LED! LEDs do not produce any UV light, so I used an array of 25° 3000K LEDs lighting four sets of frescos. Colour rendering is not bad for this purpose even though it has a slightly colder colour temperature.

Knowing that the

hatchments would only be rarely lit (they are high up in the aisles) I put UV-filtered 12V 20W birdies onto them from the aisle roofs. I also lit the nave roof, the positions where flower arrangements are placed, the organ's visible pipes, behind the main

altar, and the tracery inside the east window. Unlike many churches in Buckinghamshire there are no stone monuments to light.

Controls

I'm keen to leave a church with the ability to change

the lighting memories I help them set up and also to have simple manual control for unusual occasions. The interior lighting is all brought together in a Polaron dimmer unit controlled from the new colour touch screen control from I-Light. The main control panel is placed at the rear of the nave where it's easy to see most of the space. Other sets of parallel control buttons are provided at access doors.

My hope is that a good relighting scheme can in some way add to the welcoming feel of a church, where worship is made easy and congregations will flourish. #

This summarised article was originally published in full in the Spring 2007 edition of *Television Lighting*, the journal of the Society of Television Lighting Directors



View of the south aisle with the organ and frescos.

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Lighting up the stage

We are delighted to welcome this issue's guest reviewer, the well-known and respected theatre critic Michael Coveney, to share his response of the lighting on recent performances.

We say that certain actors light up the stage whenever they come on. But the oldest trick in the book used to be the one where the lights come up a point or two just as the star makes his or her entrance. Even the greatest actors were not above resorting to this subtle enhancement, and the lighting designer presumably just played along. They do things differently now. I watched Maggie Smith very closely when she entered (finally, and not before time) as the Lady from Dubuque at the Haymarket, and I swear that Howard Harrison's lighting stayed absolutely level.

The Albee play is a good example of a production where you don't really notice the lighting, but no-one should underestimate the skill required to make sure that all the actors are equally lit in

all parts of the stage, and it must be especially tricky on a white and chrome set such as Hildegard Bechtler's, which resembles something Frank Lloyd Wright might have dreamed up on a secret visit to the De La Warr Pavilion at Bexhill-on-Sea. I hadn't really thought about it before, but how, exactly, does Harrison make sure that the artificial illumination of a place looks so utterly natural?

It is an entirely true adage that the actors you can't see properly you don't hear properly. Unless, of course, the "not seeing properly" is part of the idea, as it was in Marianne Elliott's brilliantly integrated production of *Therese Raquin* last November at the National, where the shadowy lighting of Neil Austin not only caught, as Alastair Macaulay said in the Financial Times, "the

changes of daylight, lamplight and surreal conscience" but also defined the sensuality of the heroine – Charlotte Emmerson was picked out, bathing, in a golden nimbus – and the disastrous wedding night of the guilty lovers snapped in a long series of sickly green freeze frames.

The temperature of a play is always important. Jean Kalman's lighting for *Happy Days* at the National was a real scorcher, so bright and fierce it almost hurt your eyes to look at the stage. Not just this corner of the world – which in Tom Pye's design looked like Beirut after a bombing attack, or an abandoned military redoubt on the beach at Shoeburyness in Essex – but the entire universe, you felt, was burning up: global warming with a vengeance. And Winnie's parasol didn't gradually start smoking, as

is usual, but burst into flames with an explosion so forcible that many in the audience (myself included) thought that there must have been a technical cock-up. The after-smell, and the after-glow, followed us into the foyer during the interval.

"It is an entirely true adage that the actors you can't see properly you don't hear properly."

Hugh Vanstone's lighting for the hilarious *Boeing Boeing* at the Comedy is similarly hot, but less threatening, in perfect harmony with the primary colours of the air stewardess's costumes and functional farce setting (seven doors) by Rob Howell. A performance of genius such as Mark Rylance's, full of slow burns, delayed reactions and fumbling mental processes

needs the sort of unequivocal, impeccable lighting Vanstone here provides.

The same could be said of Mark Doubleday's lighting for John Simm's equally brilliant comic performance in *Elling* at the Bush. Simon Daw's clean design of two walls, one blue, one yellow, at right angles to each other must be unsparingly lit, but Doubleday also has to close down his lamps on short, inset scenes in cafes and

other interiors, and does so with minimal spillage or any sense of confusion as to where we are exactly at any one moment. You really do climb into a play at the Bush. My perch of preference is right by one of the lamps over the main entrance, so I take care not to bash my bonce against it and ruin the designer's focus.

You think of comedy as

bright, tragedy as dark, which is why William Gaskell's notorious 1966 Royal Court production of *Macbeth* (starring Alec Guinness and the virtually unintelligible Simone Signoret) was so arresting: the tragedy was played throughout in full bright light on a bare box set (by Christopher Morley) that would become a template for countless RSC productions, including Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1970. Current theatre design has reversed this trend and not only embraced soundtrack and video as endemic to design, but even used new technology to revisit the sort of design style popular on Broadway fifty years ago.

Certainly this was true of Rupert Goold's revival of *The Glass Menagerie*, in which Jessica Lange fluttered effectively in the poetic chiaroscuro of Paul Pyant's wonderfully detailed, nostalgic lighting – you could feel the stage filling with sepia – and Adam Cork's extraordinary sound score.

The whole metaphor of the piece – Tennessee Williams finding his own voice in the character of the narrator, Tom, as he leaves home to be haunted by his disabled sister for the rest of his life, and becomes a writer – was given a perfect, organic expression in the production.

"You really do climb into a play at the Bush. My perch of preference is right by one of the lamps over the main entrance, so I take care not to bash my bonce against it and ruin the designer's focus."

You can usually rely on similarly well integrated theatre experiences at the Donmar Warehouse. Michael Grandage's production of *John Gabriel Borkman* had a poetic homogeneity every bit as good as in *The Glass Menagerie*, with Neil Austin lighting Peter McKintosh's design with humming intensity, and combining with Adam Cork's second extraordinary sound score of the season (the "danse macabre" that Frida plays for Borkman elided with the icy blasts, sleigh bells and cold iron imagery of Borkman's early

days in the mines) to create a sense of both desolation and gaping void. Because of the architectural requirements of the Donmar, you never feel that any element of design has been conceived in isolation from the others; the production team has a series of problems to solve

and solve them together.

It was exactly the same with the latest Donmar revival, Charlotte Westendra's production of Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, where Hartley T A Kemp's lighting filtered through the slatted walls of the prison and created a dusky hinterland of marching gaolers and physical threat. This establishment of the atmosphere of "place" is a sure indicator of design success. Chris Davey's lighting for Lucy Bailey's recent *Don't Look Now* took us to Venice without a glimpse of St Mark's or a painted gondola: the

vaulted roof of the cathedral was simply done by lighting the height of the stage in a Gothic rigour, and the claustrophobia of Daphne du Maurier's story conveyed with a heavy, suffocating quality in the interior illuminations.

There was a comparable sense of nightmare pressure in Oliver Fenwick's lighting for the Sheffield Crucible revival of *The Caretaker* that visited the Tricycle in Kilburn. Fenwick started the show by picking out the Buddha statue and the drip-catching bucket in great cross beams and then moved around the locations, inside and out (Mick was seen lolling on a street corner before making his first entrance), before really pinning down Aston in his bedroom for electric shock treatment speech. Such a lighting plot seems perfectly to express the new mood of 'anything goes' after years of Royal Court-style steady levels of austerity.

The revival of *Evita* reminded me that David Hersey used "a light curtain" in Hal Prince's original staging,

an intense sheet of white light that he had first used in ballet. Hersey also introduced "white-outs" (instead of black-outs), freezing a moment at the end of a scene in a blaze of light; the technique became one of the show's governing dynamics. Last year's revival was almost a rebuttal of this stern Brechtian approach, more Latin in every way, including Paule Constable's sensuous lighting of both dancers and Christopher Oram's spectacular colonial décor, all part of Lloyd Webber's upping of the tango guitar ante in the new orchestrations.

Which reminds me that one actor in that first *Evita* was unwise enough to ask Hal Prince in rehearsals why he should move downstage at a particular point with no motivation to help him. "Motivation?" retorted Prince. "You move down there because that's where the fucking light will be." Further proof, if any was still needed, that lighting design will soon take over the world. #

“...Thanks for coming, we will be in touch.”

Looking for a new job? Lighting designer Guy Kornetzki was searching for a new challenge in the lighting biz. How did he get on?

Did I get it? I'm afraid like any good thriller you will have to wait to the end to find out. But it will be a ride of mystery, suspense and maybe even a few plot twists.

“It was a grey day; this damned city was drowning in its mix of crimes and dimes, and all I had to do was keep my nose clean and my gun loaded”

In a nutshell: after four years in the same job, I had to find something else. Regardless of whether you have experience but especially if you don't of course, first you have to get potential employers to know you; and to do that I needed to know them.

Find your target and do the leg work

“...I needed information and quick, so I headed down town. Everyone knows that if you

need information, you visit Fat Louie. But you'd better be ready to pay.”

First, I identified the job I wanted – you may either have a definite position in mind or you may only have a general direction, a market you would like to get into initially. My case was complex: I had experience but I went for a completely different market, so I had to learn about it. But that's a whole different adventure. Look out for a future piece on my switch to the 'other side' of lighting design.

The internet is of course the most important tool for getting information. The secret is persistence – follow every lead because you never know what may turn up. Other sources I had included were Yellow Pages, industry directories and trade magazines.

I compiled a list of companies and started enquiring, even though I wasn't answering a specific vacancy. Bold? Perhaps, but you don't get anywhere if you don't try.

“ Send to... a specific person rather than a generic “Dear Madam/Sir”, and make sure you spell their name correctly!”

I started with a generic email asking about openings for a particular position, trying to send the email to a specific person rather than a generic “Dear Madam/Sir”, and make sure you spell their name correctly. Silly yes, but you would be amazed how important this can be.

I included a couple of dynamic paragraphs on the kind of professional I am and offered to follow this

with CV upon request. This way, although my email is unsolicited, I'm still leaving them some level of control. It worked – I got nothing but polite and welcoming replies, even if they were refusals. I admit I was pleasantly surprised as I thought responses would be rare and negative. Encouraged by this, I prepared for the next phase – the CV.

Sell yourself with your CV and portfolio

From my experience in performing arts, I ended up having two documents: the standard CV that listed qualifications and relevant life story, and the showbiz biography, which only detailed recent production credits and used for program blurbs.

I decided not to amalgamate the two and always sent both, which never raised any complaints. If you're thin on

Since leaving his native Israel in 1999 where he started as an actor, Guy has been living in the UK working as a lighting designer.



experience or qualifications, it might be better to have a single document. Have a look at various online sources for advice on putting a CV together.

Another thing I ended up putting together is a portfolio of work. This is a must if you are applying for a design-oriented position. In the 'good-'ol-days' this involved a photo album; these days you're arguably invisible without an online presence. I had my ALD page of course (mentioning I was a member gave additional kudos, mind you), but I was asked to send 'examples of work'. High-

resolution A4 PDF with a few key photos was satisfactory at this stage; on one occasion I was required to send a hard copy.

... and onto the interview

For the interview stage, I'd decided to elaborate on 'example of work' and created a portfolio in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. I could easily take it with me on a USB stick, maintain original photo quality and make a professional, hi-tech impression at the same time. I selected the best photos considering resolution, diversity of projects and relevance to my target position and market. A few subtle transitions, key sentences and that's it. Clear yet impressive.

"They have invited you for an interview because they are interested in you. You are not in an inferior position but an equal one, so be confident of yourself"

My final CD 'press pack', taken to all interviews, included copies of everything I'd mentioned, and was left with interviewer for reference.

I'm happy to report this approach seemed a success as subtle yet meaningful compliments were given.

"I'm not much for dressing up, but after years of walking these mean streets, this tired old face was as famous as a chick on a billboard"

I was very disappointed with my first interview: I was stressed, gloomy and confused. Although I prepared for it, I was so caught up in the need to be 'business-like', I forgot to be human.

In contrast, the best interviews were the ones where I was at ease; with myself, with the interviewers and with the material I had prepared. And that was simply a matter of practice. The more

interviews I had, the better I became. It was actually a comfort to know that even if I wasn't successful, it was invaluable practice. I suggest

you look at the various specialist websites offering advice on how to prepare for interviews.

Interview experiences

A few things I particularly found useful to remember:

1. Looks can be everything, so dress smartly and cleanly even if there is a dress down policy. A few times I found I was over dressed compared to my interviewers, but looking smart made me feel confident, and showed them I was serious.

2. Let's be honest, a job interview is not a natural situation. I think it would help to think of it as a larger than life version of you; a feature film based on your true life story. Think about it like this: the cover letter or email inquiry is your pitch – a very early contact that wants to be both alluring but as short as possible. You are convincing the recipient to want to take the next step – view your CV. The CV and biog are your trailer – informative enough to give a strong and clear idea about who you are,

but also teasing and open enough to make them take the next step – invite you for an interview. The interview is your feature film: this is when everything comes together, where you present yourself in Technicolor for all to see in all your glory. But remember this is a feature film, make an impression that is larger than life – not false, mind you, you should always be truthful, just exaggerate. Make your good sides shine to the camera, and simply don't attract attention to less glorious aspects of your performance.

"A job interview is not a natural situation... think of it as a larger than life version of you; a feature film based on your true life story"

3. Finally, if you take one thing with you let it be this: they have invited you for an interview because they are interested in you. You are not in an inferior position but an equal one, so be confident of yourself.

"It was early morning when I finally returned to my flat. I looked at my reflection in the hallway mirror; unshaven, torn shirt and that black eye will look peachy in a few hours. But I was alive."

I started the new job in January. #

TIPS

- Info resource: look at specialised recruiting agencies; they already have vacancies conveniently gathered into a centralised database including company names.
- Even a generic search engine can be invaluable if you use the right words.
- Put together a proper CV; make sure your advice sources are recent and apply to the position and country you will be focusing on.
- Save and send everything as PDF documents. It looks much more professional and neat, and prevents any unauthorised alterations.

Through the Lens... part 2

Concluding Jackie Staines' pixelated thoughts about why she's never given the quality of digital photographs she needs to meet the demands of her editors.

Here we examine scanning prints, saving JPGs, press vs screen resolution, camera specifications, physical size and pixel dimensions. As far as submitting images to *Focus* is concerned, you don't really need to worry about this too much as it is dealt with at the production stage, but it is important to understand why, when we ask for "high resolution" images, we cannot use "low resolution" images that may have been sent in.

For digital photography, whether using a compact camera or SLR, the resolution of the camera can be set within the menu. When you purchase a camera, one of its selling points will be how many MegaPixels it is capable of handling. My aging Fuji FinePix A303 has a maximum resolution of 3.1mpx, my Nikon D50 6mpx and, as mentioned last time,

I saw a 10mpx compact in the supermarket recently. It is quite simply a matter of the higher the number the better, but remember, these numbers indicate the *maximum* resolution that the camera is capable of, not the default settings – so you will need go through the menu to select the optimum settings for the current job. I keep both my cameras on their maximum resolution (3.1mpx and 6mpx respectively) as I tend to take photographs specifically for press or to make prints to display at home, but if your photos are mainly used for web or photo CDs, check the resolution before your photoshoot if you want the images reproduced by press, as the camera will probably be set to 1Mpx or less. The resolution in megapixels is the maximum image size that the camera is capable of producing.

The figure is the image area measured in pixels as you will see below when we take a look at the Adobe Photoshop Image Size dialogue box.

One of the reasons that *Focus* has recently changed into a landscape format is to enable us to publish full-page colour photographs, some excellent examples of which appeared in the last issue. As the majority of theatrical photographs are in this format (through the proscenium) this was a logical design decision to make. An A5 page is 210mm x 148mm so any images intended for full-page publication need to be at least those dimensions, at 300dpi (Dots Per Inch). There are various ways of reaching this goal, although not all will produce press-acceptable results, hence needing to explain about pixel dimensions and resampling.

Starting with photographic

prints, if your image is A5 or larger, scan it at 300dpi and send in the resulting file. The DPI setting will be in the scanning options dialogue somewhere – probably under an 'advanced' tab. Do look out for this setting as most scanning software seems to default to 200dpi. But if your original print is smaller than the desired print size, you will need to scan it at a higher resolution to compensate: scan it at 600 or even 1200dpi, or look out for a percentage function and scan at 200-400%. If your scanner will not scan to these resolutions, then post the prints to us and we will scan and return them to you. If you happen to have a large format print such as A4, or 12"x10" you can stay with 200dpi and I will resize the image to fit the page. This is possible because the relationship between dpi (or pixels) and physical

Jackie Staines

Best known as resident lighting designer at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, Jackie now spends her time crafting magazines and books as Technical Editor for Entertainment Technology Press / etnow.com.



dimensions is not dissimilar to the Inverse Square Law...

Imagine a zoom profile fitted with a 500W lamp. No matter what we do with the focus, the Wattage is fixed. When focused to a tight spot, the 500W lamp provides a bright and crisp image. But when opened up to its widest focus, the image appears dimmer and less well-defined, even though the number of Watts has not changed.

Now imagine a 200dpi photograph that is about one *Focus* column wide. It's a reasonably clear image, but

we want it larger. If I blow it up to two or three columns wide (let alone a full page) the image becomes less well-defined as the fixed number of dots per inch, or pixels, is spread out over a larger area, just as when 500 Watts are spread out over a larger area they appear dimmer (see figure 1).

That's what happens with a simple layout enlargement – the visual quality of the image deteriorates as the image is enlarged. Someone recently asked me if this is what happens when working on *Focus*, how is it still possible to send a small image to

a print house and have it enlarged to poster size. The critical difference is that the print house can enlarge images photographically whereas my job on *Focus* is purely digital pre-press, i.e. I mess around with data, not 'real' photos.

On the subject of messing around with data, we come to the black art of resampling images. Or rather we don't, because it is just not suitable for press quality images. Resampling is avoided at all costs because unlike analogue photographic enlargements and reductions, resampling involves removing

or adding data. Even without a thorough explanation it is fairly obvious that removing data will result in something less than it was – in this case, poorer quality; and adding data raises the question of "what data and from where?" The computer interpolates data based on the information contained within adjacent pixels. Logically, as for as the computer is concerned, this is perfectly correct. Visually, it may or may not be what we expect to see.

Figure 2 is the Image Size dialogue box from Adobe Photoshop. The top third shows pixel dimensions, the middle shows document size and the bottom third resampling techniques. For press quality images, the only part of the dialogue box of interest is the middle section as it shows the resolution of the image in dpi against the physical dimensions.

So we can see that this example, and image from my Nikon at 300dpi is 25.47 x 16.93cm – an ideal *Focus* page size. A second image, from my Fuji, appears a

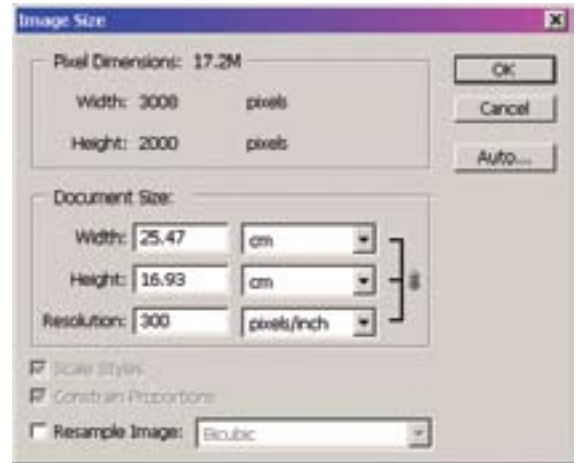


Fig 2: Raw image size from Nikon D50.

massive 72.25 x 54.19cm in the same dialogue box (shown overleaf); but this is at the default resolution of 72dpi. As stated earlier, we need to be working with 300dpi images so, with the Resample image option unticked, I can change the dpi from 72 to 300, (figs 3 and 4) and the physical dimensions reduce to 17.34 x 13cm accordingly – large enough for four columns. Note that the pixel dimensions above have not changed. This is critical

as it means that the amount of data within the image has not changed. I can safely change the resolution (dpi) or the physical dimensions, providing that the pixel dimensions remain the same. It is these pixel dimensions that relate directly to the setting of the camera:

2048px x 1536px = 3,145,728 or 3.1 megapixels – the maximum resolution of my Fuji. 3008px x 2000px = 6,016,000 or 6 megapixels – the maximum resolution of my



Fig 1: Image deterioration due to enlargement.

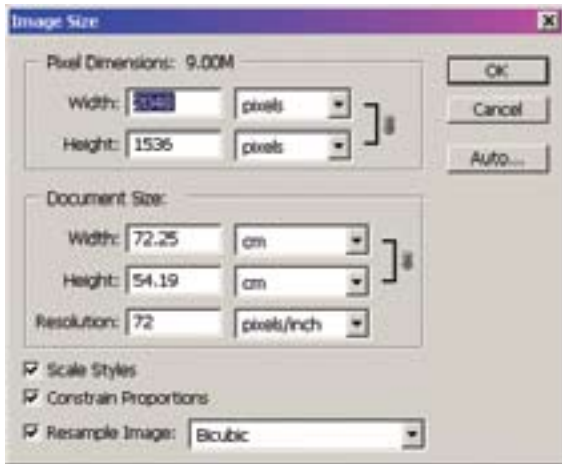


Fig 3: Raw image size from Fuji Finepix A303.

Nikon. The observant amongst you might notice that my two cameras have different aspect ratios – the Fuji produces a squarer image than the Nikon. Don't be concerned that the Pixel Dimensions shown in megabytes doesn't match the pixel dimension calculation – the top figure is the amount of memory in use whilst the picture editing is in progress, not the actual saved file size.

Downsampling an image will result in a smaller file

size (as there are fewer pixels – less data) and you may be tempted to downsample to squeeze the image into an email. But please don't – once something has been reduced in this way, it cannot be successfully enlarged again. If I see an email coming in with a 2-5mb attachment, I get excited, less than 2mb I think "I can use this image, but at a relatively small size" and less than 1mb starts to make me twitch. If I see an image of just a few tens

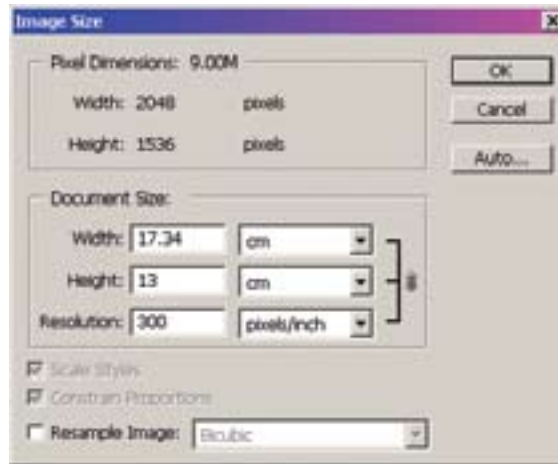


Fig 4: Unticking the Resample option and changing the resolution to 300 dpi.

of kilobytes, I think: "This eejit's nicked this image off a website!"

And that is where downsampling comes into its own. If I was to post sample 1 at 3008x2000 pixels on a website, it would take hours to download on a dial-up connection, and more than fill an average monitor, so if I want to post pictures on the web – perhaps on my own site or on message boards, I will downsample to a maximum of 700px

(longest side.) Combined with Adobe's Save for Web function, this will result in a very small file perfectly suitable for web publishing, but look what happens when I do the reverse and take a web image to use in the magazine! (Fig 7 below.)

Upsampling is the opposite of downsampling – i.e. increasing rather than decreasing the pixel dimensions. This is not a required function for *Focus* as images can be enlarged to a degree at layout stage, although this is best avoided



Fig 5: An image 'stolen' from a website becomes severely pixelated at press resolution.

wherever possible. Ideally I only use images at full size, or reduce them to fit. If an image is upsampled, it will suffer the same fate as the previous two illustrations.

The relationship between pixel dimensions, physical dimensions and dpi is shown in the following tables:

| Camera set to 3.1mpx | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| DPI | Physical Dimensions in cm |
| 72 | 72.25 x 54.19 |
| 150 | 34.68 x 26.01 |
| 200 | 26.01 x 19.51 |
| 300 | 17.34 x 13 |
| 400 | 13 x 9.75 |

As the DPI increases, the physical size decreases, so what may seem like a large image when presented at 72dpi will reproduce at a much smaller size when converted to 300dpi – the specification that the printer requires.

Fig 6: Relationship between DPI and physical dimensions (not resampled).

| Photo fixed at 300dpi | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Pixel dimensions | Physical dimensions in cm |
| 2048 x 1536 | 17.34 x 13 |
| 1600 x 1200 | 13.55 x 10.16 |
| 1200 x 900 | 10.16 x 7.62 |
| 1000 x 750 | 8.47 x 6.35 |

Pixel dimensions and physical dimensions are locked in ratio. As the image is resampled, the physical dimensions are also changed.

Fig 7: Relationship between pixel dimensions and physical dimensions (downsampling).



Fig 8: A 1200dpi scan of a 6x4 inch print, showing Ken Price in *Rocket to the Moon* at the Stephen Joseph Theatre.

When you draft an article in Word (or similar WP packages) you are able to insert images into the document. This is fine as a layout tool, or to help you write descriptions of the images, but when it comes to publication, we need the images as separate graphics files as described above, regardless of whether or not you leave them embedded

in the Word document. This is because word processors compress images in a similar fashion to downsampling, so they are not suitable for high-end digital print processes. So please, if you put images in your manuscript, please supply the images as separate files as well.

To submit electronic photos to *Focus*, we don't really need you to worry about the dpi as

that can be set at pre-press – providing the actual pixel dimensions meet the above criteria, i.e. at least 1200 pixels on the longest edge. This will allow a full height upright or a three-column landscape orientation print. A minimum of 2000 pixels on the longest edge is required for a full page print, or if you want us to zoom in on a smaller area of a large photo.

The ideal images for us are good quality scans or raw images straight from your camera – no cropping, editing, resizing or touching up in any way – leave that to us (although feel free to give us instructions if you hope for the image to be cropped or zoomed-in in a specific way. Try not to use the SAVE AS function as this will give the option of various quality types whereas copying the images directly off the camera card means that the images we receive are the original JPGs. Also, don't worry about large file sizes – the necessary recipients are on broadband and if you are not, then save your images to disk and post it to us, we'll do the rest. Large files are good, we can always make big things smaller, but can't make small things bigger. Remember the adage: "You can carve a ham but you can't build a pig!" #

Focus is produced using Adobe Creative Suite 2, comprising Photoshop, Illustrator, Indesign and Bridge. Microsoft Word is used only as a transport device from the raw manuscript to the finished layout.

Dear Focus

Re: Through the Lens 1

I certainly learnt a lot from Jackie's article on stage photography in the last issue but would like to make two points, each backed up by one image. The production was *The Band Wagon*, which was produced last year by The New Farnham Repertory Actors Company. I had 24 dimmers and we were in a marquee with a grid at 10ft, so conditions were scarcely ideal.

The first point is about shutter speed. I generally set a speed of 1/100th of a second, which is fast enough to eliminate camera shake with a light digital camera (I use a Fuji Finepix F11) but also allows a sense of movement on any shot where action is important. In this photo, the desolation of the centre character is emphasised by his stillness, in contrast with the purposeful movement of the men in black who are about to turn his world upside down.

My second point is about photocalls. I find that the

results from photocalls can often be perfect in composition, in eye-line, in balance, and yet they actually evoke very little of the mood of the moment. This can be because of restaging (which can affect lighting context), the strain of holding poses, or loss of concentration, due to lack of flow and context. In this image, the joy in the face of the girl is in stark contrast with the certainty of the other woman that it will all end in tears. That would be hard for the actors to generate from a standing start.

Probably, neither of these pivotal moments would have been included in a photocall and now that digital photography is so available and so good, it is easy to take shots continually through a dress rehearsal and to delete the 90% that don't work. Of the survivors, a few will certainly show you aspects of your show and of your lighting that would never have registered before.

Get snapping! #

Yours,
James Laws.

