

FOCUS

ALPD[#]

**IN MEMORIAM
RICHARD PILBROW**

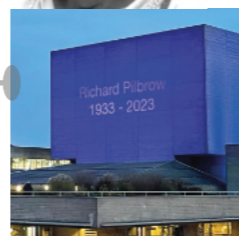
Friends and colleagues
remember the esteemed
lighting designer

LIFEWIRE: Finances | LIGHTING DESIGN: BRB Black Sabbath by K.J

The Association for Lighting
Production and Design
February - March 2024
£5.00 / FREE to Members



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Titlepage photo credit: Richard Pilbrow by Jim Laws (also p14).

I would like to start by wishing you all a very happy 2024.

This issue of Focus is dedicated to our President Richard Pilbrow, who sadly passed away in late December. Our thoughts are with his wife Molly and family at this sad time.

Richard was a founder member of the ALD in 1961, member #001, and through all those years remained a huge supporter of the association, watching it grow and develop in stature.

I, like so many other members of the Association, first met Richard through his book *Stage Lighting*, with his Lightboard lighting desk at the National proudly on the cover. I was 18 and just starting work at the Royal Exchange as an apprentice. All I wanted to do was to be sat at that lighting desk operating shows. Forty years on, I still have that book on my shelf and I still open it to find the answers to lighting questions I need solving.

In this issue we will read how Richard touched so many lives, about his passion for lighting in all its forms, whether it be lighting design, lighting technician, manufacturer, architect or teacher. He saw the

importance of a lighting profession working together to make an industry worth being passionate about.

Personally, I would like to thank Richard for his support when I became Chair. For his impromptu visits to ALPD events and his resounding support of our name change to The ALPD. He was a huge support in all the actions and campaigns the association have undertaken, especially during the Save Stage Lighting campaign.

Richard helped create the ALD in order for lighting designers to have an association they could network in and have as a support structure in the very infancy of freelance lighting design. Our industry has not stopped growing, made up now with the many new and different types of lighting freelancer and we continue to need the camaraderie and support of each other.

I would like to thank you, Richard for founding our association, creating a safe space for its members to talk, share, support each other and campaign from, and for your continued support in its growth over the last sixty years.

We will miss you.



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



It is with great sadness that the ALPD heard the news that its co-founder and President, passed away on the evening of December 6, 2023. Richard, esteemed Member No. 1, had been the Association's President for many years. A distinguished lighting designer, producer, and writer, he was a hugely respected consultant for the construction of new performing arts venues. He was the first Lighting Director of the National Theatre and founder of Theatre Projects.

ALPD Vice-President Rick Fisher

"Since I ever thought about light on stage, Richard Pilbrow has always been there. First on the bookshelf, at conferences and trade shows, then on the ALD (as it was then) letterhead as our President, and most importantly as a colleague and friend. While he was mostly based in the USA during the last few decades, he was always very keen to know about the progress and the aspirations of the ALD, one of the many organisations he co-founded.

In every area of the theatre that Richard worked, he fostered collaboration and

collegiality. He was always truly excited by new people, new technology, and what could be achieved by us all individually and together. He was truly supportive of other designers and thrilled at their successes. This manifested in the early days of Theatre Projects where there were many lighting designers under one umbrella. This collaborative start to our design profession became part of the

RICHARD PILBROW 1933 - 2023

The Association mourns its Co-Founder and President

core of the ALD and why it has always flourished as a friendly, non-competitive association. Very much in the mould of Richard Pilbrow.

At one point when I was working in NYC Richard and I co-hosted a meeting to try and jump start an organisation like the ALD in the US. It was a great, fun and positive meeting, underlining what I have

always thought about professional organisations - that if you start with the social, the purpose and goals of what you need to do better will naturally flow.

An organisation never took off, perhaps it is the scale of the US where so many lighting folk work all over the country, but I think it was partly due to there not being that initial collaborative designer experience that Theatre Projects promoted.

Unlike some founders of organisations, he was pleased to see how the ALD developed and changed over 60 years. He memorably told me that starting organisations was easy, keeping them necessary and relevant was hard. He completely understood that performance lighting was never the work of a designer alone, so he was completely supportive of

changing the organisation's name to the ALPD to reflect this.

Richard's pride and support of the ALD/ALPD was always evident. He was particularly proud of how wonderful Focus became under Andy Collier's and Kelli Zezulka's editorships, transforming into what he always referred to as the best magazine about lighting in the world.

The ALPD had applied to the Honours Commission, for Richard to be recognised with a well deserved 'gong'. This sadly never came to pass but in the process, going back decades we gathered some very moving testimonial letter of support.

Richard truly was one of a kind, someone who only saw solutions and opportunities. While others can speak more eloquently about his brilliance at design and theatre consulting, his embrace of technological innovations, his importance as author, producer and mentor, what I am most reminded of when I think about this wonderful inspirational man is his true enthusiasm for all the people who make up our world.

His instigation of countless associations including the ALPD is a legacy from which we all benefit. He was always excited to see how we would develop and what we all could achieve

singly and together as a profession. We can best honour him by working together to improve our industry and create magic in performance. I will miss him!" ✨



Photo: Theatre Projects

Obituary

Richard Pilbrow was born 1933 to a music teacher, Marjorie, and an Olympic fencer, Gordon, in Beckenham, UK. From an early age, he was producing, designing, and starring in small shows with family and friends, drawing influence from his time with the Beckenham Children's Theatre. After serving as a corporal in the RAF, Richard's theatrical training continued with the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama – the institution established the Richard Pilbrow Scholarship in his honour in 2016.

Richard started his venture, Theatre Projects Limited, in 1957 alongside Bryan Kendall, renting out lights salvaged from under the stage at Drury Lane and working as a designer-for-hire. Laurence Olivier engaged him for the Chichester Festival Theatre, followed in 1963 at the National Theatre, where Pilbrow became theatre consultant.

Leading on the development alongside architect Denys Lasdun, Pilbrow is credited for numerous innovations, including the Olivier's drum revolve. He would go on to help shape the profession of "theatre consultant"

and to plan and design hundreds of global performance venues.

Outside of consulting, Richard lit shows on Broadway and the West End, earning him Tony nominations, a Drama Desk award, an Outer Critics award, and multiple lifetime achievement awards. His design of *Zorba* marked the first time a Broadway musical had an English lighting designer, and along with Robert Ornbo, he became one of the first English designers invited to join United Scenic Artists.

Richard was a co-founder of the Association of Lighting Designers, the Association of British Theatre Technicians, the Institute of British Theatre Consultants, and the Society of British Theatre Designers. He also frequently spoke or held leadership positions at other esteemed education and industry institutions.

His latest book, *A Sense of Theatre: The Untold Story of Britain's National Theatre*, will be posthumously published in March 2024.

Richard Pilbrow was born on April 28, 1933, and died on December 6, aged 90. He is survived by his wife Molly, daughters Daisy and Abigail and son Fred. 🌸

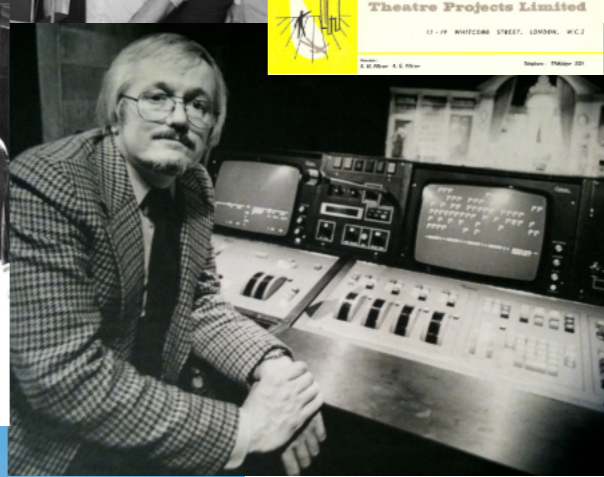
Theatre Projects

We join many in mourning Richard at this time. His influence across our industry, within our company, and at an individual level was deeply felt, and his energy and compassion will be missed. Richard created and embodied the spirit of Theatre Projects - demonstrating values like inclusion, innovation, community-centric thinking, kindness - and directed the company's course, time and again, as our industry and our scope of services changed. Richard was a vital force in the theatre - a celebrated Broadway and West End lighting designer, a pathfinder in the theatrical consulting profession, and an innovator in countless other corners of the industry. He lived a life committed to expansive thinking and supporting others, co-founding multiple professional membership organizations and serving as mentor to consultants and designers across the globe. And his books on lighting and on his career in consultancy have become standard reads for fledgling creatives and industry professionals alike.

Richard's landmark venues with Theatre Projects include the National Theatre (London, UK), the Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles, USA), the New Amsterdam Theatre (New York, USA),



At 'The Photon Connection' with broadcaster Brian Redhead, which Richard favoured over 'Phantom of the Opera'



Left centre: At Theatre Projects L-R Richard, Larry Gelbart, Tony Walton, Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim. Lightboard, designed by Richard, built by Strand for the National. (Photo: Philip Sayer). Tribute projected at the National Theatre (Photo Matt Drury).

Steppenwolf Theatre (Chicago, USA), the New World Center (Miami Beach, USA), the Kimmel Center (Philadelphia, USA), the multiform Derngate Centre (Northampton, UK) and Glyndebourne (Lewes, UK).

Under Richard's leadership, Theatre Projects was at times a lighting house, a sound studio, a film and Broadway producer, a planning and design consultancy, an architectural lighting firm, and almost anything else that supported the management and construction of creative spaces. His contagious ambition and willingness to experiment kept the company shifting, expanding, retracting, and restructuring over the years.

Even after Richard's retirement, he stayed close with team members and remained a committed advocate for the arts; our work will forever benefit from his passion. Lifelong friend David Collison, a sound designer and fellow Theatre Projects executive, describes Pilbrow as "one of the most extraordinary and charismatic figures I've had the joy and privilege to know. Despite many awards and accolades he retained his self-deprecating sense of humour. Totally driven, yet with a gentle, unassuming manner, he enriched the lives of so many people, not least my own." 🌸

Dame Judi Dench

"I have known Richard since we were at drama school together and have always admired his talent and integrity. He is highly respected in his field and his work is much admired both behind the scenes and by audiences."

Sir Nicholas Hytner

"Richard Pilbrow has been one of the major influences in British Theatre over the last several decades. Nobody has done more to establish lighting design as a central feature of theatre production in this country."

Ken Billington

"I first was introduced to Richard in 1968 when I was the assistant to lighting designer Tharon Musser on the UK transfer of *Golden Boy*, starring Sammy Davis jr., to the Palladium. Richard came to meet Tharon and though I was not invited to join them at dinner he was warm and welcoming and treated this kid from NY on his first visit to London like a friend. Over subsequent years he was a friend and colleague and tireless in his quest for knowledge and of the newest and most interesting lighting products, always trying to push lighting forward. I

do remember Richard photographing the interior of a theatre he had not been in before. When I asked why, he replied: "You can always learn something new about theatres and this way I remember them". Last Spring at his 90th birthday party we sat for 20 or so minutes and it was like time had stood still. Richard was still as curious and as warm and welcoming as he was when I met him 55

RICHARD PILBROW

Friends and Colleagues remember

years earlier. I am sad that he is not with us anymore but glad that he wrote down his history which will continue to inspire future generations of lighting designers and theatre lovers."

Cameron Mackintosh

"Richard Pilbrow was not only a great, much-loved gentleman of the theatre but also one of the most brilliant and influential lighting designers of his generation. As well as his extraordinary talent, the gift he gave the whole theatre profession when he founded Theatre

Projects has been his everlasting and invaluable legacy, without which our profession would have been undoubtedly dimmer. Richard was a true beacon of light and we will all miss him."

Psyche Chui, Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

"It was my privilege to have known Richard for over three decades in a number of capacities, as a guest artist at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and joining him at lighting seminars around the world. Together with his wife Molly, we also struck up a friendship over the years and I can truly say I have lost a wonderful friend and close acquaintance."

Paule Constable

"He is the Godfather of modern lighting design, a pioneer, an educator, and inspiration. Richard had left the UK by the time I made my way in the industry, but I finally met him through his amazing wife, Molly. Before that he'd been a name to me - the name of someone who had paved the way, gone before, created a space. To get to know him; to call him my friend was such an incredible joy. That

inspiring, innovative mind, that had created such incredible work, was as twinkly and creative and exciting as ever. Richard's obituary in *The Guardian* is beautiful. It makes an attempt to try to cram that full and rich life into one piece but that would be entirely impossible. For me it doesn't talk about how generous Richard was with the younger lot - about his excitement as he came back from talking to students or meeting new technologies. About how he always wanted to explore what something new might create. About how generous and genuinely interested he was - in it all."

Sir Richard Eyre CH, CBE:

"Throughout his lengthy career he has been outstandingly innovative, imaginative, and enterprising - an inspiration to lighting designers and technicians all over the world."

David H. Rosenburg, Theatre Projects director

"I came up to the office, than in Ridgefield in 1997, to chat, get the tour, and meet the staff. At the end of almost three hours, he said that he didn't have any positions to offer but would keep in touch. Four months later I got a call offering me a position. In hindsight I



"Richard's artistic genius has breathed texture, tone, character and beauty into every project he has touched. He is revered in the theatre world." Dame Julie Andrews (above, with Richard and his wife Molly at the premiere of *My Fair Lady*, Sydney 2016). Left: Knights of Illumination

Lifetime Recognition Award 2011 (from left Durham Marenghi, Mark Jonathan, Richard Pilbrow, Rick Fisher, Antonio Marino from sponsor Osram). Top left: David Hersey, Laurie Clayton, Lennie Tucker (receiving his 2006 Fellowship), Richard Pilbrow.

cannot imagine working for (and with) anyone else in this industry. He opened my eyes to what is important in what we do and gave me a whole second career that I never could have imagined. I will be forever grateful for his guidance, patience, sense of humour, and insight

into not only why live theatre is vital, but how to best present it so that audience and performer alike are elevated."

Patrick Woodroffe OBE

"His influence on hundreds of young lighting designers who have followed him, will be his true legacy."

Paul Handley, head of production at the National Theatre:

"We are deeply saddened to hear of the death of Richard Pilbrow. Richard was a pioneer of modern stage lighting and played a huge part in the development of the National Theatre. Heading up Theatre Project Consultants, who worked between the building's architect Denys Lasdun and Laurence Olivier, Richard's technical mastery was instrumental in the creation of the Olivier and Lyttelton theatres. He donated his collection to the National Theatre Archive, which is full of wonderful materials, learnings and notes. The National Theatre wishes Richard's family and friends our deepest condolences."

John A. Williams

"I was introduced to Richard at an ALD meeting in the early 1980's. At that time there weren't many of us, I was/ am member #23, and meetings were intimate

affairs. We struck up a friendship that brought us together in various parts of the world. We sat together as panel members for lighting seminars, and on a number of occasions me inviting Richard to the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts where he conducted captivating masterclasses and workshops. Always, only too happy to share his expertise, knowledge and experiences. On Richard's last visit he was conferred Academy Fellow. We didn't know then it was to be the final time we would meet. Will miss you dear friend."

Robert Bryan

"A little over sixty years ago a fresh-faced young man said to me "Hullo, my name is Richard Pilbrow". So began a lifelong friendship. Richard asked me to join Theatre Projects Ltd. I have to confess

that at the time I had neither heard of Richard Pilbrow nor had I heard of Theatre Projects Ltd. I was very quickly introduced to the rest of the team at TP - exactly what



Lighting My Fair Lady, Sydney 2016

it was – a team. One of Richard's enduring strengths was the ability to build a team. Richard had the uncanny knack of thinking ahead of his time. Hence our development of predistorted slides for scenic projection; the idea of memory systems for controlling lighting; the

development (now defunct) of drawing stencils for drawing lighting plans, and so the list can go on. He was also very generous in asking colleagues to take on extra work. Hence after some time as his assistant he asked me to start lighting shows. This was a general trend in the TP team. His books are classics of their genre. From immensely detailed "how to do it" books to fascinating tomes on the history of Theatre Lighting and of course his pet subject of the development of Theatre Projects Ltd. He was my friend and colleague who I miss beyond belief as will the rest of the lighting world."

Andrew Bridge

"Richard was the beacon that literally made our paths brighter, he was the most enthusiastic artist in our profession. Richard was a brave pioneer that forged the creative position of lighting designer. Against many obstacles he pushed the technical and lighting design process to become a new essential department in all theatre projects. Creating beautiful theatre and Theatres in all forms was his passion. Ever

supportive of new talent and excited about new technologies. Passionate about painting with light, moving the darkness around to create emotions. His colour sense and the clarity of his work came from always keeping his eyes open and observing the beauty of light. Richard was a theatre wizard."

David Hersey

"I first met Richard in early 1968 when I came to London from New York on a mission to discover what the English Theatre was all about. He was kind enough to offer me a job even though I had been extremely off hand about a play I had seen

without realising he had lit it. He even loaned me the down payment on my first boat which I lived on for seven years just upstream from the National. I will forever be in his debt. I was extremely proud to be part of the commando team charged with the task of wresting the National from the grip of the contractors and lighting the opening productions in the Lyttelton and the Olivier."

"His work is of an astonishing completeness and a magnificent exposition of sheer masterliness."

Lord Olivier as quoted by Tony Walton from the introduction to 'The Art of Stage Lighting'.

Neil Austin

"Dear Richard, You are deeply missed. Your energy, enthusiasm and joy for life was inspirational. The schoolboy that devoured your book can't believe his luck that he got to know you and call you a friend."

Brian Croft

"I am utterly devastated. Richard was a great man, a genius, and the best boss I ever had."

Mark Jonathan

"I have so many memories of Richard and his generous enthusiasm for all things. From a letter complimenting my lighting, written in the 70s, to often meeting him on a podium to encourage and reward others. When we were going to give him the KOI lifetime recognition award, in order make sure he came, I asked him if he would mind helping me hand out the swords. Then, to his surprise, we pounced on him with the final award of the evening. Richard said to me 'don't you ever do that again, I might had had a heart attack!'

What a wonderful and brilliant man; as Howard Eaton said, he was a 'da Vinci' of the modern World." #

This will, I fear, just become a jumble of memories. They appear, randomly ordered as I go about a day, usually when I'm least expecting them.

They go back a long way because Richard was threaded through my working life – before it became a working life, actually, back when it was just a thing done for fun in the school hall, a way of getting into the warmth of the theatre crowd for someone with no interest at all in being on stage.

So there was the book, obviously, found tucked away in the library. It wasn't the only one – someone had also thoughtfully acquired Francis Reid's, and Fred Bentham's, and maybe even John Williams'. I realise precisely as I write this that this was actually a lot of lighting books for a school that didn't officially dabble in drama in any way!

Then there was the actual learning from them, all invaluable in their different ways, but Richard's throwing not just lighting but the remarkable possibilities of the glamour of life in theatre into the mix: the travelling around the world, the building new theatres, the inventing new technologies. None of it felt like the 'there's no money in theatre, get a proper job' of the grown-ups around me! I didn't

understand the real power of the NT's Lightboard then; I do now, and I wish we could bring it back to life and actually try it!

Then applying for, eventually joining, the National Youth Theatre: a vague connection to this remarkable man because he was on their letterhead, on their council.

But the mystery, where was he? He

seemed to have vanished. Had he passed away and I'd missed the news? That would be easier to do then than now, the time before the internet. Years later his book *A Theatre Project* would reveal the answer: this was the time of his post-National nervous breakdown, and then move to America. Like the rest of Richard's writing, it is open, and friendly, and approachable – and searingly honest. The whole book is worth a read, that part in particular.

Vividly, discovering the National. My dad was more of a classical music fan

rather than a theatre fan; we tended to get as far as the Festival Hall. But one day old enough to be allowed out alone, I remember somehow ascending to Waterloo Bridge in a way that let this remarkable building rise up in front of me. I was hooked on it; I still am. I was a fan. Richard was part of it!

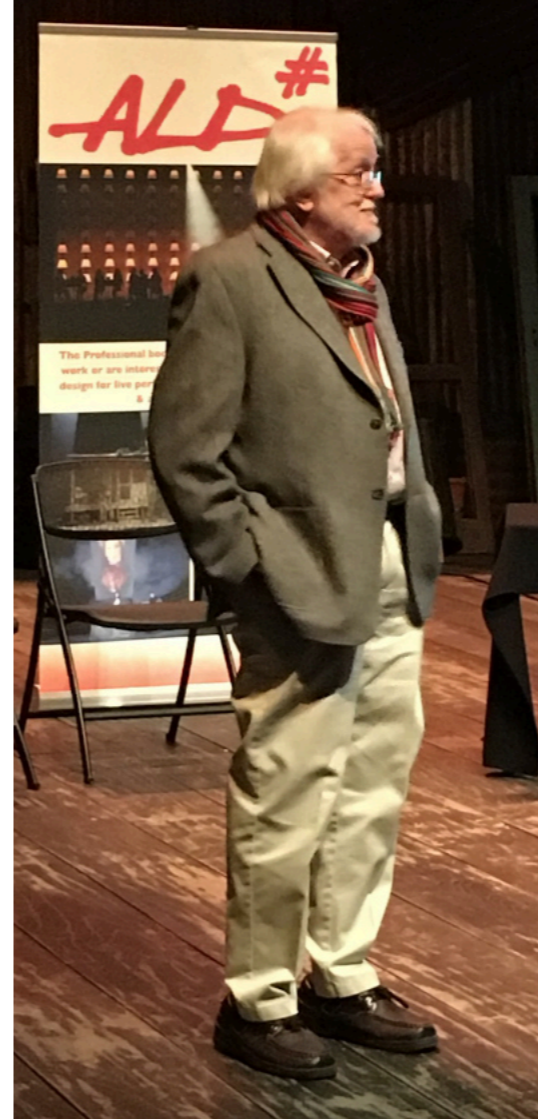
Then a redemption, in 1988, when that troublesome drum revolve was finally brought to life in a show – to triumphant acclaim. Richard wrote about it in one of the little trade magazines, *Cue*, issue 55; find it at the amazing Theatrecrafts.

com. The article blew his cover: he was alive! And, clearly, jubilant. Maybe also relieved. Certainly justified.

Flash forward through some years of studying and working and travelling the world doing lighting – just like in that book – and there's the memory of that phone call from someone, could you come and help with a demo at PLASA?

Richard Pilbrow Memories of a remarkable life

By Rob Halliday



Sure. What is it? A complete re-imagining of lighting control. Oh, ok. Who's running it? Richard Pilbrow. Ahh. Yes I'll be there (scramble to re-arrange other things!). I'd already met, and then worked, with my other lighting idol growing up, David Hersey. But here I was, star struck all over again. And there he was, just like in the words – open, friendly, accessible, welcoming. You were an equal. Even though he was clearly way ahead of you in every thought. The system we put together that day, integrating a console, a touch interface in Fred Foster's (another one much missed) graphics tablet, a performer tracking system and Robert Bell's 3D previz system: if I sometimes seem a bit blah about all of these new-fangled products we're seeing today, it's because they're not really new. We did it in 1995; Richard had been dreaming of it for probably two decades before that. Do the maths; he was 62 then, when many people would have been looking forward to a quiet retirement. He was still pushing boundaries in the field that he loved, not for the sake of technology but really because he wanted a better way of realising his lighting vision on shows, and allowing others to do the same. There are so many things I will miss, but one is that strange sense of calling someone almost

forty years older than you to learn about the latest innovations in lighting. He always knew of them first.

There are many more memories. But you get the idea.

It's interesting that as I pause, I realise that was really all about me, really very little about Richard. But in realising that, I notice that's incredibly common in the tributes that have been written about Richard since last December. We reflect on ourselves through him. And actually we do that because of him. That was one of his traits, one of his skills: he'd always ask about you. Many's the dinner I've had with him when I've wanted to ask questions, so many questions, about the shows, the lighting, the producing, just how did it feel to have turned down *Phantom*? The National, all of it. Wanted to ask how he fitted all that in to just one life, when it so often feels I like have a hard time getting a single thing crossed off the to-do list in a day. But then he'd ask first.

Though over the last year, I think I've realised I have a bit more of an answer to how he fitted it all in: his other innate skill was surrounding himself with the right people. Then sowing enough of a seed to let them get on with it.

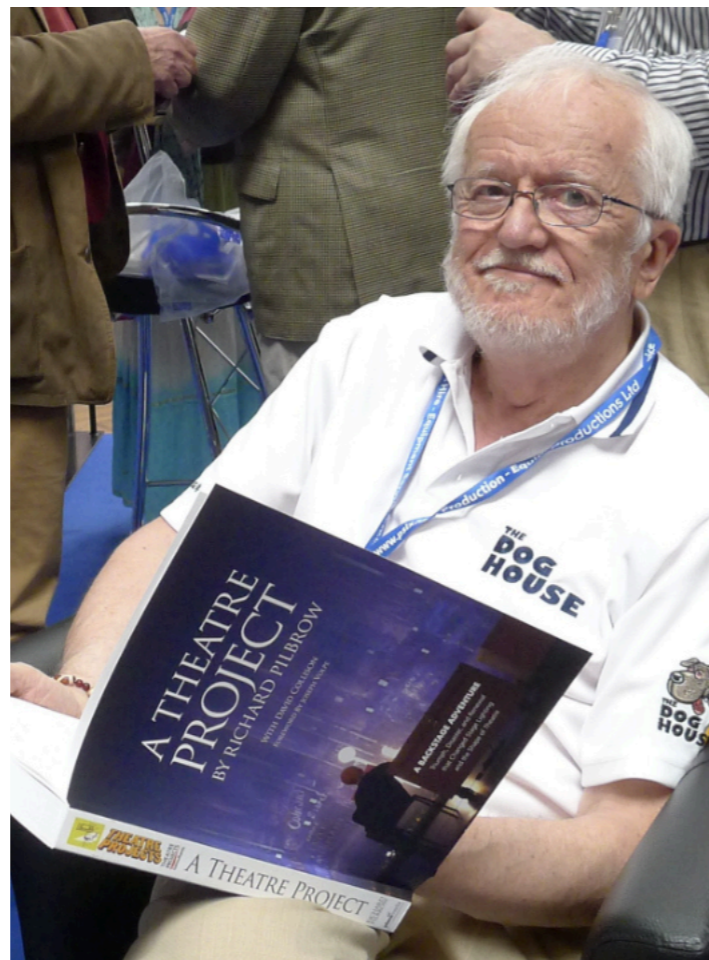
Which of all the random memories,

suddenly brings *Star Wars* to mind. Brings what?! Yes, *Star Wars*. The first one. Unlikely as it sounds, it has a clear relationship to the National: a new generation re-inventing something lost over time (the big block-buster effects movie, the design of theatres), and pushing the boundaries of it by applying brand-new technology, pushing that technology to do things it had never done before. The timeframes are also similar, both made in the early seventies, opening in 1976 (the theatre) and 1977 (the movie). But that's reverse-engineering the reason for the memory. The actual reason is this: the line in the film Alec Guinness as Ben Kenobi utters, asking his young apprentice as they head off on some reckless adventure, with a twinkle in his eye, "who's more foolish, the fool or the fool who follows him?"

I followed him – willingly, I might add! – into his latest, and it turns out sadly his last, adventure, his book about the National Theatre. He definitely had that twinkle in his eye. I'd been skirting around the edge of it since before he began on it more than eight years ago. A year ago, when he realised that traditional publishers wouldn't let him do it the way he wanted to do it, he just made an announcement that you realise was an

announcement he'd been making all his life, with the start of Theatre Projects, the start of consulting, the start of theatre producing and film producing and books so much more:

"Right. Then we're just going to do it ourselves!" Not I. We. Together. As a team. I'm sure that I'm not the first to follow. I'm sure that was the same line that built that remarkable lighting design group at Theatre Projects (seriously, look at that list of names: we owe them pretty much everything!) That lured Richard Brett from the BBC to help make the National. That built those remarkable theatres around the world. You can actually sense it any time you talk to anyone who had any involvement with Richard: their memory of setting off on adventures, never quite knowing where they'd end, knowing that sometimes

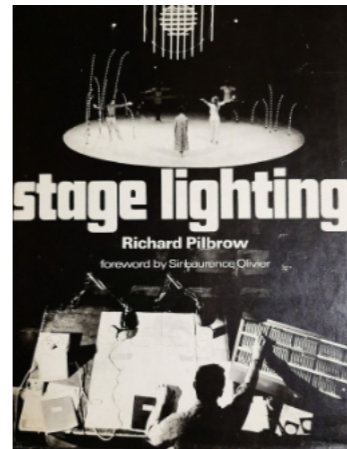


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things wouldn't end at all as planned, but knowing that sometimes something remarkable would result. And knowing that the journey would be a remarkable one, one you'd remember forever.

I hope we managed an enjoyable journey for the last year of his life. To be clear: the content of the book was all there. It needed editing, tightening, a bit of cutting through the jungle to make the path clearer, but it was all there. We did that. And it needed all the 'book' stuff you never even think about until you have to do it sorted out:

picture rights, indexing, printing, distribution; we're just finishing that, knowing what he wanted. And if you're doing it yourself, you need money. We raised the money thanks to so many people out there, companies and individuals, who loved Richard and wanted to be sure that that 90 year's-worth of knowledge and experience was written down somewhere so we could all continue to take advantage of it: of the



National, of course, but also of how to make theatres that are magical rather than just places to sit and watch a play. Richard, with his former theatre producer hat on, I think was fascinated by the direct route Kickstarter provided between an idea and anyone interested enough to support that idea. The end result, I think is pretty great. You'll get to see it, fingers crossed, in April.

Now, though, there is that shock of silence. Knowing that when a question comes up about the National, the person who'd have the answer is just not there. Knowing that when a question comes up about just about anything in lighting, or in theatre, or across 90 years of history, the person who'd have the answer is just not there.

Except in the books. They're not the same, not even close. But as an understudy, well, they're pretty good understudies. If you haven't dipped in to them for a while, please do. While you do, remember that remarkable soul we have lost, and to whom we owe so much. #

Richard Pilbrow Backup Tech Tribute Fund

Richard has been an inspiration and mentor to so many people throughout his 70+ years in our industry, as Author, Lighting Designer, Producer, Theatre Consultant, teacher, and co-founder of many of the organisations that continue to support all those working in live performance.

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.



 Backup Tech

<http://tinyurl.com/RichardPilbrow>

We mourn the loss but celebrate the life of Richard Pilbrow, founder of the Association of Lighting Designers and president of our ongoing organisation.

He led by his enormous influence on both lighting design as an artform and the design and concept of new and evolving theatre stages throughout the world. He was a truly 'comprehensive man' whose concepts and teachings will always remain with us. His first book in 1970 is the only one I've ever read on lighting cover to cover and remained my 'bible' for many years.

My memories of him are in two stages. The first being when I was a theatre design student at Central School of Art in the mid Sixties.

Richard was an icon then in the days when the role of the lighting designer as an established member of the creative team was really just emerging and being recognised. As Head of Lighting at the National Theatre under the artistic direction of Laurence

Olivier he was a great catalyst for lighting designers working there and establishing new standards. When he created Theatre Projects in 1957 he went on to assemble a very distinguished group of designers who seemed at the time to dominate the world of lighting design - including Robert Ornbo, Brian Benn, John B Read, Bob Bryan, David Hersey and Andy Bridge.

I well remember as a student watching John B's work with the newly 'contemporary' Ballet Rambert which certainly influenced my involvement with the emergence of contemporary dance in

the UK in those days. The 'TP guys' were a living legend even then.

Just that list alone of Richard's associates tells the story of his

influence on the world of lighting design but it goes far beyond that. Our current National Theatre owes much to Richard's appointment as one of the design consultants, as does the Crucible in Sheffield and many many more globally.

Dear Peter - Yours, Richard

Peter Mumford shares candid emails, from the President to the former ALD Chair

On a lighting bridge, The Olivier National Theatre, mid-70s.

Photo Philip Sayer



Quite apart from his creative work as a designer in both the UK and America it is his generosity of spirit and interest and encouragement of others that makes him an outstanding catalyst in the world of theatre.

Which brings me to the second stage of my memories quite a while after Richard had largely moved to America and become an established part of Broadway and a huge influence on the creation of new theatre spaces around the world.

As the president of our organisation he was the first to welcome me when I took on the role of chair of the ALD from Rick Fisher in 2011 and I've been looking back on a trail of emails that demonstrate his commitment, encouragement, friendship and continued support for both the ALD and it's members.

So here are some quotes from the man himself.

Jan.2011

Dear Peter:

As the very long-range President of the ALD, I felt I should welcome you into the seat of Chairman. Congratulations . . . on both that . . . and a most distinguished career!

Rick has done one hell of a good job

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with the Association. His are big shoes to fill, and I'm sure you will do marvelously.

As the really old-guy-member, it is pretty staggering how far the ALD has come. I suppose, I remain depressed that, despite those advances, the remuneration of our profession, particularly in the UK, is still pretty pathetic, considering our role and contribution to the theatre.

But, enough reservation. The ALD has done wondrously, and you will, I know, be a splendid Chairman. If I can ever be of any help do, please, call on me. The 50th should be an occasion for celebration in any event. I am in the UK much less than I used to be, but I will be over, probably in April, and on-and-off during the summer.

Best wishes, and lots of luck to you.

Richard

It made such a difference to get that kind of encouragement.

April 2011

"Gentlemen:

I arrive in London on Tuesday. I'm staying at the Garrick Club.

Is there any chance of lunch on Wednesday?

Peter, is at the Colly, so somewhere near there?"

Richard

We lunched with Andy Collier (our original Focus editor) and Mark Jonathan and discussed everything from the latest shows and the demise of tungsten. Then there was a proposal initiated by Declan Randall to attempt to reproduce a lighting design from 50 years ago (by Francis Reid) but using an entirely LED rig. Eventually Richard joined the debate ...

August 2011

Dear Friends:

"I've not joined in this fascinating conversation until now. But I've been thinking about it a lot.

The idea of building three ages of lighting for some sort of comparison is a fascinating one. But one, I suspect, with a few problems.

1. Periods of lighting in the UK.

I'd suggest for reasons of closer historical accuracy the timeline is rather more complicated. One could say:

a. Early spotlight period: 1920 to 1955 . . . before the patt 23 miniaturization. This would include Basil Dean through Joe Davis

b. Second spotlight period: The Pattern 23 revolution to the moving light. My beginnings and the TP Lighting team . . . "multi-lantern complexity," the

emergence of the stage lighting design profession.

- c. Moving lights
- d. Video, etc., perhaps?
- e. LED's

2. The Proposal. A dance comparison. I agree with our honorable new Chairman, that The Place saw the birth of modern UK dance lighting. I would add that I had nothing to do with it, other than sending along John B. Read, who did, I believe, put lighting of dance and ballet on the map in the UK. I also agree with Peter, that in many ways the dance rig is little changed. Certainly, having recently lit for American Ballet Theatre at the Met, the rig does, and still must handle very well Jean Rosenthal designs of the fifties. I'm afraid I added VL3500's.

3. I do agree that lighting has changed. Obviously it has the potential of being a lot brighter. I constantly wonder if brighter means better. I suspect . . . often not. It is certainly vastly more expensive. That must label me as an old codger. But I was actually there. I saw Joe Davis creating breath-taking magic using masses of Patt 43's, 44's, 56's, etc. Putting aside entirely false modesty, some of my own, such as *Brand* in 1957, or an RSC *As You Like It* in 1961, possessed a subtle complexity that I'm not at all sure, I ever did any better.

4. Comparison by reproduction. I must admit that I'm skeptical . . . although I'd love to see the results. To me, light is about creating the three dimensional air that enwraps the performer, revealing, adding atmosphere, supporting the telling of stories. I hardly care from what sort of instrument is the source, providing it is doing the job that I need it for. Is a human being lit in five moving lights more exquisitely lit than Jeannie Rosenthal, or Tharon Musser did with Lekos?

5. I'd obviously support Peter's comments on projection. Amazing things were done with Reiche & Vogel or Century projectors in the 1960s. Different to today. Not video then of course. But better or worse at telling stories?

6. I second also Peter's comments of control systems being a pivotal development. But even then I must pause. Three men on piano boards could perform prodigious feats. But computer memory is a wonderful thing . . . it certainly makes the process so much

easier. And then the wondrous moving lights come along to make it all more complicated again . . .

7. I love a good LED, and we must use less energy. Happily the advance of technology seems on our side.



8. Again: "brightness in the theatre is a relative thing - relative to darkness of course." I find, both for myself and seeing the work of others, darkness is getting hard and harder.

Finally, I'm really lucky to have seen fine lighting through the five ages of light I mention above. I've also seen some

bloody awful lighting. This last summer in two of our esteemed National institutions, I've witnessed both!

Thanks and best wishes to you all."
Richard

***I say again; wise words as ever.
And following a discussion about the
use of production photographs:***

August 2011

Photographers.

I too have enjoyed friendships with many.

They, like us, have to earn a living. If I'm using a photograph for 'commercial' use, I'm happy to pay for it. For my own website or lecture use, I expect it free.

But more importantly, take your own!
Greetings to you all.

Richard

And a more political comment sent to us all:

December 2011

I personally am alarmed at our profession seeming to support the US disastrous Republican Party. Yes we've "saved" the incandescent lamp! But will there be a planet for us to light on!

Well this is my comment.

Nobody is more in favor of the incandescent lamp than I. However we should restrain our enthusiasm about this move by the troglodyte Republican Party. They actually want to ban almost everything ... the Clean Air Act, the EPA, spending on culture and education, financial regulation, etc. We should be surprised that electricity has not been banned as well. Less taxes, less government, and more war will not be good for lighting design.

If the political madness in the USA continues, we will have much larger worries than our light bulbs.

All the best

And HAPPY NEW YEAR to the ALD

Richard had strong feelings on all subjects that affected our profession - this to the late Andy Collier and All.

Andy and friends.

I don't remember cutting rigs to reduce power. I do remember West End shows playing to generator driven work light during 'rolling blackouts'. Robert Ornbo's finely lit *Company* at Her Majesty's without projection or lighting. The audience didn't seem to notice. As a producer I was pleased . . . As fellow artist, shocked.

I personally had always been warmly treated in NYC. Unionization with better pay and conditions . . . And efficient practices, seemed to me excellent. When I was the first foreigner to light an original Broadway show, I was welcomed into membership. Yes, I was inducted before a roomful of cigar-smoking painters. But Tharon Musser guided me through my oath to "only wear union made undergarments."

I personally always saw it as inevitable that if we designers were ever to emerge with dignity and sane conditions we had to "unionize". I had experienced the benefits of the U.S.A. Despite the "labour" element, a collective did mean strength. Lighting alone could never make it.

My regret is that now, 37 years later, we still haven't got further. But as a one time member of SWET, I also saw how very deeply imbedded was the opposition.

Richard

In response to an email from Neil (Austin) addressed to all:

March 2013

Neil:

A serious thought occurred to me: We must beware that by saying "Save Our

Tungsten," we are not sounding like King Canute trying to command the tide to stop advancing. Or Henry Irving bemoaning the advent of electricity.

When we say "Save Our Tungsten" what Tungsten are we referring to? Every Tungsten lamp that ever glowed? Or tungsten specifically made for existing theatrical luminaries? Source 4's? Beamlights? Is there a list we should even try to prepare?

We're living through a period of enormous change. Our lighting world is but a small part of that change. LED's and other light sources are here and more will no doubt arrive. When electricity overtook gas, and before that candle and oil lamp to gas, our forebears all came out in opposition. But the change occurred. Frankly I still mourn the passing of the candle flame . . . certainly the original and best "Moving" light! Not even Howard Eaton can quite reproduce it!

I support the campaign to Save Tungsten. But I also support our industry recognizing change . . . some of which might be very positive. I think our paper should acknowledge that. Otherwise we risk a luddite label which I know we do not deserve.

I'd appreciate people's thoughts -
Love, Richard

So lastly and one of many ... and I among hundreds of others am very proud to have known this wonderful and generous human being.

February 2016

Dear Peter:

I much enjoyed our conversation last night.

This was my desk set up for *Tale of Two Cities* on Broadway. A 30" screen showing Virtual Magic Sheet of 1500 channels. I've been using VMS for about 7-8 years and find it an amazing time-saver . . . and a considerable aid to one's personal insecurity at the lighting desk.

Eric Cornwall's site is <https://vmsopen.org> (Editors note: Changed link to the new Open Source edition.) I hope he's still trying to make other arrangements. It changes the lighting process . . . in my mind in a miraculous way.

All the best and good wishes for the ALD meeting. I'm very proud of you all!!

Yours
Richard 🌸



Richard Pilbrow Interviews online

Richard's knowledge, advise and opinions have not only been captured in books and articles, but on video for many years. Rob Halliday has chosen three recordings available on YouTube, linked below (scan with your phone).



<http://tinyurl.com/BuildingNightmare>

Candid and hair-raising - building the National Theatre

<http://tinyurl.com/PilbrowInterview>

On his life and career for the BackstagePass



<http://tinyurl.com/Plasa2012Talk>

On architecture and theatre design at PLASA 2012

Robert Bell: 'Uncle' Richard

I first met Richard at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation building in downtown Toronto in 1993. I had just quit the lighting department at CBC to start



CAST Lighting in order to develop WYSIWYG into a commercial product. I was looking for seed money and wrote to every magazine and manufacturer I could get an address for. This was the era of snail mail - email wasn't really a thing yet. John Orford said he and Tony Gottelier

were travelling to Toronto to interview Richard who was just about to open *Show Boat*; would I mind if they brought him along to see my early demo software in the studio. As I had studied his book, 'Stage Lighting', while at Uni and knew Richard was the Yoda of Lighting I was gobsmacked.

It seemed that when Richard arrived, he already knew what he was looking at - although the concept was brand new. Never before could computers previsualize a moving light rig, operated directly from a lighting console in a virtual 3D set in real-time. Every other person I demoed this to didn't seem to 'get it' as quickly as Richard did. That is because he dreamt of it, likely before I was born. This reflects what a visionary he was. The things he had Strand do in the Lightboard for the National in 1976 are still not done on consoles today. There are a few of us that recount these details whenever we find ourselves at the pub together - normally around the PLASA trade show.

Richard was a visionary, but moreover, he was a kind and generous gentleman. I was young but he treated me like a peer. As I was rewriting my CV to flog myself to other designers as a programmer, he helped me craft it. He hated the first draft and wrote back this quote: "*Robert Bell is*

an extraordinary entrepreneur whose creation of WYSIWYG has had a revolutionary impact upon the world of entertainment lighting. His contribution to the field marks him as one of the most innovative figures in our industry of the last decade!" I don't think I appreciated the impact his quote could do for me. I sent another draft without his quote and he very politely said something along the lines of "You fool, what I said about you should be at the top of your CV - don't you know who I am." But of course he didn't say it like that - he just knew that I didn't quite know what I had achieved with WYSIWYG nor who I was currently rubbing shoulders with.

He and I continued a great friendship that lasted until his dying days. He was the first designer I worked on Broadway with. I programmed many a show for him, including his last on Broadway - *A Tale of Two Cities* (Photo left), with his greatest friend Tony Walton (RIP) designing.

I've been lucky to have Richard in my life. He was more of an uncle to me than a friend. My life and my career have been so much richer because of him. 🌸

Tributes compiled by Rob Halliday and Rick Fisher.

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members,
see the back
page.

CORPORATE MEMBERS

News and information from the ALPD office by Amanda Laidler

DATES 2024

New Technology Showcase 1 Feb.

Old Technology Showcase 16 Feb.

(see p36)

Prolight + Sound

19 - 22 March

PLASA Focus North

14 - 15 May

ABTT 5 - 6 June

PLASA 1 - 3 Sep.



SUBSCRIPTIONS

1st April is the start of our new financial year for subscriptions. At a meeting of the Executive of 16th January it was decided that we should hold the subscription charges at the same rates for a further year. Student sponsorship will be extended to 2 and a half years, which will cover most students for the duration of their course, and they will be encouraged to take up Associate or Affiliate membership once they graduate.

- Professional £102
- Standard affiliate £60
- First-year affiliate £48
- Associate £48
- Retired £36
- Corporate £660
- Commercial £300
- Non-profit organisation £60



(All info can also be found at www.thealpd.org.uk/alpd-membership/fees or scan the QR above)

If you would like to check your membership details you can do this by logging on to the website. You can see your method of payment, whether your details are up to date, and if you have any queries or wish to make any changes, do contact office@thealpd.org.uk.

And a reminder to check your postal address is up to date on our website database. You can update it yourself, or send in any change of address to the office.

NEW ALPD BANK DETAILS

Please note: our bank account details have now changed. If you use GoCardless, there is no need to do anything, but if you still pay by Standing Order, you need to change this before the end of March. The new account details are:

The Association of Lighting Designers
HSBC, Sort Code: 40-07-30
Account Number: 62666499

PRODUCTION FUTURES

We will be attending the Production Futures event at Redditch on 9 February. If you're in the area, or even exhibiting, do come and say hello. This show is a FREE entertainment production careers fair where visitors can get to see all pathways and opportunities into the entertainment industry. If you know any students who might be interested, send them along. Info at productionfutures.com



A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Professional

Malachy Orozco, London

Associate

Jonathan Terry, Ipswich

Corporate

Clear-Com

Student

Sam Q Bailey, Liverpool
 Ryan Jones Littler, Caerwys
 Ryan Watson, Hillingdon

Student (Sponsored)

Nina Morgan, London
 Alexander Hoppe, London
 Jamie A Burke, Glasgow
 Paige Amber MacGillivray, Falkirk

NEW TECHNOLOGY SHOWCASE

The New Technology Showcase is taking place at RCSSD on the date of publication of this issue. At that event, the ALPD will be presenting its 2023 Awards.

The winners are:

AWARDS WINNERS

The Michael Northern Award sponsored by Go Live Theatre Projects:

Morgan Moroney

The Fred Foster Award for Excellence in Production Electrics, sponsored by ETC:

Michael Scott

The ALPD Award for Excellence in programming, sponsored by ETC:

Daniel Street

Applications for the 2024 Awards will be opened in March - please check the website for information. Remember the Fred Foster Award and the ALPD Programmers' Award are intended for established professionals and are nominated awards. If you work with someone who is great at their job, and deserves recognition, you can nominate them at any time after March. Do it while you remember! It's really easy to do.

AWARD

The ALPD presented **Kelli Zezulka**, outgoing editor of the Association's magazine FOCUS, at the annual Lighting Lunch, with a gobo encased in glass as well as Life Membership of the ALPD. Alongside teaching and design work, Kelli took over Focus magazine at short notice, after the sad passing of then editor Andy Collier. Kelli volunteered to do 'a few issues' which turned into ten years. Sponsored and realised by GoboPlus and Rosco. **Peter Vincent**, ALPD Membership Secretary, was also awarded Life Membership. Photo (by Nick Moran): Paul De Ville of Goboplus and Kelli. 🌸



After spending three months at Glynedebourne, 2023 Lumière Danny Vavrečka began part two of the scheme: "I was looking forward to working in multiple venues, experiencing how different building are run, and how each lighting team works."

My first show was *The Little Big Things*, a brand-new musical at Soho Place theatre. The show is based on the memoir by Henry Fraser, which details how an accident changed his life when he was 17 years old. The lighting designer was Howard Hudson, who I met at Soho Place for the first day of rehearsals. The Little Big Things was the first musical to be performed at Soho Place, which is itself the first purpose-built West End theatre to be opened in 50 years. But most significantly, actor Ed Larkin became the first wheelchair user to lead a West End musical. Howard asked me to look after the followspots and create their cue list. A show in the round adds an extra layer of complexity in terms of number of spots and operator positions. Howard devised an innovative solution; the production used 4 Robo Spots (Robe BMFLs), one on each corner of the overhead truss. These were then paired across the diagonal, with

two operators controlling two spots each. The result is that when any character was in their spot, they always had a facelight and a backlight, or two high sidelights, depending on where they were positioned. Howard was able to paint the stage with sumptuous reds and blues, but keep characters in focus. Programmer Vic Brennan is a regular collaborator with Howard. As well as a large rig of moving lights, Vic was controlling a myriad of practicals, effects and atmospherics, including two smoky bubble machines, and a coffee machine. I was amazed at the speed at which we moved through the tech. Director Luke Sheppard worked incredibly fast, and Howard and video designer Luke Halls kept pace. Despite cues numbering into the 1000s, we headed into the act 1 finale within just a few days. Several days later, and we got to the end of the show. However, this was only a 'first pass', and we revisited everything in future tech sessions and during previews. Spot operators Beth and Kirk did a fantastic job learning to operate

two spots at once, and their work was crucial in not only lighting the characters, but also guiding the audience's focus throughout the busy show. As we moved into the final few previews, there was just enough time for Vic and I to document the show. We took photographs of every generic focus and moving light preset, and Vic loaded it into MLA for the lighting team at Soho Place. The show opened to wonderful reviews, with set, lighting and video highly praised.

The next placement was Molière's comedy *The Hypochondriac*, at The Crucible in Sheffield. I met lighting designer Jo Town on Zoom, who

explained her ideas and the rig for the thrust configuration. Colin Richmond's intricate set

highlighted how Argan, the hypochondriac, has let his home become cluttered. It featured towering shelves in bacterial green, spewing out books, papers and drawings. This meant Jo's lighting plan had a significant number of units marked 'shelves'! After arriving in Sheffield, we began to focus the rig. Jo

called the focus for the first unit of a system, and then asked me to call the focus of the matching units on the opposite side while she moved onto the next few units. With lighting programmer Connor O'Neil on the desk, and senior lighting technician Kati Hind and her team in the bridges, we were soon ready for plotting. Much of the comedy in the play was derived from visual and physical humour, Jo emphasised the importance of not only the characters being well lit, but also lighting the many doors and corridors they travel through. The play's several musical sequences gave an opportunity for a more saturated colour palette. During a love duet towards the end of Act 1, Jo sculpted the stage with soulful blues and blushing pinks. As the show is staged in thrust, Jo and I moved round the auditorium during tech and previews to experience the show from multiple angles. As we went into the final previews, Jo needed to leave Sheffield to go into rehearsals for her next project, leaving me to look after any final notes with Director Sarah Tipple. Judging by the amount of laughter, the show was very well received by audiences.

I was very lucky to have a second new musical on the schedule. Roald Dahl's *The Witches* had been adapted as a musical

for the Olivier, National Theatre. Lighting designer Bruno Poet met me at the stage door a week before we began tech. He introduced me to Olivier theatre lighting supervisor Jack Williams, and we were also joined by assistant Marc



Danny Vavrečka and Lumière mentor and Lighting Designer Peter Mumford at Hampstead Theatre

Heimendinger. Jack gave us a tour of the space, and updated us on the work he and his team had been busy with. In addition to the overhead rig, there were numerous trucks and portals, all fitted

Lumière Scheme

Danny Vavrečka reports his experiences on three shows

with various set electrics. Prior to tech, I joined Bruno in the rehearsal room to watch some runs. Bruno asked me to call the 4 followspots, and I created a cue sheet for each operator based on the rehearsal notes. During tech I observed Bruno and lighting programmers Nadene Wheatley and Laura Choules, as for larger show such as *The Witches*, the NT uses two lighting programmers. Nadene was our 'number 1' programmer, talking directly with Bruno and programming the main cue list. Laura was our 'number 2', looking after work lights, followspot programming and sharing the workload with Nadene. Bruno had designed several shows in the Olivier, so was familiar with the vast scale of the stage, and the amount of light needed to fill it. Lizzie Clachan's ingenious set utilised a donut revolve as well as an inner revolve. This meant some of the sequences became very complicated to tech; synchronising actors, light, video and automation. Adding to the pressure, everything would need to be teched three times, as there were three sets of young performers! Bruno remained unflappable throughout all of this, and kept in

constant communication with Nadene, director Lyndsey Turner and video designer Ash J Woodward. Followspot operators Zoe, Molly, Jason and Steph did a wonderful job during the complex show, from 'full body' to 'mouse'. The preview period offered time to finesse the busier numbers. For the showstopper



'Bruno, Sweet Bruno', Bruno flew in extra auras in candy pink to highlight a chorus of dancing sweets. Before leaving, I completed my paperwork for the team, which hopefully helps to maintain the show's run well into 2024.

Before I knew it, I was starting my final Lumière show with the legendary Peter

Mumford. Tom Stoppard's *Rock 'n' Roll* first premiered in 2006, and was being revived at the Hampstead Theatre. I met Peter to discuss his thoughts on the show and the rig; for my final placement I would also be programming for Peter. One of the challenges for the creative team was to jump seamlessly between Cambridge



and Prague, as we followed the Czech and British characters between 1968 and 1990. Anna Reid's beautiful set placed the two locations at either end of a traverse stage, and lighting would play an important role in creating them. Peter draws his plans in DWG format, and it would be my job to import them into

Vectorworks. I met head of lighting Chris Farncombe at the Hampstead, and he gave me a tour of the venue, and talked me through the standard Hampstead formatting for lighting plans. We were tight on time, so Chris focussed the rig with Peter, while I prepped on the desk for of tech. It was slightly terrifying to be



programming for Peter, particularly as our VL1100s didn't always want to play ball! But we got into a rhythm, and soon finished a 'first pass' of the show. Given that most scenes began and ended with a snap in time with a music cue, the majority of the lighting cues were triggered via MIDI. One of the challenges

when working in traverse can be keeping actors lit as they find new dark areas throughout the preview period! We had a chance to revisit these scenes and Peter subtly re-positioned our moving lights to ensure they captured any updated actor blocking, without overwhelming the stage with light. The show finishes with all the main characters going to a Rolling Stones concert in Prague. The preceding scene is slightly more naturalistic, so Peter and I spent some time experimenting, quickly filling the room with haze so we could transition from a café during the day into a stadium filled with 1000s of people. Chris and I took turns operating lighting during the preview period, which meant I was able to watch the show from both sides of the traverse. It was particularly lovely that some of my extended Czech family came to see a preview. Having lived through many of the events in Czechoslovakia that the play depicts, it was wonderful that they could join me for my final Lumière show.

Having now come to the end of the 2023 Lumière, I cannot believe how lucky I was to have been part of this extraordinary scheme. Being able to work

on such a variety of different shows with so many amazing people has been a fantastic opportunity. I'm immensely grateful to all of the lighting designers, programmers, and teams who have so generously shared their time, knowledge, patience and humour with me. I'd also like to say a huge thank you to Charlotte Burton for organising the scheme so brilliantly, and to Amanda Laidler for her assistance from the ALPD office. I'm really looking forward to taking my new skills into 2024 and beyond! 🌸

This year's Lumière Scheme is closed to new applications. Our Production Lumière has been appointed, and interviews for Design Lumières who have been shortlisted will be taking place in February. Details of Lumière Scheme 2025 will be available on our website in the autumn.

Production photo credits L-R: The Hypochondriac Manuel Harlan, The Little Big Things Pamela Raith, Rock 'n' Roll Manuel Harlan

We've caught up with ALPD member K.J to talk about their process and approach to lighting for *Black Sabbath - The Ballet* for Birmingham Royal Ballet at its home, the Hippodrome.

Focus: A very unusual combination of two great Birmingham institutions. But tell us a little about yourself first, what was your path into lighting.

K.J: I'm originally from Birmingham but I live in Yorkshire now with my husband. I went to the University of Hull studying drama and theatre practice, wanting to perform, but I was introduced to lighting design and took a real interest in it, attending all the modules available. After graduating I started to seek work in theatres, interning at a local theatre, and eventually found myself at Trinity Laban. I was always interested in dance, my tutor was a lighting designer mainly for contemporary dance and that became a real springboard for me in knowing where I wanted my career to go, so the internship was a perfect match for me.

Trinity Laban's in-house internship program really got me started, touring their post-grad dance company. Alongside the touring aspect, the emphasis is heavy on lighting. I met several people throughout that time (Chahine Yavroyan, Lucy Carter, Kerry

Nicholls, Matthew Bourne, Wayne McGregor) who were kind enough to give me an insight as to how they built their careers and how they work. Throughout my time there, I got to design for freelance choreographers and finished the internship with an impressive portfolio. After a number of years in tech management (and finally getting a mortgage!) I felt ready to take the leap as a freelancer in 2022.

Focus: How did your connection with the Black Sabbath Ballet come about?

K.J: I was simply in the right place at the right time. In Oct 2022 I worked with choreographer Morgann Runacre-Temple on a piece called Hotel for Birmingham Royal Ballet (designed by Linbury Prize Winner, Sami Fendall), which was very successful and also my first time working with a large-scale ballet company. Growing up in the Midlands, it was great for me to be back home, and I really enjoyed being able to work knowing exactly where I was and instantly feeling settled.

The tech team are wonderful at BRB and just from chatting in our spare time I

said that my dream project would be to light a heavy metal ballet. Turns out one was happening (much to my delight!).

Being from Birmingham and being a metal fan, I had to make this happen as it would be working on a project that combined my two passions – Ballet and Metal – so I just kept reaching out. During my time there I was making the most of it; getting to know people, seeing how the building worked and most importantly if I enjoyed it, as it was my first time working at such a scale. As much as everyone has

to in this business, I'm not the biggest fan of networking, but I'm trying to force myself to do it, and being in the building really helped to knock on the

choreographer's doors. Pontus had seen my work and he wanted me on board.

Carlos is also such an inspirational leader to work with, and witnessing the passion he has for every aspect of the work was an additional motivation. I feel really fortunate to have had this opportunity, given my age and experience, and hopefully this grows into

LIGHTING A HEAVY METAL BALLET BY K.J



more opportunities.

Focus: Do you have a personal affinity with the music, and did this shape your approach? Did the music come first for you, or seeing the movements and rehearsals?

K.J.: A bit of both really, obviously Black Sabbath has such a legendary status, especially in Birmingham. I grew up listening to them and it's easy to recognise the roots and the importance of this band for a lot of the musicians I love. The premiere was like Dawn of the metal gods, Robert Plant was there, Jimmy Page, Tony Iommi of course, Bev Bevan from ELO ... I knew all the music coming into this and that it was going to be further arranged for orchestra, mixed with original compositions. I always try to digest the music before rehearsals start, to really understand it but it's made more difficult when the music is going to be reworked. I tried to imagine 'a look' for each piece, anticipating this will change while the music and choreography is being shaped. Thankfully the composers and re-arrangers bring their own language into play, capturing the essence of the band, but also twisting it and making it unique and fresh.

Focus: Can you describe the process?

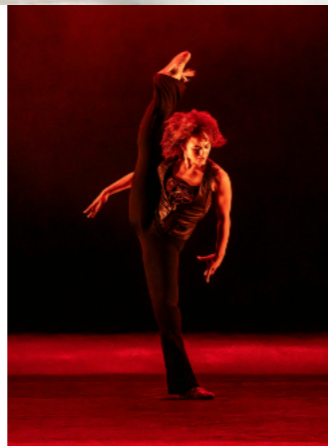
K.J.: On this show each Act had a

different choreographer, plus there are 3 composers, a dramaturg, a set designer and artist, a lighting designer, and, uniquely, a metal curator. A huge creative team!

It was quite hard to keep track of it all. I had a hotline to each stage manager, to get alerted when a choreographer reached a critical run that I had to see.

I find that being in the studio is the most important time. It creates an organic response, and I'm able to seek conversations there and then to gauge whether the idea is liked or change it if there's a disagreement. The same goes with the technical staff as I can ask about an idea and get an instant response as to what can be achievable within the timeline set.

Making it a cohesive performance



overall was a real challenge, logistically and artistically. Having different choreographers who all have different styles and tastes, the design and lighting had to mediate a lot, as there had to be a unified language from start to finish.

Focus: A demon perched on an overturned car in shimmering chrome, light boxes with band insignia - there are quite a few strong looks the lighting has to work with...

K.J.: We knew from the start that there were bold design choices and rather than adding too much on top of that, we mainly focused on the use of colour and kept a clean aesthetic in the lighting. Act 1 was strictly monochrome, as we wanted the colour story to go on a journey. For Act 2 we crafted a custom colour palette of the album covers of the music featured. For example, we sampled the purple from the Master of Reality album, and used it heavily in Act 2 on the LED strings hung above the space. Act 3, we wanted to mute the colour tones as the costumes were band t-shirts through the ages (and very colourful!), so we thought we'd let the costumes speak for themselves.

What really helped was to have a fantastic dramaturg, Richard Thomas, who wrote Jerry Springer The Opera, and he steered the narrative towards each act as

being a nod to the band, the legacy and then the fans. It wasn't spread over a traditional narrative but offered different viewpoints of the band. So, in Act 2 for example we had voiceovers from the early years, it was really important for Richard to lead the audience through different impressions of the band's work and journey. Dramatically, it became a mixed bill for the lighting, rather than one arch.

We had really enjoyable conversations, and it felt like a real collaboration, which helped with my massive case of imposter syndrome!

Focus: Any moments during the creation process where you had to get back to the choreographers and change ideas, to gel it all together, or just for logistics?

K.J.: I tried to pre-empt such problems during the process. Of course with three different choreographers, there were going to be different flavours to each of their works but Pontus Lidberg (Lead choreographer) helped steer the dance to form a cohesive language. My job was to simply match the energy of these works and form a language through light.

First and foremost, it's a ballet. I wanted to maintain the feel and image of

a traditional ballet but also try to emphasise the epic nature of a metal concert. We had 60% of our audience as first time ballet watchers so we wanted to create something that would cater to both traditional ballet and Black Sabbath audiences.

Some ideas we wanted to realise were still running on a ballet budget and not that of a huge music tour. Being a touring production, we needed to cater for all spaces as all audience members deserve the same show!

In saying that, we had the fantastic in-house fixed rig, which is completely LED, quite astonishing really. ETC Lustr3 from the sides, ETC SolaFrames, SolaPix from the top, a really great rig to work with. I tried to make everyone's life not too difficult, but I really wanted to have a wall of parcans, real parcans, coming down in act 3 to give that old school rock and roll feel. We had to cap them at 40% as they were too blinding and creating too much heat on stage for the dancers. Probably not the best eco aspect but I made sure it was brief!

Also, amazingly, the company created a very accurate colour palette for their rig during lock down, consistent throughout all instruments, which makes the work so much easier. LED is such a double edged



sword for me because you can reduce the size of a lighting rig massively but you'll still end up using that time gained in order to colour match correctly.

Focus: So there wasn't a way for you to do the wall of Pars with LED -

K.J: If you could tell me a fixture that can create the same quality of light as a good old fashioned parcan, you'd be a lifesaver. If it wasn't going to be pars, my other option would have been to use Auras. I'm happy with how it ended up though. Nothing beats that glow.

Focus: ... which is short hand for that real 1970s rock'n'roll look...

K.J: Exactly! And I love that.

Focus: You spoke about your Ballet and dance influences. What are your metal and rock influences?

K.J: I try to go to gigs - when I can afford it!

I've been to five Slipknot concerts - my absolute favourites, I just know the show will be incredible each time (could you imagine a ballet?!). My crowd surfing days are probably in the past, I watch from the back and, as much as I love the music, enjoy the artistry which goes into stage shows today. I look at Billie Eilish or Beyonce - the video work alone is out of this world. I would love to get more into concert lighting. I recently lit the band

Jockstrap at the Barbican, but this was more a theatrical aesthetic. It was also my first contact with an MA board, for which we thankfully had a programmer! I hope there will be more opportunities to crossover between theatre and live music, and why not? I really liked Bruno Poet's work for Sigur Ros. There's a real sense of intimacy in a theatrical environment and it creates a better sense of connection between audience and performers.

Focus: What's next?

K.J: The show I worked on for the Venice Biennale is going to New York: *On the Nature of Rabbits* by Swedish choreographer Pontus Lidberg, mentioned above as he also worked on Black Sabbath. This will be my first time in New York, so I'm looking forward to making my design debut Stateside as well as immersing myself in the city during that time! I'm also the associate LD on the opera *The Fxxxs and Their Friends Between Revolutions* at the Southbank Centre. I have a ballet booked with Dutch National Ballet later in the year, so I'm really excited to be working with them for the first time! Keeping it in Holland, Black Sabbath is going to Rotterdam in June, which I hope leads to it getting further international touring as well as a wider UK tour. 🍀

CREDITS

Black Sabbath: The Ballet Company: Birmingham Royal Ballet
Director: Carlos Acosta
Choreographers: Pontus Lidberg, Cassi Abranches & Raúl Reinoso
Designer: Alexandre Arrachea
Programmer: Alastair Phillips
Photography: Johan Persson

Lighting designer: K.J
Born in Birmingham, trained at University of Hull and Trinity Laban.





Somewhat unbelievably to me, it will be ten years this summer since a group of us drove up to Jim Laws' place in Suffolk to talk about old lighting equipment and how best to preserve it.

With us that day – of course he was – was Richard Pilbrow, along with Molly. I will never forget the look of surprise and delight on his face when he discovered his National Theatre Lightboard console lurking amongst all of the other gear (Photo left). An impromptu lesson in how to drive it followed, along with, a few days later, an email with many of the original design documents attached.

If the premise of the Backstage Heritage Collection that came out of that day – a sort of 'lending library' museum where companies or organisations could choose interesting gear to display for a while before trading it for something else – never quite panned out (though the online repository of information certainly

has, at theatrecrafts.com), a few companies did enthusiastically grasp the idea. White Light was one of those companies, and over this last Christmas they gave their classic gear area a dramatic, elegant, beautiful overhaul, creating a lovely, calm area surrounded by the gear that has shaped the way we do lighting (-more art less tools I know, but

it'd be pretty hard to do that work without these tools!).

We have, for years, been intending to have open days where you can come and discover this gear. Covid, inevitably, got in the way, but now we're back to

normal AND everything is beautifully displayed – it feels like now is the time.

As you probably know, White Light hold an event each year at the Central School which they call the New Technology Showcase – a chance to learn about the new gear we'll encounter in the coming year.

We've decided to adapt that name for this day of looking back, and have called

OLD TECHNOLOGY SHOWCASE

**White Light to display vintage lighting marvels
An invitation by Rob Halliday**

it the Old Technology Showcase...

There's a wonderful mix of stuff on display. Some of which you might have read about, some of which you might have used, some of which you may never have heard of at all. The stalls control from Glyndebourne. The remarkable Light Console organ from Drury Lane. Strand's IDM, DDM, MMS, Duet, M24, Gemini and Galaxy memory consoles. Manual boards from Alderham and Zero88, the latter with the original 'effects engine': plug in cartridges for different effects! Lights, including the 252 projector plus every effects disc you've ever imagined, and the Patt 23 all the way through to moving lights you'll remember (and, in some case, might still be using!).

From the perspective of this issue, the star of the show: Richard's Lightboard, there as a reminder of how much we've lost from lighting control over the years as well as how much we've gained.

The Old Technology Showcase is on Friday, February 16th. At White Light, Wimbledon, Time TBC so keep an eye on ALPD mail-outs. The gear will be there, some tour guides will be there (and if one of these products is your passion, feel free to come and share your knowledge of it), hopefully you will be there too.

See you on the 16th! #



The Richard Pilbrow designed Lightboard (above) is one of the highlights. See also page 7! Photo: White Light

To book your place visit: <http://tinyurl.com/OldTechShow> or scan the QR





Susie Italiano

February 1. The day after the night before ... the tax return deadline! Sounds like a B-movie horror title - and for many freelancers this is not too far-fetched. Anxiety levels through the roof. Late night scramble for invoices and expenses. That box which had all paper receipts just stuffed on top of each other. And the solemn oath - next year will be different.

If that is you - help is on its way. We have collected resources and links, but if you need a friendly bit of motivation, down to earth tips and perhaps a push now and then, meet Susie Italiano (yes - her real name):

Focus: Susie, you have made yourself a name as "your financial Fairy Godmother" on the internet - please explain!

Susie: In short, I help artists, creatives, and artistic facilitators with all things accounting, budgeting, and personal finance.

After training as a dancer, and spending time in the United States, I realised that I'm rather better placed back-stage. I've worked 15 years now in the financial departments of companies like Improbable, Park Theatre, and now Yard

Theatre. On the way, I've met so many creatives who convinced themselves that they "just don't understand finance" or are "bad with money" - promptly get into a panic, ignore it out of anxiety - and get into trouble. So I decided to do something about it.

Focus: The endless instructions issued by HMRC give me a headache and nightmares ...

Susie: I know the pain. While I love doing creative finance, I also co-run a theatre company, so I've been there - but I realised that financial literacy is part of setting you free to do creative things. You just have to start simple, than grow into it. It's like learning Ukulele - totally easy at the beginning - and our company is on it's

way to a Ukulele musical now. So, I've decided to pass on a creative and playful approach to

finance, which I believe can be fun for everyone - the opposite to stress and anxiety.

Focus: You've designed an online course to teach creatives about finance -

Susie: Yes, for a reasonable fee I take you through all things self-assessment in a

MAKING FRIENDS WITH SELF ASSESSMENT



course called *Making Friends With Self Assessment* which is bursting with good vibes and step - by - step detail, but before that you can try out a free 6-day

email course, download budgeting spread sheets and try your hand at a savings goal tracker. The important thing is to get started at all, and February is the right time.

The worst method is to leave it until Christmas, that's bound to end in panicked all-nighters. You are also lucky - in the UK the financial system is streamlined and so simple. Compared to Italy, where I'm from, for example, which is a mess.

Focus: Where should people start?

Susie: Perhaps look at my blog and follow me on instagram, there's a linktree to all what's on offer (links followeing below), and lot's of regular tips for best praxis and .motivational ideas. Basically, I'd like to be the missing link between creative people and accounting!



Focus: But you offer professional services as well.

Susie: Of course, I also work part time in an accountancy company, which mainly serves charities, still work a day at Improbable and tailor-make financial workshops for clients. This could include building a production budget for a touring company, training in book-keeping, or

formulating a business strategy

Focus: What are your top three tips for a freelancer to start with?

Susie: Schedule your financial admin in your diary every two weeks to stay on top of it. Keep it simple with a spreadsheet, there is no need for fancy book-keeping software. And every time you get paid, det cash aside for your tax.

Links to find out more about Susie Italianos fearless finance approach:
idlemoneyblog.com

www.instagram.com/idlemoneyblog

RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

<http://tinyurl.com/alpdFeesDoc> takes you to the ALPD Substantiated Fees Document. Our guide based on information of members.



<http://tinyurl.com/hmrcCreativesGuide> is the HMRC main sectoral guidance for designers, directors, and choreographers

(often described in the industry as 'creatives') who work in theatre, opera, dance and circus.

freelancersmaketheatrework.com/financialsupport has a large collection of further links for freelance creatives.

Sign up for their newsletter to hear about regular workshops.



As you are hopefully aware, the Association offers insurance to Affiliate and Professional Members of the ALPD. How does it work?

The combined policy offered covers both Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance. Whilst we don't subsidise this, we do pass on the cost to you directly – the ALPD makes no profit on this. Because we are buying for a large number of members, rather than as an individual the cost is considerably less than you can generally find as an individual. And we work alongside the brokers to find the best deal for our members.

Unlike membership, insurance cannot be paid monthly. The policy runs for the financial year and if you opt in part way through the year, you will still have to pay the full year's amount.

We start working on the policy for the new financial year in January. Despite this, and much nagging, insurers tend to be very slow to come up with the premium to be charged. In order that your insurance continues to run through

from one year to the next with no interruption, we take payment in advance in the last week of March. If we don't know exactly what the amount will be at that stage, we take the same amount as last year and if there's an increase, take the balance in April or May. We ask you to pay by direct debit through our GoCardless scheme. If this is a problem, please contact the office.

ALPD INSURANCE

Insurance Scheme for Association Members explained By Amanda Laidler

certificates from the insurers. This is not always on the 1st of April and we do hassle until we get them. Again, if this causes any difficulty with employers, please contact the office.



Full details of our insurance scheme can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/alpdInsurance>

If you are insured through our scheme, we will keep you informed of any changes to the payments as soon as we are notified.

Certificates of Insurance will be added to your Membership page of the database as soon as we have the



There is a good article on insurance and why we offer both PL and PI insurance at: <http://tinyurl.com/AboutalpdInsurance> #

RESOURCES - UNIONS

Both unions have in-depth advise for freelancers: bectu.org.uk/topic/freelancers has a host of links about finances, even if you are not a member, on topics ranging from pay rates, taxes, savings, to pensions and insurance. Copy the link above or scan the QR.



Equity leaves financial advise to a list of entertainment-savvy accountants, but has more info about tax credits, social security and universal credit, for members. They cannot advise on debt, housing or immigration matters. Please contact your local Citizens Advice instead: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Happy New Year. I hope 2024 is busy enough for you and that you manage to find some work life balance. Sending love and luck to you all as I think it's getting tougher out there.

Less money leads to tighter contracts for us, to harder work for everyone realising the show in every department, stretching equipment and staff very thinly.

Producers are showing ruthless traits to continue to get the shows on for less money, still with big or even bigger ambitions.

I had a crazy year with two chunks of back to back techs. Not disastrous planning on my behalf, but due to producers slotting in revivals or postponed shows around existing productions already in the calendar. Which only highlighted for me the need for good contracts at the initial stage, because otherwise you get stitched up on transfers and revivals and lose control of your work or your fee. I have been both stung and happily in control in equal measures last year and it was, in both instances, dependent on the contract we had initially negotiated. Keep pushing for

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS

By Lucy Carter

what you believe is fair and right when you do your contracts. If in doubt the ALPD team are happy to advise.

Having now sent one of my children off to University and the other approaching GCSEs, I am counting my blessings that somehow we got this far and managed to raise a family while we both navigated this industry. I have worked bloody hard for it, but this year I am wondering if I can

manage to keep my schedule manageable for once?? I want to ask you, our members, to help us on the professionals committee and at the ALPD as a whole please.

We have managed to create a lot of useful guidelines and support documentation which are mainly aimed at the theatre sector - this is where the committee and support teams have their experience. However, the ALPD supports and represents members now who work in a much more diverse sector and we would like to support that and create guidelines

Please get in touch as we need to get this work moving forward. Email us at professionals@thealpd.org.uk

for other areas. So I would love for some members who work in live music , live events, corporate events to get in touch with me. I need a mini group of technicians, programmers and designers who have experience in these areas to help us adapt our current documents to create more specific guidelines for how to work, negotiate and find work in those areas. We need to support the emerging practitioners in these areas and I know many of you members with experience would be happy to help them. Lots of luck to you all in 2024 #



Professional members rep Lucy Carter updates on the committee's work and need to expand



Read more on Lucy's previous blog at <http://tinyurl.com/alpdblogcarter> or scan the QR

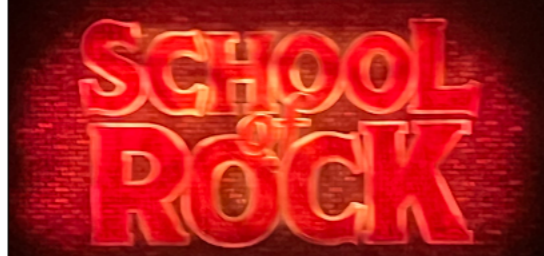
The Association of lighting designers, trading as
The Association for Lighting Production and Design
 Redoubt House, Edward Road, Eastbourne BN23 8AS
 For correspondence: PO Box 801, Banbury OX16 6RS
www.thealpd.org.uk - office@thealpd.org.uk
 Company registered in England & Wales no. 10079797

President: Richard Pilbrow †
The ALPD Board
 Vice President: Rick Fisher rick.fisher@thealpd.org.uk
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 Vice Chair: Mark Jonathan mark.jonathan@thealpd.org.uk
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 Board members: Sofia Alexiadou, David Ayton, Briony Berning, Charlotte Burton, Lucy Carter, Mark Jonathan, Iain Quinn, Stuart Porter, Joe Price, Johanna Town, Mark White

Ex officio officers
 General Administrator: Amanda Laidler
office@thealpd.org.uk
 Company Secretary: John Leventhall office@thealpd.org.uk
Member representatives
 Professionals: Lucy Carter, David Ayton
professionals@thealpd.org.uk
 Companies: Stuart Porter companies@thealpd.org.uk
 Students: Oli Hynds (chair) students@thealpd.org.uk
 Meetings: Briony Berning (chair) meetings@thealpd.org.uk
 Education: Sofia Alexiadou education@thealpd.org.uk
 Equity: Zoe Spurr equity@thealpd.org.uk
 Bectu: Alex Fernandes bectu@thealpd.org.uk
 Diversity: Simisola Majekodunmi diversity@thealpd.org.uk
Co-opted committee members
 Jason Addison, Paule Constable, Tom Lightbody, Jai Morjaria, Peter Mumford,

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 Assisted by Amanda Laidler, Rob Halliday,
 Sam Waddington, Amélie Friess.

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On the Road: School of Rock in Seoul

ALPD Company members rep Stuart Porter (top row, second left) and the fantastic team from Artwon Lighting in Seoul recreate Natasha Katz' Lighting in the Opera House at Seoul Arts Centre for the latest international tour of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *School of Rock*.

In our series *It's Light, Jim, but not as we know it*, a look at the foyer and waiting room of the Ethical Society in Ladue, St. Louis, Missouri, USA. Built in 1962, and still with complete original features, the windows are made of process-stained glass, designed by modernist architect Harris Armstrong. It's like living inside a LEE swatchbook or a giant sun-powered Linnebach projector, and filed under "ideas when the set designer talks about translucent walls". Photo: Francesca Lord. Please send us your inspirational photos of light, texture, colour. Only rule: No plug attached. #



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