

# FORUMS

ALPD#

The Association for Lighting Production and Design  
[www.thealpd.org.uk](http://www.thealpd.org.uk)  
December 2023 - January 2024  
£5.00 / FREE to Members

## NEW LUMIÈRE SCHEME 2024

Applications open for  
the new extended  
scheme

## LIGHTING DEVISED

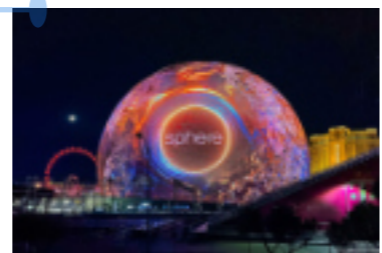
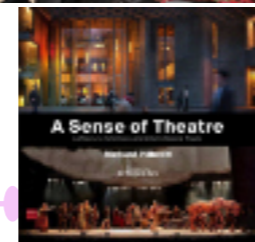
Chris Swain lights Gecko  
Theatre's show 'Kin' - while  
it constantly develops

## LIFEWIRE: WELLBEING

Looking after your  
physical and mental  
health on the job



<b>3 WELCOME</b>	From Johanna Town, Chair of the ALPD
<b>4 UPDATE</b>	From the ALPD office, new members, Lighting Lunch 2023
<b>6 lumière SCHEME</b>	Applications open for new Lumière Schemes 2024; BBT Awards
<b>8 ALPD AGM</b>	The AGM meeting at CSSD and report by chair Johanna Town
<b>14 LIGHTING DEVISED</b>	Chris Swain lights Gecko Theatre's new show 'Kiln' - while it constantly develops
<b>22 CORPORATE MEMBERS</b>	Thank you for your support
<b>24 KICKSTARTER</b>	Rob Halliday announces Richard Pilbrow's new book on the National Theatre
<b>26 A DAY IN THE LIFE ...</b>	People supporting our industry. This time: Amanda runs the ALPD office
<b>28 LIFEWIRE</b>	This time: Looking after your mental and physical wellbeing
<b>38 THE SPHERE</b>	The greatest venue ever built or the end of Lighting Design as we know it?
<b>40 BOOK LAUNCH</b>	Contemporary Performance Lighting - the editors discuss the seminal book
<b>42 CONTACT</b>	Contacts; Wishes for ALPD Santa
<b>44 COMMERCIAL MEMBERS</b>	Thank you for your support



**Welcome to our 2nd new edition of Focus, I hope you have all enjoyed the changes.**

Early November we had a very successful AGM, and I would like to thank everyone who came, we held a great talk in the morning, followed by lunch with much chatter and socialising, followed by our AGM report in the afternoon. A printed report is published on page 6 of this edition of Focus.



Now is the time for all lighting people's annual run up to Christmas, with Panto season well under way, I hope you are all busy and having fun, flashing LEDs, and chasing effects to children's joy. I was late in my career to Panto but now I can't think of anything more rewarding than watching the children, parents & grandparents having fun on a winter's night, even if it does mean I am singing the songs right the way through to the New Year!

My annual Panto at Theatre Clwyd is going to be very different this year. I will be lighting the Panto in a huge Big Top perched on the top of the hill by the theatre, which is undergoing a major rebuild (Photo below). My skiing thermals have been dug out of the loft early, along with a sheet of polystyrene to put under my desk for my feet, a fan heater and hopefully lots of hot chocolate. Wish me luck, warmth, and magic.

Production desks and our experiences with them are part of this issue's Lifewire section on physical and mental wellbeing (page 26 ff). There are tips and resources, and even an exclusive pilates session for lighting people! (Of course we'll allow sound and stage management to join in.)

So, wherever you are this year lighting Panto, I would like to wish you a very jolly and festive time. A happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.



**From the Chair of the Association for Lighting Production and Design  
Johanna Town**



Titlepage photo credit: Kin by Gecko Theatre. Lighting Chris Swain. Photo: Mark Sepple. See page 14 for the article.



News and information from the ALPD office by Amanda Laidler

**DATES 2023**

- **Oliver Twist Tour Tobacco Factory Bristol**
- **Lighting Lunch 18 December**

**DATES 2024**

- **New Technology Showcase 1 February**
- **Prolight + Sound 19-22 March**
- **PLASA Focus North 14-15 May**
- **ABTT 5-6 June**
- **PLASA 1-3 Sept**

**Oliver Twist Lighting Tour**

With ALPD member Chris Swain, Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023, 16:15 GMT at Tobacco Factory, Bristol. Register on Eventbrite at [tinyurl.com/OTwistBristol](https://tinyurl.com/OTwistBristol)



**New Technology Showcase**

will take place on Thursday 1st February 2024 at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. The ALPD Awards will be presented at this event. We do hope many of you will be able to join us. Further information and details will follow in our emailed Bulletins.

**Lumière 2024**

Applications for the exiting new extended scheme are now open for both Schemes and closing dates are fast approaching. There are full details of both Schemes and how to apply on page 6 of this issue and on our website at: <https://tinyurl.com/lumiere24> or scan the QR code.



**AAPTLE**

The Alliance of Associations and Professionals in Theatre & Live Events met online: Topics discussed included CPD and

training, theatres failing to credit technical teams, mentoring and how to find sponsorship for training. The Stage Management Association would like to encourage nominations for their Awards. PMF are planning a Forum at the Royal Opera House in the New Year on the subject of Pathways to Diversity, and there are plans for a sustainability event at Nottingham Playhouse in the spring. Information will be shared in bulletins as we receive it. The Association of Sound Designers is changing its name to The Association of Sound Design and Production. Visit [www.aaptle.uk](http://www.aaptle.uk) or scan the QR code.



**Student Working Group**

Oli Hynds is the new chair of the Student Working Group and would welcome some new members. This WG comprises students and those who have recently graduated. It's helpful to have feedback from recent graduates on how we can support students, and to have people willing to talk to school and college groups about the ALPD and starting out in the freelance world. Contact the office if you would be interested in joining. 📧

**A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS**

**Professional members**

Ebru Sarikaya, Munich  
Bettina Hofmann, Munich  
Matthias Jung, Munich  
Angelo Sagnelli, London

**Corporate**

Clear-Com

**Student (Sponsored)**

William Gibbs, London  
James Milne, London  
Eoin Beaton, Glasgow  
Jasmine Hoi Ching Tom, Cardiff  
Laurence Deane, Gerrards Cross  
Kirsty Edwards, Haverhill

The Showlight Quadrennial will return, one of the few international events organised specifically for lighting professionals, by lighting professionals across the performance, television, film, architectural and event worlds. Following the postponement of Showlight 2023 and a bumpy ride during the pandemic, the committee "has reassembled, invigorated and forging forward to this unique industry-favourite networking event." Incoming Chairman, Jim Tetlow, says "We are truly excited that Showlight is back with such energy and cannot wait to bring our delegates a fantastic programme of papers and networking opportunities. This has been a much loved event since 1981 and there will be many in the industry who are very happy to hear that we will return!" Date and location to be announced. Information and a sign-up to the mailing list can be found on the Showlight website at [www.showlight.org](http://www.showlight.org) 📧



Lighting Lunch 2023 would like to invite you to to The Phoenix Arts Club, 1 Phoenix Street,

London WC2H 8BU, Monday 18th December, 12:30 - 18:00, for an afternoon of welcome drinks, buffet lunch, speeches, entertainment and Christmas festivities. Students, veterans, everyone welcome. Great company, a chance to catch up with friends and meet new industry faces. This year we would like to ask corporates to include in their booking someone who hasn't attended before. Strictly limited to 150 places this year. Closing date for tickets is 17:00 on Monday 11th December. For any questions, also about access: [jason.larcombe@brightbluelight.com](mailto:jason.larcombe@brightbluelight.com), phone 07889 784681 or scan the QR code. Photos: 2022 Festivities. 📧



**The ALPD are delighted to announce that applications are now open for the Lumière Scheme 2024.**

Established by the ALPD in 2015, the Lumière Scheme is an exciting professional development programme that provides pathways into the industry for emerging lighting practitioners and designers.

The ALPD are pleased that they will partner with Glyndebourne on this scheme for the third year running and delighted to announce that this year they can also offer a second scheme: The Production Lumière Scheme.

A pathway scheme for emerging lighting designers, the **Design Lumière** Scheme gives the successful candidate valuable experience of working professionally as an assistant lighting designer for six months. For the first three months, the Lumière will be placed at Glyndebourne, assisting visiting lighting designers within the lighting and AV department.

Danny Vavrečka, the 2023 Design Lumière, wrote of his time with the team at Glyndebourne "I'm so grateful for their support and all the combined knowledge they have generously shared with me."

In the second stage, the Design Lumière will be matched with a number of established lighting

designers and will spend a total of three months assisting them, travelling around the country. The Design Lumière may have the opportunity to take on associate lighting designer roles toward the end of their attachments. Previous Design Lumières include: Charlotte Burton, Rachel Cleary, Alex Musgrave and Jason Addison. The **Production Lumière** will spend four weeks at Regent's Park Theatre and a further two weeks at Lamp & Pencil. Alongside this, each Lumière will receive a bespoke package of mentoring and support.

The Production Scheme will offer a 12 week placement at Glyndebourne, Regent's Park Theatre and Lamp & Pencil alongside established freelance and resident Production Electricians and Programmers. The Scheme will provide mentorship and real-world

experiences over a period of 4 months. The Lumière on the scheme will make contacts and gain invaluable experience to enable them to take the next steps in their careers.

Johanna Town, Chair of the ALPD says "We are delighted that we have been able to extend our lumière Scheme in 2024 by adding an opportunity for a Production lumière in 2024 in line with our commitment to support all those who work in lighting for live performance."

## Lumière Scheme 2024: Now open for applications

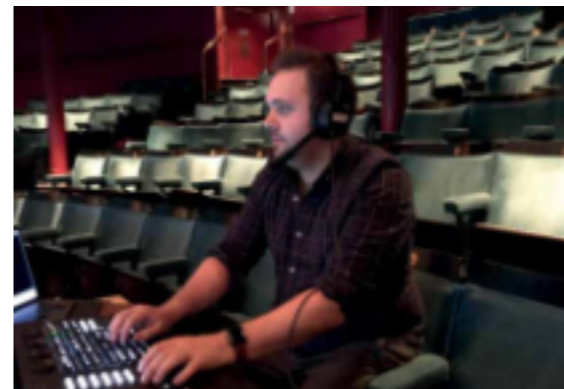
industry. The ALPD cannot accept anyone who is currently in full-time education.

The ALPD are committed to inclusivity and are actively encouraging applications from those who feel they are currently under-represented in the UK theatre industry. We would also like to encourage applicants who may have moved away from theatre for various reasons and want to return to the

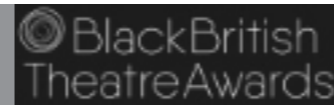
industry. You do not need to be a member of the ALPD to apply for the Lumière Scheme. Applications close on 11 December for Production lumière and 16 December for Design lumière.

Further information about the positions and how to apply can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/lumiere24> or scan the QR code.

The ALPD would like to thank Glyndebourne, Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, Lamp & Pencil and all those who donate towards the lumière Scheme. 🍷



**Previous Lumière Alex Musgrave, relighting Oor Wullie in Glasgow in 2019**



**Congratulations to Joshie Harriette, winner of 'Best Lighting Design' at the Black British Theatre Awards, supported by and hosted at the National Theatre.**

**A trained dancer, Joshie says he "choreographs exclusively**

**with lights, fascinated with the physicality, musicality and emotionality lights can embody."**

**Joshie has lit 'Cake The Musical' in the West End, the National Theatre tour of 'Sucker Punch', 'House of Absolute' at Sadlers Wells and the 'Dream of Delphi' tour for music artist Bat for Lashes.**



**The ALPD once again held its annual AGM at RCSSD. Preceded by a seminar for freelancers by United agent Dan Uszta and Philip Norfolk from Ambersphere Solutions (which we will cover in the forthcoming Focus Livewire Career Special), many members filled the studio to socialise and attend association business, centred on the report by Chair Johanna Town:**

"I am so pleased we are able to be holding this AGM in person, Zoom is brilliant, and I am glad it allows members from around the country to join us. But Zoom will never replace being able to socialise with our members, it never replaces that off the cuff remark or that personal face to face response that is so important in our industry.

The year started with the Exec, Working Group members and invited guests attending a Strategy weekend. It has been five years since we took a full

weekend to examine the future of the association and a lot has changed in the ALPD and the industry since then. It is important to be always looking forward.

Our position in the industry is much stronger and we have a voice on many committees and are invited to collaborate with many other associations and organisations. We have the lumière scheme and have expanded our Awards, we have changed the name of the association. All of this has happened with the help of our voluntary Exec committee

**"Our position in the industry is much stronger and we have a voice"**  
**Chair reports at AGM**

and working groups, which have expanded as our collaboration with others in the sector grows.

## STRATEGY WEEKEND RESOLUTIONS

- # To embrace all forms of Live performance
- # To help Mid-Career development
- # Mentor leaders of the future
- # Build members' camaraderie
- # Develop strategies that really do link with all our members needs
- # To Keep up to date with modern methods regarding the sustainability of careers and well being
- # Develop ways of making the Association move faster through people and IT
- # Work co-operatively with our corporate members
- # Increase our status in the industry
- # Invest in the ALPD's future

## At the Strategy weekend

By getting together over a whole weekend we were all able to agree on the associations aims and its strategic future. We looked at our Mission and Vision statements along with our Aims and concluded they remain relatively the same with some slight adjustments, they are all available on the website. We formulated a new set of strategic headlines to help motivate and inform us (see the box)

These strategies are a framework in which to improve communication with our members, to help create and share important documentation, to help to develop the funding of the lumière scheme and our growing Awards. This means a lot of this year has been spent improving our internal workings and implementing tasks set out during the Strategy weekend.

## Membership

I can report that since the name change in 2022, we have seen an increased number of members joining from the production side, this makes us more collaborative and stronger. I enjoy my discussions with all members of the lighting departments over joint concerns and ideas for the future and have a real



sense of us working and collaborating for the future of the industry.

We are seeing more members especially on the production side, where contracts are not as common, using the resource pages for contract riders and best practice documentation that were produced in 2021 & 2022. The industry is still very volatile, and many productions are closing early or even before they start.

ALPD members enjoyed RCSSD hospitality

We have had an increase in calls to the office of bad practice and It shows that our resource pages are important for many early careers and for the sometimes not so early career members. Our resource documents are living documents, constantly changing with industry practice and we always welcome updates and feedback.

## Website

As part of improving communication with our members, we have proposed an upgrade to our website which is looking very outdated. During Covid we voted to restrain our spending, to have money available for more pressing issues. This year and into next year we will concentrate time and finances to improve the Website, Focus magazine, Internal and External membership communication and our social media, you will have already seen small changes which will grow into the bigger change of our website upgrade.

We will shortly be sending out a survey about the website for comment, specifically on what you want the content to be. We welcome discussion on look and style, please do help by returning the

survey promptly, it is your website, so it is important for us to deliver what you want.

## E-membership cards

As part of all these changes we introduced the E Membership card, which adds better membership integration to the website and is more sustainable. Amanda is always looking for new members benefits to attach to your card - I always forget I can get cheaper drinks at ATG theatres, discounts on Lovetheatre.com, we also have discounts with some of our corporate members, but we are always looking to expand, whether they are work related or not, social, or well-being. Please contact the office if you have a benefit to offer.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Peter Vincent our membership secretary, who quietly in the background looks at every application, makes sure they are in the right category and sends out all the correct paper work. He reviews all lapsed membership, chasing up their



**Mark Jonathan discusses freelancers**

reasons and making sure that they are OK. This all happens quietly behind the scenes and Amanda, and I would like to thank him for all his hard work over the years.

## Focus

This year saw the publication of our 100th edition of Focus. Focus has taken on many different formats over the years with each new editor giving it a new style and feel. After ten years and reaching the magazines 100th edition, our editor Kelli Zezulka decided it was time to hang up her pen and concentrate on her own writing. I would like to thank Kelli for temporarily stepping in in 2013 after the sad passing of Andy Collier and for continually running Focus for a further ten years, we have had some fantastic articles and you have done an amazing job. Good luck with your writing adventures. With editor changes come idea changes. I would like to welcome Annim our new editor, he is eager to hear from you. You should have received our new look Focus; this is only the beginning of the changes as we will see Focus become more integrated into our website and social media.

## Equity

I am pleased to say we have lighting designers Zoe Spurr, Jamie Platt on the Equity committee. We are in the final stages of signing off the Fringe agreement for directors and designers. It is to be used as a guideline to producers

to ensure creatives aren't mistreated or exploited, essentially teaching emerging producers/creatives what our roles are and how our time should be managed. At the moment the SOLT/UK Directors and Designers claim has still not been approved and we wait as they continue to drag their feet. This is very frustrating for everyone including Charlotte the Equity officer who works very hard for the committee. We are all equally frustrated that SOLT/UK theatres do not take our claim as seriously as other areas of the industry, but we have no real strength of numbers until we all agree to work as a collective.

## Awards

We have just closed entries for the Michael Northen early career designer awards, as well as the nominations for the Fred Foster Awards for talented Production electricians and the Award for Excellence in programming. There have been a lot of talented entries, congratulations to them all. Many of the theatre awards for creatives have been dropped over the past few years. We have plans to start campaigning against this current trend and we will at some stage be in touch with members for support and letter writing. As an association, we are

also looking at developing awards, we are currently looking at the best way to open more nominations to include everyone from early career through to mid-career practice and to also engage more regionally and more alternative work, this may take the form of ALPD awards or to find a partnership within the industry to help us build a showcase for creative awards in the future.

## Meetings

Meetings have been happening through out the year; do read the members bulletins which advertise all our meetings and how to sign up. This year we saw successful visits to Bolton Octagon for the Book Thief - Nic Farman; Regent's Park Theatre - Zoe Spurr; ETC for their Illuminate Day; Royal Opera House Masterclass talk on Modifying Lighting for Broadcast; Tour of the Shakespeare North Playhouse; and a visit to the Vaults. We also had two successful socials in Edinburgh and the ABTT show.

## Socials

Look out for coming events including a visit to The Factory, the new MIF venue in Manchester, Tour of Soho Place in London and the start of the book club reading Wise Children.

If you would like to host a coffee or drinks event or invite members to hear and see the work you are doing, we would love to hear from you and help support you actioning an event in anyway. We are keen to promote outside of London whether that's a coffee morning, book clubs, social drinks or seeing a show.

## Prague

In the summer we were invited to The Prague Quadrennial to host a day on the SBTD's Hello Stranger exhibition stand. We did three talks, "Sustainability of Product and Manufacturing" led by Tom Lightbody, "Sustainability of Careers and Well-being" lead by Joe Price & Mig Burgess, plus a discussion on the book "Contemporary Performance Lighting" hosted by the authors Scott Palmer, Katherine Graham and editor Kelli Zezulka. We also featured a show reel of the 2022 ALPD Michael Northen award winners.

We repeated our Sustainability talk again at PLASA, thank you Tom and the manufactures involved, and we also held a talk at this year's ABTT from Nick Moran on The Death of Tungsten. All the above

talks and discussions can be found in past issues of Focus on the website.

## Lumière scheme

Our lumière scheme is going from strength to strength

The scheme has had another great year thanks to private and members contributions personal and corporate, I would also like to thank Glyndebourne for their continued involvement in the scheme, we have just finished our second summer season and hope to be securing 2024 very soon.

The Production lumière scheme is also preparing for 2024, we have placements almost confirmed with Glyndebourne, Regent's Park and Lamp and Pencil, which will demonstrate an amazing variety of work and skills to the successful lumière.

The scheme comes at a price, and we have been very lucky to have funding from private individuals, members & corporates in the past. We are however in the process of creating a Charitable arm to the ALPD to help future proof the lumière scheme and other educational activities. We cannot continue this success by lurching financially from one year to the

next, we need to find a more sustainable and secure funding model.

We are looking for sponsorship that will commit to a three- or five-year donation package.

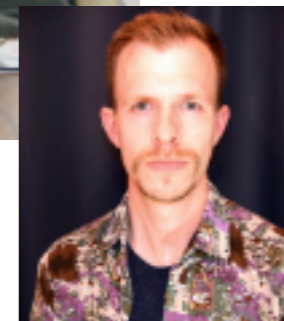
This will allow us to plan, to be more efficient and will help open more doors to further funding.

We are currently in a strong position with our links to Glyndebourne, there has never been a better time to put the resources of the associations into launching this campaign. We are looking for financial commitments whether it's as little as £10 from an individual member or from a corporate member wishing to invest much more, but it needs to be over a fixed period of time to allow this amazing scheme which has grown from nothing to have a long-term future.

You can read all about our 2023 lumière experiences in Focus - Danny Vavrečka has written about his time at Glyndebourne, and he will shortly be reporting back on the last three months shadowing designers around the country. For the second year we have been able to assist with an additional placement and



Jo Town, Nick Moran, Mark Jonathan (l-r) Joe Price (inset)



this year Lucy Adams assisted and shadowed a couple of designers and her experiences have already been reported in a recent Focus.

## Closing

The year started with a bang with the Strategy weekend and has seen a lot of hard work with changes being made behind the scenes. Amanda continues to do an amazing job keeping us all in check and administering not only the office but makes many of the Exec's plans happen on time and in budget. I would also like to thank Nick Moran on his first year as

treasurer, doing a brilliant job in re-organising our accounts.

So, thank you and Amanda for all your hard work and continued support.

I would like to end my report by thanking our Exec committee for continued hard work and time commitments and to thank you, our members, for your key part in making this such an important association for now and the future." 🍷

## AGM - Elections

At the recent AGM, three of our directors stood down, having completed two three year terms of office. These were Steve Huttly, Rick Fisher and Nick Moran. Nick remains as Treasurer and Rick, of course, as Vice-President (and Steve on the Awards Working Group).

There were only three nominations for the three vacancies: Jo Town, Mark Jonathan and Joe Price were elected nem con. Jo Town and Mark Jonathan are our Chair and Deputy Chair respectively. This will be Joe's first term of office as a director, but he is a very active volunteer: he is the person who compiles and sends out the Member and Jobs Bulletins, assists with some aspects of the website and Focus, as well as being part of the Meeting & Events team, helping to organise networking, training and social events for members. He was one of the group organising and hosting Hello Stranger in the Southwest and at Prague.

**We've caught up with ALPD member Chris Swain, lighting designer, programmer, and often technician and maker for physical theatre company Gecko, who are in the midst of touring their newest show "Kin". A National Theatre commission about migration, "a provocative story of desperation and compassion," its conception asks the LD to adapt the design process in a way far removed from, say, a traditional play.**

**Focus:** First of all, before we even get to the devising process, what seems striking is the darkness of the scenes, there is a strong sense of chiaroscuro, almost like in paintings by Caravaggio.

**Chris:** I've worked with Gecko for a long time, I started off as a re-lighter, more than ten years ago, than lit my first show of five shows now. The shows have quite a long life, they go through these extended periods of R'n'D and development, they are really a big part of my career. Gecko pays for creatives to be with the show for a very long time. Even several years after a show I get contacted and asked to come back and revisit the design, as the choreography keeps changing. The style is a thing that has developed over that time, along with how the company functions. The show is such a visual thing,

the image and the stagecraft is centering the audience attention, usually around a small section of the stage, and allows to zoom in on a couple of characters and their interaction, and quite often because there is something happening in the background or the sides, the audience is not supposed to see. So scenes are often lit just by one or two lights, and we use a lot of practicals at Gecko. Examples being: oversized picture frames with inbuilt LED strips, all sorts of lamps, or we got a bar-heater, the single light source upstage in a scene.

**Focus:** ... but that's not a real heater?

**Chris:** It's a re-build with LEDs, and I'm glad you had to ask! It's my favourite practical light so far, and building these is part of the show, with ideas often coming from the company. It looks great. A lot comes from the artistic director, Amit Lahav, who has an amazing visual mind, coming from working a lot with European companies, and ensembles like David Glass, Lindsay Kemp. He has a

## Chris Swain: Lighting a devised and constantly changing show

very strong opinion about what he likes to see on stage, and we have developed a common language together over the years. He's also now in the show, playing one of the roles, returning to his roots when he started with Gecko, which has been going as a company over 20 years.

**Focus:** Is there a typical creative process you could describe, is there a gestation period, a method - my guess is that's quite different from a normal play touring at this scale?

**Chris:** This last show Kin is a bit different, as it started during the pandemic, which extended it out quite a bit longer than previous shows. The process of creating a Gecko show is essentially a R'n'D, putting something on, then there is a pause, then there is another

period of R'n'D, then it goes away, but this doesn't stop when the show starts to go out on the road, so even while we're touring the show. We then have a standard technical rehearsal (albeit we



always try to get as long as we can onstage) where all the set, lighting and sound elements come together - which is usually the first time we have a full lighting rig to play with (in the R&D's we try to have as much as possible - but this is limited by the practical limitations of the rehearsal room and by budget) - so ideas worked on in the rehearsal process get fleshed out. Every week we have a three day fit up, while the cast has one to two days in the rehearsal room, and changes elements of the show. We are now on our 10th week of touring, and the show gets still constantly altered. I join for two days every week, and I have an associated who fills in the other day.

**Focus:** A bit like a lighting designer-operator touring with a band?

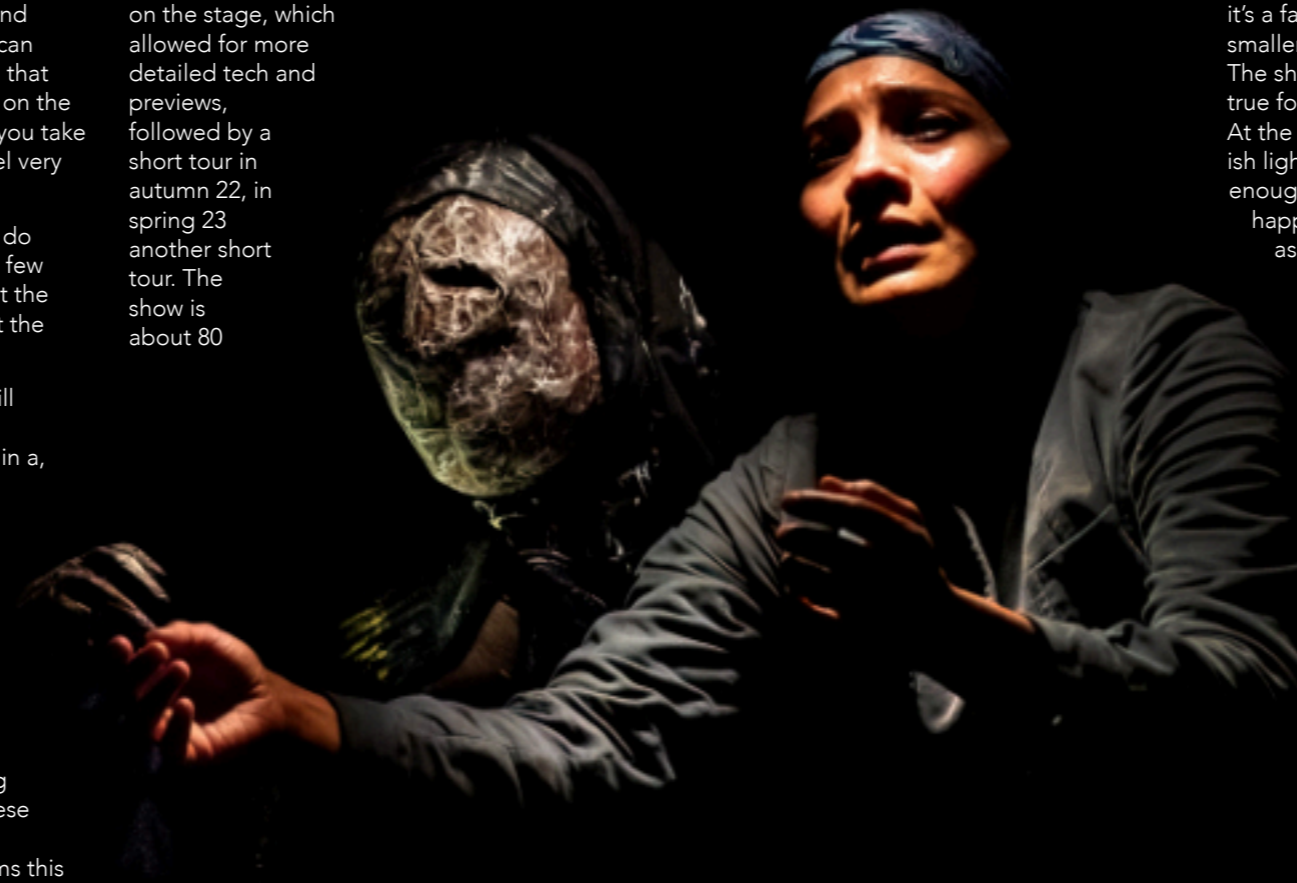
**Chris:** The band analogy is quite good, I'm not a musician, but it often feels like we're riffing off each other, the sound designer is there for a long period as well, all the stage crew have a real investment in creating and control of the show, tinkering in the background, constantly in response to the process. Also, I need to point out, we do not have a DSM or somebody calling the show - every department is cueing themselves, it's a very organic thing, and sometimes you

get this beautiful moment, where everything shifts in rhythm very slightly, something goes slightly quicker, and because everybody knows it, you can move with it and you realise, wow, that was amazing. The lighting is cued on the in-breath, like an instrument, and you take it before something happens. I feel very lucky to be part of this.

**Focus:** A not very 'English' way to do things. So, the show people saw a few weeks back in Brighton, will be not the show people can see in January at the National?

**Chris:** The show in the National will definitely have new and changed elements. We had weeks of R'n'D in a, let's call it a resourced warehouse in Ipswich, I could get some lights in, and there's a workshop so Lucy Adams, my associate and I've been working on practicals and lit props together. All this is helped by the fact that LED has become smaller, brighter, and more affordable, this gives us more scope to experiment. During the pandemic, we had three of these periods, not ending in scratch performances as before, but in films this

time. Then four weeks at HOME in Manchester, with three weeks on the stage, which allowed for more detailed tech and previews, followed by a short tour in autumn 22, in spring 23 another short tour. The show is about 80



minutes long, and about 20 minutes change between each period of touring, it's a fairly big chunk, and then there are smaller changes every week while touring. The show gets more nuanced, and that's true for the sound and the lighting as well. At the moment this has lead to about 500-ish lighting cues, and it's now detailed enough that I can follow what's

happening on stage. We developed aspects which you just wouldn't be able in a week's tech, even if you have a lot of prep or flashy kit, or work along a visualiser. The

beautiful thing I can do is giving lights to the cast, to manipulate in rehearsals, we have whole sessions to work this out, and we can achieve results which you just couldn't without that level of integration. The cast is working the lights, then there's crew follow-spotting from the sides with tiny 12 volt spots, we have puppets rigged with overhead lights, and in addition to the performers puppeteering, we have a puppeteer just for the light. All this takes a huge amount of rehearsal. Then we have a giant light at the back, a

very strange adapted 2k fresnel with a sawn-off barrel attached to it. The show reflects on migration, and all that movement, and we were using naturally moving lights in the R'n'D, from lighthouses to search lights, but the provocation was to come up with something which isn't too obviously anything, but far more ephemeral. We ended with this light which can fly in and out, move along the bar manually, move diagonally and across.

**Focus:** Please explain 'provocation'.

**Chris:** So this comes from Amit and the cast. Amit is the source of the initial thrust of the piece, and also ultimately the person who has overall artistic say in how the production ends up. We started off with an obvious image of search lights, erected a scaff 'security' tower, and I followed the cast, dressed in life jackets around, and there was a beautiful moment, when everybody reached out to the light, felt very powerful from my perspective as the one moving it, like a salvation. We experimented with all sorts of beam lights, and something retro from Robe, but we quickly moved on and away from anything too literal. The company is full of people with strong visual imaginations and devising performers



who really understand lighting - so quite often the scenes/choreography is moulded around specific lights - and I can request that we try certain staging if we stumble upon a look or an angle that really works. Amit is very interested in abstracted images, to enable the audience to write their own narratives into the show. Another element: Our multi-national cast speak with each other in many languages, from Mandarin to Spanish - it becomes very soon clear to the audience that they can't follow what is being spoken, it allows the performers to emote, scream at each other, cry, plead, without the audience latching on any words, allowing emotion. Again, not a very British way of storytelling - I think we are quite hung up on script, and words and their meaning, a playwright's theatre. We don't have a script for Gecko shows. There's a storyboard, a kind of spreadsheet document with all the images, movements and videos, and the complex cue sheets the operators have, but the bible for me is what's in EOS, there's no other document.

**Focus:** This is probably where the band-analogy ends. I was about to ask whether you are busking the show?

**Chris:** Not at all, it's all on an ETC board,

and played cue by cue. On this show, we are pretty low tech - the money is spent on people, designers, associates, 3 stage managers, and so everything has a lot of love and care, but it not high tech. Having said that, we have everything we need, movers, some ColorSources, and it became clear that we needed wireless DMX, all practicals on stage are now controlled by the board. Previously we had small manual dimmers on the props, controlled by the performers, which was sometimes terrifying for the lighting designer, even though the performers take incredible care and attention, and are hugely aware how each light behaves, how it fades and points.

**Focus:** So no improvised elements of lighting, no busking on the show?

**Chris:** No, it's not improvised, the show is set enough. In re-rehearsals and further R'n'Ds sections get moved around, or an ending changes, but it means mostly moving around cue-stacks. It's locked down to an extent, you wouldn't be able to operate it with live-elements at all, and about a quarter of the lighting sequences are triggered by Qlab for synch, and there's a real joy in precision, fine-tuning sequences and sound and lighting designer and associated working close

together. But there are also elements of the hand-held lighting, which are controlled by the performer, and change. I feel my job on the show to really help the audience to understand the story, and while Amit loves to keep things abstract, and let audiences be interpretative their own way, while I focus their attention into the right direction, these are the characters in this scene, this is what's happening to them, this is the environment they might find themselves in, my first impulse is try to ground it almost, rather than creating another abstract layer.

**Focus:** How do you organise an ever-changing show and therefore cue list on the board? What's your technique to keep on top of changes, and how do you keep sequences the company might want to come back to?

**Chris:** It is a ever present issue - my current system is to save a separate dated showfile each day- then we can come back to any changes from previous versions. So unlike most tours I've worked on - where there is a tour master file that is used as a base for each venue, we usually work from the latest dated version. The issue with this is that it's hard to separate venue specific changes (for

example if certain FOH positions are different, or we use a smaller version of the set because of stage size) from show updates - so there is often some slightly complex merging of showfiles that goes on when we move to a new venue.

**Focus:** And there isn't a set as such.

**Chris:** The set is very ephemeral, there is a revolve, and a raked floor, the idea is constant movement, never be sure that you are safe in one place, and there are trucks representing borders and walls, objects like chairs, and elements of a constantly shifting, uprooted home. It feels quite sparse, there isn't a scene where the whole stage gets lit up, apart from the end when the show develops a very large crowd movement.

**Focus:** This seems underlined by what feels like a very muted colour pallet. Tones of rust, earth, wood, and water reflection.

**Chris:** You are right, this is a development which has taken place over years. I started on a show which was very stark, beautiful, lots of tungsten. I'm very careful with colour, there are three main character groups in the show, and I use colour a bit to reference these, plus some colour on the cyc. I love the warmth we get from the





tungsten units and props we have put into the show. There's a trapeze with very old floods we're flying in, bulbs, and fixtures which look so beautiful at low levels. I don't have a strong opinion on the 'death of tungsten' discussion, I wonder sometimes if a hundred years ago lighting designers banded on about the death of gas. I pick a tungsten fixture when I can use it open white, but colour - give me an LED. They have developed enormously and the environmental arguments are very much on my mind. We are not touring the entire rig and at the moment we can rely on being able to pick up 2ks and parcans in each venue we go to.

**Focus:** And what does a devising day look like for lighting?

**Chris:** A typical Gecko thing is that there is barely a 'sitting around tables and talking about characters'. This is how Amit works. Everybody is up on their feet immediately, you are given a provocation, including light and sound, or I watch something and try out suggestions "this is what this needs, how does this change a structure" - this was a bit of a surprise on my first Gecko show. I come from lighting dance and worked before with Rambert, so my experience was never huge on the scripted play, I also did circus and physical

theatre. I love watching shows and admire lighting designers who can create beautiful naturalistic looks, it's a great skill, I love that, but that's not me. It's far more architectural, skim across the body, not so much the faces, The FOH position in a theatre - not interesting to me. And everything stays hands on, I've got a technical background, I help out with the fit ups, and often rig myself or help, and I program myself. My CV is more or less just Gecko. It feels like living with them sometimes, and during the pandemic they have been fantastic, and keeping people employed - much respect for that.

**Focus:** There were plans for a creative base, a building?

**Chris:** That would be great, the first site looked at had too many problems, but this is in development. I love living in Bristol, but I have family near Ipswich, and a permanent space would help with development. Simple things like not having to ask to use the loading bay to cut another piece of metal. The company would benefit from this.

**"Kin" by Gecko Theatre is playing at the National 12 - 27 January 2024. More info [www.geckotheatre.com](http://www.geckotheatre.com) 🇬🇧**

## CREDITS

**Created by Amit Lahav**  
**Collaborating with:**  
**Set and Costume Design:**  
**Rhys Jarman**  
**Sound: Mark Melville**  
**Original music by Dave Price**  
**Photographers: Malachy Luckie, Mark Sepple**

**LD Chris Swain is a graduate of Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. He has worked as a production manager, relighter, and lighting designer for Tobacco Factory Bristol and Gecko Theatre, amongst others.**



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# CORPORATE MEMBERS

## Richard Pilbrow

founder of theatre projects in 1957, is one of the world's leading theatre design consultants, an author, stage lighting designer and has been a theatre, film and television producer. Under his leadership, Theatre Projects has become the preeminent theatre consulting organisation in the world, with over 1800 projects in 80 countries to its credit. He is the president of the ALPD.



**In April 2024, a rather wonderful new book will appear - hopefully. It's called *A Sense of Theatre*, and it is a look at the creation and history of the National Theatre from the unique perspective of someone who was there from the very beginning – lighting designer, theatre consultant and your ALPD president Richard Pilbrow.**

This is a book that has been eight years in the making – but, as I've taken to saying, really eight years and a lifetime in the making! Richard is 90 now. That would have made him thirty when he was asked by Laurence Olivier to light the opening shows for the National at the Old Vic, just a little older when asked to join the building committee of theatrical greats of the day tasked with devising just what the National Theatre building should be, not really any older when appointed consultant to the building. In this role Richard and his team at Theatre Projects revolutionised the technical design of British theatres, from the high tech Lightboard console, power flying system and famous Olivier drum revolve, to the more mundane elements that are now so commonplace we don't even really think about them: facilities panels, centralised worklight controls, comms. But he also

did rather more than that: the shape of the Olivier flytower, which dominates the building? That's Richard's design. The Cottesloe (now Dorfman) theatre – designed by Theatre Projects because the architect was too busy with the rest of the building. Richard has a long and deep history with this place.

He's also long been unsatisfied with the result, particularly with the form of the two big theatres. His career since the National has really been about trying to figure out what was wrong with them, and how to learn from that to make better theatres. He set out to write a book about that. The end result has gone dramatically beyond that – a history of the creation of the company, the fascinating minutes of those planning committee meetings, the creation and fraught opening of the building, the National's work since then. It's not just Richard's voice, but is interspersed with thoughts on the National from many others who've worked there, from Dame Judi Dench to several renowned ALPD members.

Why am I telling you all this now when it's not out until April? Why that 'hopefully' back in the first line? Because we need a little help getting it out! This is

a big book, lavishly illustrated. Those are, it turns out, expensive to make. Covid means the book has had a bit of a turbulent history with publishers – with its

don't know how to place it on their lists. Richard's solution, as it has been throughout his career: "we'll just do it ourselves!"

So we are. But to achieve that we're doing a bit of fundraising.

If you're a company in our industry that feels like you'd like to support this, we have some sponsorship slots remaining that will get your logo in as a permanent part of this unique book. Get in touch and I can talk you through them: [rob@robhalliday.com](mailto:rob@robhalliday.com).

Or alternatively, sign up for the Kickstarter at [tinyurl.com/kickstartpilbrow](https://tinyurl.com/kickstartpilbrow) (or scan the QR code) by pre-ordering the book, or support us a little bit more through a number of tier options some of which will also get your name inside

the book – you can be a part of this history! 🍷



mix of theatre, architecture and history, exactly the mix that I find fascinating, they

**Rob Halliday wants you to be part of history**



**So just what does the office do? Well, first of all, the office is a home office: my study – or wherever my laptop, phone and I are together. And there isn't really a typical week. There are some regular tasks, but no week looks exactly the same.**

My day always starts with a scan through emails, phone messages and texts. There are regular accounting processes to undertake, particularly relating to membership payments. Welcome packs need to be sent to new members. But after that, anything could happen. The office is the first port of call for those wanting information about the ALPD – students, colleges, members with a query, amateur companies or start-ups who are employing lighting personnel for the first time and don't know where to start. I'm grateful for our growing bank of resource documents to which I can refer them, but some jobs just don't fit neatly into any particular box. If I can't answer the question myself, I will generally know which ALPD members would be a good fit to offer advice. I am constantly impressed by the willingness of members to give time and advice to those who need it.

Often I will find myself talking to new employers about what it is a lighting

designer, programmer or production electrician does, and why they need to be paying them more than the proposed fee! The Production Process Documents which the Professionals Working Group have produced are invaluable at this stage. We refuse adverts where the fee offer or Ts and Cs are silly, and often that employer will rethink what they're offering after having a chat and reading the documents.

I keep an eye on press and newsletters from producers and other membership associations to see if there are any issues which I need to bring to the Executive's attention or where a letter from our Chair might be appropriate. It's important that the ALPD's voice is heard in support of the profession. I hope that by keeping in touch with what all the Working Groups are doing, I keep all those separate teams up-to-date with what's going on. And groups need admin

support, particularly our busy lumière, Awards and Meetings groups.

Our communications both within the organisation and outward facing are really important. Arnim, our Focus Editor, Joe Price, who sends out most of our Bulletins, and 'the office' stay in touch via Zoom and on our Trello Boards to make sure we're

co-ordinating what we're doing. Some enquiries are very straightforward – a recent graduate who wants guidance on a contract offer, a member who wants to report an unfair practice, someone wanting to know how to find a lighting person, or a

college wanting someone to give a talk.

Some of the more interesting enquiries can be challenging. There was the phone call that began "Is that the ALPD: I don't want a Lighting Designer, I'm looking for a Sound Designer." Erm yes? And how can we help you?"

## **"Is that the ALPD? I don't want a Lighting Designer, I'm looking for a Sound Designer."**

**A Day in the Office  
by Amanda Laidler**

Or the lady who wanted to exchange some theatre tickets. Ticket Source gave her our number. I politely enquired what the tickets were for and why she had been referred to us? Turned out they were tickets for Theydon Bois Amateur Dramatic Society's production of The Vicar of Dibley. That was one enquiry I really couldn't help with!

Throughout the year events and showcases keep me busy. As I write, the invitation to apply for a stand at the ABTT show next June has just dropped into my inbox. I enjoy getting out and meeting members and other associations and much useful networking is done. Gathering all the bits for the stand, squeezing it all in my little Jazz and getting it there can be interesting: has anyone watched me trying to put up our roller banners which are about two feet taller than me? I have it down to a fine art now, but it involves a nice empty piece of floor, something to weight it with, a bit of gymnastics and then hauling it upright hoping it won't roll itself up again. And be warned, when the show closes I will be on the hunt for a tall person!

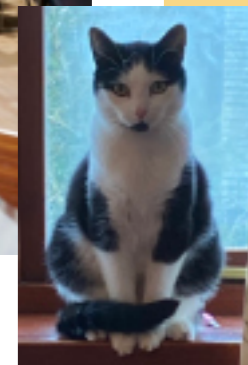
Organising meetings is another regular task: getting together a group of freelancers with busy diaries can be a challenge. As well as our more formal

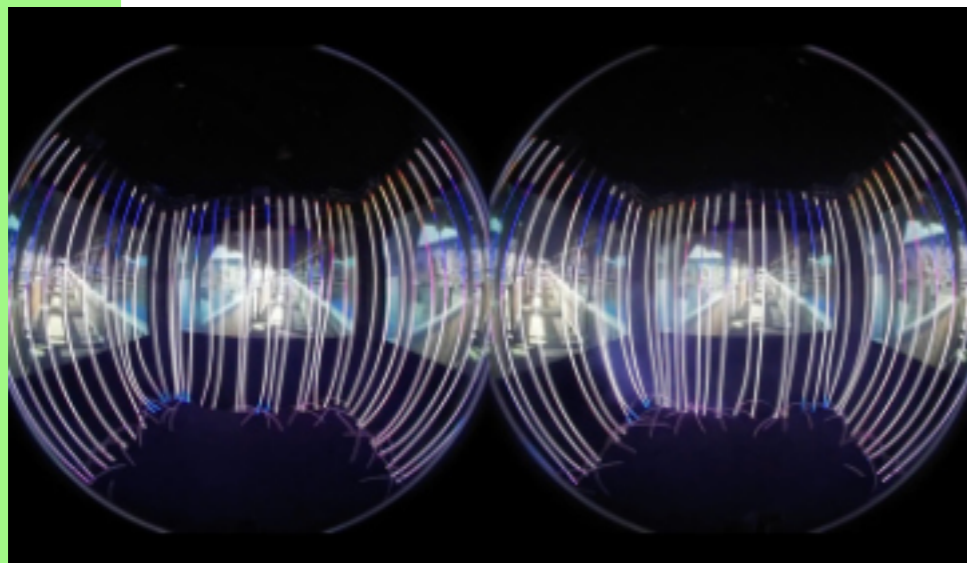
Executive Meetings, there are informal Catch-up sessions. Notices of meetings, elections and procedures have to be carefully timetabled. (There might be those who accuse me of being a nag - but it's the job!) And our recent AGM – getting all the paperwork dealt with was one thing – working out how many sandwiches we needed was easily the most stressful bit of it! 🍷



**How was your day? We would like to hear from your working life, especially if your job description is not 'Lighting Designer'. There are so many roles in our industry, often not visible to the public, or to young people thinking about working 'in lighting'.**

**Amanda's view of the AGM, keeping track and checking the zoom. And Pip, the official ALPD office assistant**





**“The show must go on!” I’ve lost count of the times I’ve had that quoted to me during a production period when I’m tired, run down, physically ill, and mentally drained. In that one sentence you have managed to elevate the importance of the show above everything else.**

The show is more important than me, than my physical and mental health and the health and well-being of every human that

**Mig Burgess’ installation ‘Blackout’ can be watched in 3D on her blog - link at the end of the article**

works to bring that production to life. The word that makes this sentence aggressive in its delivery is “must”, defined as “to be obliged to or should”. When you say this, you are telling me that I must get this show on, it’s my duty above all else. Somehow in our industry that word “must” carries a huge obligation to us personally, so much so that we ourselves have been indoctrinated to value the

show over everything else including our own health and wellbeing. Perhaps this personal attachment to the fate of the show is linked in part to the statistics that 70% of our workforce in the theatre and live events sector identify as freelance? Operating as self-employed brings a host of personal responsibility and perhaps we have allowed that mantra to roll over to include larger obligations like the entire fate of a show. Perhaps we have allowed

the love and passion that we carry for working backstage to be abused by the producers, as they lean on our enthusiasm and impose this personal obligation to get the show on? Perhaps it’s simply an old phrase that was coined that we carry and flippantly still use to this day? Either way we are still allowing this old mantra to continue, and our young backstage workers are having it indoctrinated to them. It’s time to change this toxic culture backstage. It’s important we remind ourselves and others that it’s just a show. Working backstage is just a job. Somehow that has been lost in all the passion and creativity. Yes, we love what we do, yes we are dedicated to creating that beautiful show, but we don’t have to break ourselves to see the curtains rise on the productions we work on. The show of course “will” go on, it can continue and proceed to open its curtains without us being present if we need to stop to get well. We know it takes a team of people to bring a show to life not just the actions of one person. In

other industry sectors a good business model will have the capacity and contingency to lose one or two members of staff without suffering a big operational issue. Why then in our industry is the same foresight not applied?

A show or theatre is a business model that needs to operate with the same contingency’s, planning and foresight that other business’s do across all sectors. The

**“The Show Must Go On!”**

**Mig Burgess asks: At what price?**

correct personnel staffing levels need to be considered to be productive. The correct amount of time needs to be given to perform tasks. A level of contingency needs to be allowed for if staff are sick, or extra staff need to be brought in. This needs to be finely balanced against the profit and loss accounts so we have money to achieve this. These are all business 101 objectives to be productive, efficient, and therefore

profitable. Why then is the same logical business acumen not applied to producing shows? How many times have you been asked to work with one less member of crew to cut costs? And when was the last time a panto run had a tech swing in place to cover sickness? Why do we work 12 hour days for weeks in production periods? Why are designers and production LX’s not paid a fair rate for pre-show planning? I could go on with many other issues, and I’m sure we all have our own to add to the list.

**When did working backstage in showbusiness stop working to the same standards as other sectors?**

When did we start to value the product “the show” above the human beings that are integral to bringing these shows to life? In many other sectors we are starting to see change. We are more aware of things like fast fashion and fair trade and most of us want ethically sourced clothes and food now. How might our audiences feel if they knew that the follow spot operators on the show they are watching earn less than someone working in McDonalds. Can we campaign for productions to work and operate to a fairtrade standard for the people that bring that show to life? Could we

develop our own stamp of approval saying that the show and business operates to a certain level to consider the health and wellbeing of every worker. That being fair pay, fair hours and fair terms for sickness including support. We have made huge strides in how our sector operates to be more sustainable and we are all asked to work towards these goals. Why then can't we ask for the employer to give the same focus to social sustainability. After all a happy and healthy work force will be more productive, profitable and innovative.


It's all very well to muse on my dreams of an industry united goal to change the culture of working backstage. I will do all I can to continue to campaign for this change in my future work, but what can we do personally to preserve our own wellbeing in the workplace? We need to bring humanity back to our working world. That's something we can all begin to do. We need to challenge this "show must go on" mantra and tell the employer that we value ourselves more than we value the show. We can all politely and respectfully challenge the rhetoric and remind employers that we are human, and its humans that make a show. We need to look after our humans

if we want a good product and profitable production. The show will go on, it should go on and it can with a happy and healthy cast and crew. If you need to stop because you're physically or mentally unwell that's ok. It's just a show, it's just a job. Nothing is more important than your health and wellbeing.

**Starting our own cultural revolution is tricky for some.** I have already mentioned that 70% of our workforce are freelance and many work on casual zero-hour contracts. I appreciate it's not that easy to front a revolution if you're worried about job security. All we can do is the best we can, and hope that if enough of us keep flying the flag for humanity in the workplace that someone higher up will start to listen. A cultural change can't be achieved with just one or two people waving a flag, it requires the majority.

**Let me share the story of the star fish thrower.** Told to me by another dedicated well-being activist. There was a storm and thousands of star fish were washed up on shore. A man was on the coastline picking up star fish and throwing them back into the sea. A lady came along and watched the man, she said "why are you bothering? There are so many,

you can't possibly save them all". The man simply bent down picked up a star fish threw it into the sea and said, "but I made a difference to that one". The lady was touched by the man's words, she bent down picked up a star fish and joined him in throwing them back into the sea. I am a proud star fish thrower, let's start a cultural revolution down on the beach. Maybe I will see you on the shore? Contact me if you want to join the ALPD Wellbeing or AAPTLE working group [mig@abtt.org.uk](mailto:mig@abtt.org.uk).

**I wanted to end with this statement: If it's the workplace causing your illness, injury or mental wellbeing to suffer, that IS NOT OK.** Please reach out to someone as there is support available (see the contacts following this article). I wish you all well, keep making fabulously beautiful events and shows. Just remember to not value your production above yourself or anyone else working to make your show happen. You too are fabulous and beautiful, and we need you happy and healthy to work on the next gig. Look after yourself and watch out for those around you. [migburgess.wordpress.com](http://migburgess.wordpress.com) or scan the QR 

## Mig Burgess

**Author Mig Burgess is Senior Lecturer in lighting on the Theatre Production course at the Guildford School of Acting, part of the University of Surrey, a trustee and Co Chair of the Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT), and a trustee of the Backup Tech charity for the entertainment industry. She is also a qualified Mental Health First Aid instructor and delivers courses via the ABTT.**



## Help, Support and Resources

### The Theatrical Guild

UK charity supporting backstage staff. Talk to them about practical help at any stage of your career, including financial support, welfare advice, retraining and counselling. [ttg.org.uk](http://ttg.org.uk)



### Backup Tech (The Technical Entertainment Charity)

is the UK's registered charity that provides financial support to industry technical professionals, crew/production personnel and people working in the technical supply chain across the UK entertainment industry including those from live events, theatre, TV and film. Support includes medical or hardship grants, well being. Backup also have a 24 hr helpline: 0800 4647068 [www.backuptech.uk](http://www.backuptech.uk)



### Music Support

Their mission is to provide help and support to peers who work in music and live events affected by mental ill-health and/or addiction and to promote



early intervention through support services, education and workshops. You are not alone. [www.musicsupport.org](http://www.musicsupport.org)

## Union support

### Equity

You should be treated with dignity at work, both in the hiring process and in your place of work. If at any stage of getting work or being in work, your employer (or prospective employer) is failing to provide a workspace that is safe, Equity can help. Call Equity on 020 7379 6000 to speak to someone confidentially. If your health issue arises from a non-workplace related matter, contact BAPAM ( British Association of Performing arts medicine) [www.equity.org.uk](http://www.equity.org.uk)



### Bectu

Bectu have pages on wellbeing on their website, covering menopause, working environment, bullying harassment and stress and mental health to name a few. If the workplace is contributing to your ill health physically or mentally you can contact them. They also have a theatre freelancers branch. 020 7346 0900. [www.bectu.org.uk](http://www.bectu.org.uk)



**BAPAM**  
British association  
for performing arts medicine



BAPAM deliver health and wellbeing services for everyone working in the performing arts. The specialist medical charity provide free clinics, resources and training workshops, which are available to technicians, production crew and backstage workers as well as the performers on stage or set. Factors such as long hours, intensive schedules with few breaks, working with heavy equipment, and not seeing friends and family can impact anyone in the production team, and BAPAM provide expert help with work-related health issues. BAPAM's clinical team provide assessment and advice on physical injuries and pain, voice problems, work-related mental health concerns and worries about your hearing. The aim is to support you in overcoming problems quickly, with accurate diagnosis and advice, and to help you navigate an effective care pathway. BAPAM is a registered charity and a Care Quality Commission-regulated healthcare provider. Medical advice is accessible anywhere in the UK online or by telephone. Face to face clinical consultations are available in Belfast, Birmingham, Cardiff, Gateshead, Leeds, Liverpool, London and Manchester. BAPAM Helpline: 020 8167



4775 / info@bapam.org.uk, 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday. BAPAM is not a crisis mental health service. For emergency help contact your GP or NHS 111, or in an emergency visit A&E or call 999. Find out more at [www.bapam.org.uk](http://www.bapam.org.uk)

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**Mind**



We change minds across England and Wales by making mental health an everyday priority. By standing up to the injustices – in healthcare, in work, in law – which make life harder for those of us with mental health problems. Even though 1 in 4 people have mental health problems, most of us don't get the help we need. This has to change. [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)



**Tom Lightbody reflects on his own health experiences**

- a standing production desk has been a gamechanger for me, as long as there's an appropriately high chair to sit on as an option. Works for programming and designing.
- I travel with a pack of emergency rations for those tight days or oversleeps.
- likewise I always have a little stash of drugs (the legal kind, I should add) in case of headaches, indigestion, or worse
- hydrating properly with electrolyte tabs

helps keep my energy levels up on long days, especially on sweaty summer fit ups



- I try and choose the healthy option whenever I'm eating out, grabbing a meal deal or whatever. That one very much doesn't always work out.
- another one that doesn't always work out is trying to do yoga every morning I'm away from home. Yoga with Adriene is a great free YouTube resource.
- I try as much as I can to get daylight in on my breaks, especially relevant in these darker months. 🇬🇧

**Choices, choices ...**

**A lack of time and places for preparation often dictate the nutritional choices we make in rehearsals and production weeks.**

A general reduction of greenroom facilities doesn't help, and many production desks tell the tales of missed breaks. While catering is often included at festivals and concerts, theatre crew either have to be super prepared or use break time to dash to the next supermarket or corner shop - and often comfort rules over nutritional values.

For general nutritional advice and ideas for a better diet, have a look at these resources:



**NHS healthy diet ideas:**  
[tinyurl.com/healthydieths](https://www.nhs.uk/healthy-diet/)



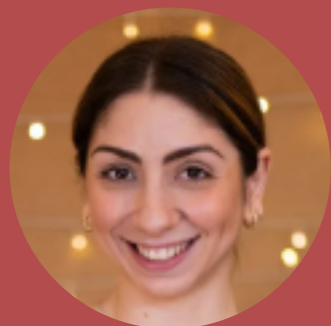
**British Nutrition Foundation**  
[tinyurl.com/healthier-choices](https://www.bnf.org.uk/healthier-choices)



**And finally healthy snacks from Auntie:**  
[tinyurl.com/healthysnackbbc](https://www.auntie.co.uk/healthy-snack-bbc)

## Stefania Catarinella

Stefania is a trained dancer and has appeared with Motionhouse. In addition she has qualified as a pilates instructor, and for ALPD members, stressed out in panto tech and sitting too long, has exclusively put together 3 exercises everybody can do on a break, even at the lighting desk. "Everybody can try pilates, at any age!" says Stefania. You can join her classes in the Midlands [instagram.com/steficata](https://www.instagram.com/steficata)



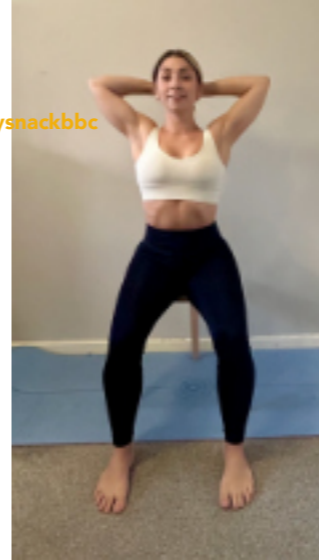
### Standing shoulder opening and back lengthening exercise

1. Stand tall in upright position. Feet hip width apart. Press through the heels and activate leg muscles. Connect your core, elongating the spine. Inhale reach your arms over head (shoulders width apart) keeping your ribs connecting toward the centre of the body
2. Exhale lower your arms down. Aim to get your arms as far back as you can, palms facing up focusing on opening the shoulders and the chest. Keep the chin parallel to the ground and think about expanding through the collarbones, Repeat the sequence 3 to 5 times, connecting the movement to the breath



### Side and back stretch

1. Sit with your back straight, bringing the tailbone in the middle of the seat with the back away from the backrest. Bring the hands behind your head keeping the elbow open as much as you can. Stay grounded with the pelvis on the chair. Pull the tummy muscles in and up and elongate through the crown of the head. Inhale expand the shoulderblades.
2. Exhale reach the left elbows out to the side, going up and over to form an arch over the left hip. Keep the right elbow open reaching up to the ceiling. Right hip stays grounded on the seat. Push through the heels to keep your spine long. Repeat on the left side.
3. Come back to centre (position 1). Inhale through a long spine. As you exhale bring the chin to the chest bringing the elbows towards the ears. Curl up and over the tummy scooping the belly button in and up towards the spine. Inhale uncurl the spine to a straight back. Exhale to reset. Repeat the sequence 3 to 5 times,



## Production Desk Pilates

Exercises designed to counter fatigue, muscle and joint pain

### Front and side plank with chair support

1. Place both hands in the middle of a chair bringing the shoulder over the wrists. Be mindful not to lock your elbows - keep them soft but not bent! Slowly take a few steps back until you reach a plank position. Head, tailbone and heels form a long diagonal line finding a two way stretch. Recruit the tummy muscles in to avoid the back to arch. Push through the heels of the hands, keeping the shoulders away from the ears. Crown of the head and heels reach the opposite direction to decompress the back.
2. Inhale push through the left hand. Exhale lift the right arm up and open the body to the front. Keep the feet in a staggered position. Push the pelvis forward to maintain a long diagonal line through the body. Keep a strong core and upper body connection. Work through the head to tailbone opposition to find a two sideways stretch. Look up towards the hand and down towards to floor to release the neck, Inhale bring the right hand back on the chair. Exhale lift the left arm up and open the body to the front on the other side. Inhale bring both hands on the chair, Exhale slowly step your feet in. Repeat the sequence 3 to 5 times. 🧘



## Production Desks

**The evergreen in the complaints department. Even after years of evidence, pointing to BS and various H&S regulations (happily enforced in other parts of the building), the situation seems to remain dire for designers and programmers alike in many venues, resulting in pain, loss of concentration and focus, and in some cases even injury. Perhaps we need to persuade production and building managers to swap places for a week ...**



## Members share their experiences

**Gareth Hughes:** Yet again, a completely unsatisfactory arrangement. This week's venue expect the programmer to sit, quite literally, on the floor while they work. Folding table at the front of the circle with the lighting desk on it, and nothing but a step to sit oh.

"Have you got a seat or a cushion or something?" - "...errr..."

"Well, how about a desk lamp at least?" - "...errr.umm..."

"Not even another table so that the LD has somewhere to put his plan and his laptop?" - "...well...not really, no." The PM had to go to Wilko and buy a

couple of desk lamps so that we had light to work by. I had to go and buy a cushion. The LD has their small workstation on a plank of MDF balanced between a seat and the circle rail.

I've said it before and I'm saying it again - if anyone told the marketing or finance department that they'd have to spend eight hours a day sitting on the floor while they wrote their tweets or did their adding-up, they'd laugh and walk out. So why do we just grumble a bit and accept it? Seriously, how long are venues going to get away with treating creative teams like. (Nov 22)

**Mark Doubleday:** Venue and year shall remain nameless. But I have a bad production desk to thank for an emergency hospital admission, including a next day operation on a trapped nerve to prevent permanent damage. The situation was the usual bumboard: Some leftover board thrown onto the armrest, with no consideration of the enforced position for the designer, constantly bending down. After a day, the pain started, and after a few days more had become unbearable. Complaints to production were not only ignored - it was implied that I was just being difficult. (Oct 23) 🍷

## Matt Dean reflects on changes since 2019

Since writing my Production Desk Guidelines in 2019, I do think production desk thinking has improved, but unfortunately I haven't seen many more solutions being offered.

When I was initially researching, I struggled to find much content on Production Desks at all, but I now I pretty regularly come across users looking for better solutions, and sharing examples (good and bad) of the positions they are working at. I have seen some custom solutions that solve a problem, but these tend to be unique to a seating bank, and not something to be easily purchased or rented for a venue or production.

There is also a new challenge when it comes to production desk design; the weight of the latest control desks. The Apex 10 is becoming the natural successor to the Ti, and whilst there is an abundance of new hard- and software features, there is also a 60% increase in weight (Ti: 38.5kg Apex10: 61.24kg). The Apex 10, by the HSE's guidance should be a 4 person lift (if being lifted from a case on the floor). I have seen first-hand how this has affected staffing calls for tech

and preview weeks.

My previous design for a production desk would struggle to support a modern lighting console of this weight, and all its associated equipment.

Another recent change to consider is the new popularity of the standing desk. Building a standing production desk would be very simple, an appropriate bit of deck with 4 legs cut at relevant lengths would suffice. However, I've never met a programmer who wants to stand up for the full duration of tech. A sit-stand convertible desk would surely be the Rolls-Royce of production desks, but with all the existing challenges to contend with and up to 60 kilos of console to move, it would require some significant engineering.

I've been rambling on about production desks publicly for 4 years now, and am keen to see things improve. I do keep chipping away at my own design, but haven't been able to find any manufacturers to partner with me to bring it to you all. If you are, or know of someone, who likes an engineering/design challenge, please do get in touch with me at desks@mdlx.co.uk 🍷



**Matt Dean's Production Desk Guidelines can be found on the ALPD webpage, under 'resources'**

**Lifewire is the section in Focus looking, each edition, at a different aspect, like health, budget and finances, or equality. Tell us what you want to read about. Next edition will look at finances and budgeting - we would love to include your contribution!**

**You must have lived under a rock or have been on a space mission in full black out, if you haven't read about or seen 'Sphere'. Come to think of it, you probably can see it from space.**

Is this the newest event venue to end all event venues? Built in Las Vegas by Madison Square Gardens ventures, the sheer scale of the structure and the unique 270 degree 'digital Trompe-l'œil' (Dezeen Magazine) LED screen are truly gigantic.

Mind-boggling stats aside (see right): For us lighting designers, the question is: Is this the end of lighting design as we know it? The main job of the lighting rig: not to be in the way, reduced to 12 (!) back lights, a Brian Eno designed, turntable style floor, and a small smattering of floor based movers and strobes.

This is all about the screen and its content, and perhaps the sound, but any live contribution by an act, even with an ego as tall as U2's lead singer, plays second fiddle. The band accompanies the AV show, the audience constantly lit by pixels.

Creative director Willie Williams collaborated with artists Marco Brambilla, Es Devlin and John Gerrard for content, with Devlin quoted that this is "an iPhone moment for event design", suggesting this is the future for other designs. 📱

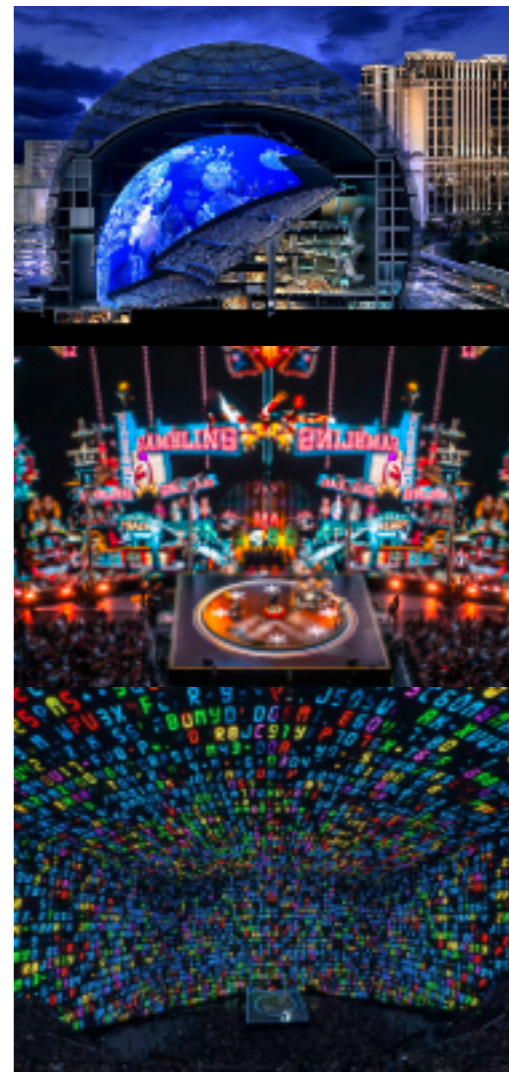


## Las Vegas MSG The Sphere

### Sphere in numbers:

- World's largest spherical structure, 366ft tall, 516ft wide
  - Outside 580,000sqft LED display
  - 17600 audience capacity
  - 15600 sqm interior LED screen at 16k by 16k resolution, reported to be the largest and highest resolution screen on the planet
  - Video streams at 32GB / second
  - Each single frame rendered 15 minutes
  - 167000 integrated, invisible Holoplot speakers
  - Dynamic pricing means tickets can be anywhere between \$267 and \$1500.
  - Cost \$2.3 billion
  - The planned second Sphere in London is on hold amidst concerns about light pollution and close residential areas
- Focus would love to hear your opinion about Sphere.

**Photos: U2's opening number (left) and right, top to bottom: Architects impression and cut-away graphic of the auditorium, Elvis and Matrix inspired video content. All photos MSG**



Hailed as a 'timely anthology critically celebrating light' this new major collection of analytical responses to performance lighting has been recently launched by its editors Dr. Katherine Graham, Dr. Kelli Zezulka and Dr Scott Palmer (photo, from left) at the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds. In conversation with Focus, they reveal how the book came about, and what makes it so different from the more usual instructional book on stage lighting.

**Scott:** Kelli and Katherine studied for PHDs in the categories of light, I was one of their supervisors, and we felt there was a kind of coalescence of knowledge and expertise, and between us, we could do a project which went beyond academia, open up discussions and invite other practitioners, and maybe we curate a space, to discuss key issues of lighting in contemporary performance, in a crossover between practise and theory.

**Kelli:** We had a symposium in 2017 called 'Performing Light' in Leeds, quite a big event, co-sponsored by the ALPD and ETC, followed by a more informal event 'Talking Light', and some of the talks became the first building stones of the book.

**Katherine:** Chris Baugh did the keynote, Paule Constable, Katherine Williams, Yaron Shyldkrot did talks and subsequently worked them into chapters in the book. As lighting designers we don't often have the chance to reflect on our work, and the exercise giving a talk, reworking that, proofed exiting. We had some ideas who we really wanted to talk to. One of our motivations was our frustration about gaps in previous books about lighting, where we felt as light scholars - practitioners, we wanted this space where both research and practise could co-exist, and feed of

each other, academics as well as practitioners. We were also very interested in expanding the voices, a lot in the field of writing about lighting were male, and many extraordinary lighting designers are not male, and the book addresses this with female and a non-binary author.

**Kelli:** We spoke to many designers mid-pandemic, which probably helped, and some people had the time to talk to us. For example American designer Jennifer Tipton, who for a while said that she really didn't think she had anything to say, and we gently persuaded her ...

**Focus:** ... which resulted in one of the most philosophical contributions.

**Scott:** The symposium generated a real generosity, and some who were not used to an academic environment, really enjoyed the opportunity to talk about ideas of lights in a welcoming space, a credit to Kelli and Katherine curating. The seed was set, and for me this was an opportunity for a different book, combining theory and practise, bringing something new to the discipline, different to traditional 'teaching' lighting books ...

**Focus:** ... which are instructional books, looking at techniques and methods. This book looks, almost philosophically, in three sections, at the experience and meaning of light, and the process of creativity...

**Scott:** ...giving readers both theoretical material and contemporary knowledge of light, with very varied perspectives: For example Lucy Carter speaks about her love of choreography, and that this is how she approaches light. Or we interviewed the lighting designer of Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, Jesper Kongshaug, who also lights theatre, who presented data about visitor experience, with interesting ideas how lighting directs people in dusk and at night. Kelli's chapter is an analysis of the relationship between the programmer and the lighting designer, and the skills they both need to develop a language together.

**Katherine:** We all think that light is endlessly fascinating, and we are past the old notion that 'good lighting shouldn't be noticed' - we are past that and now have lighting spectacles which become the talking points of particular shows, the virtuosity of technology. This is interesting, and what that does dramaturgically, is our focus. So we didn't include, on purpose, a chapter about technology, and the current changes, we are interested in how lighting can be a palpable, physiological experience, and that is a different question to the technological developments.

**Scott:** "More art, less tools" - the ALPD motto. 🍷



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The one I've said before is wing mirrors for the console so I know who's standing behind me before I say something scurrilous. The new one is a lighting periscope, to let you actually see the stage over the ridiculously tall screens attached to some of the newer lighting consoles...  
**Rob Halliday, LD**

I think on my christmas wish list would be a tiny touch screen about 6" by 6" that I could put a colour picker on so I always have it next to me at my production desk and don't need to change tabs every time.  
**Jai Morjaria, LD**

I want to start a campaign to abolish DMX. I'm fed up with the 512-channel thing. Just let me link all my lights, find them via a network, and control them. No 'fixtures with 15 DMX modes'! No 'will it fit in my universe'?  
**Greg Westwood, Technical Manager GLP**

Dear Santa  
 For Christmas this year I would like some more resilience please. Can I have two bottles of that if possible? I am sure Aldi have a two for one offer at present on bottles of resilience! I need this to deal with producers who seem to think or certainly make me feel like all I am doing is trying to spend their money when actually what I am trying to do is maintain their product to a high standard and ensure the shows look at their best while touring the U.K and entertaining the masses. Also a little bit of sparkle and some Baileys please.  
 Yours very wearily  
**Lucy Carter x , LD**

I would like Lighting Santa to bring me an economically priced moving head profile for smaller venues. An LED full colour profile on a moving yoke. No frills, no fans, just light, colour, zoom, pan/tilt, focus. Output/brightness equivalent to a 1KW or 650W conventional. Throw 5-20m Shutters and gobo can be manual.  
**John Leventhall, LD**

I have a wish. I would like a personal assistant to read all the emails from my daughters' school every day and give me a synopsis every few days. If you would prefer something slightly more industry relevant then I would like an anonymous rich benefactor to give me some money so I can afford to see more shows. Or better for them to fund the arts better so we can all go more often. Depends on the volunteers' budget...  
**Briony Berning, Ambersphere**

Make Moving lights better looking - why do they all have to look like black boxes? I'm so bored - please make them look more interesting, if they have to be on sight. And a special wish: Less haze. Let's have more shows without haze at all.  
**Mark Doubleday, LD**

That every school has a working theatre and music and drama is on the curriculum, as it's so important for a human development, children's social interaction and for peoples future careers, whatever that might be. Everyone has a right to music and drama in their lives.  
**Jo Town, ALPD Chair**

My Christmas wish is to have a comfy production desk chair - A heated massage chair that reclines so I can nap during breaks. Thanks Santa!!  
**Tamykha Patterson, programmer**

My wish would be for completely renewable energy for every performance space! That way the lighting designer can choose the best light source for the job, not losing any of the sources we need! And also saving us from throwing away perfectly working lights and replacing them with one that have to be made and shipped around the world, which is not so green at all!  
**Rick Fisher, ALPD VP**

**Christmas Wishes**  
 We asked lighting designers, programmers and production electricians for their ultimate christmas wish. And as it's the season for dreams to come true, we've sent everything on our special SACN to the ALPD Santa. Promised.

### 10 Out of 10 Productions

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