

AWARDS

ALPD #

For all the people
in performance lighting

The Association for Lighting
Production and Design
www.thealpd.org.uk
April - May 2024
£5.00 / FREE to Members

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Lighting designers
rewarded for excellence
and services to arts

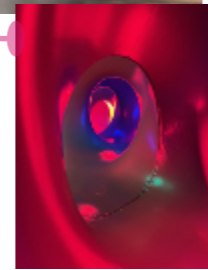
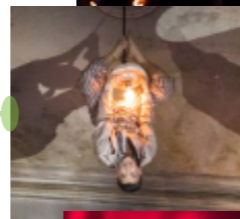
CHINESE WHISPERS

Rick Fisher finds the right
comms to light a Chinese
musical

LIFEWIRE DIVERSITY

Working group members talk
about their experiences and
give advice

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Titlepage: Metamorphosis, LD Simisola Majekodunmi, Photo Tristram Kenton (see p24).

Welcome to the Spring edition of Focus. I hope you are all well. It appears that in 2024, theatre at least, is definitely having a bit of a slow down, with fewer tours, regional theatres doing more Co-Pros, the only place with a high turnover being the West End, which is not necessarily a good thing.

Audiences seem to be plentiful, so it must be down to spiralling costs and major cuts in arts spending.

I am definitely not one for being a doom and gloom merchant, but things do seem to be tough out there. We are currently receiving many more emails regarding bad practices and working conditions as well as lack of opportunities. So what happened to "Coming back better"? Financial pressures on the arts seem to have been brushed under the carpet. As designers we need to try and bring these bad practices and lack of diversity and sustainability back to the table. We can help and support you if you have an issue, we can write to producers and we can advise you. We are an association for our members. The association welcomes anyone who needs to reach out either to the office or an Exec member. But I am aware that this is not for everyone, which is why members

events can help in being an easy way to touch base with others more informally.

I hope we can hold more meetings, official talks or just casual catch ups over a drink or coffee. But it's not possible for the association to arrange or suggest every meeting, we need members to help. We need your help to offer up shows to chat about, events to see, or even just a suggestion of coffee or drink in a theatre near you.

I recently attended the *Metamorphosis* event at the Lyric Hammersmith where Simi and Tom gave a great talk, chit-chatting about lighting and touring. It was nice to say hello to fellow lighting practitioners and catch up over a drink. Thank you both and the Lyric lighting and stage management for your time. (see p. 16)

Earlier in January, WL hosted their *New Technology Showcase*; again a great social event to meet other members. More events, such as these are vital to our association remaining a members' association, where informal chats and talking about work can be so helpful and informative.

So if you can host members looking at a show or just for a coffee, or drinks, or where you are working, please (cont. p4)

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



(cont from p3) get in touch. It would be amazing to get more events outside of London too.

Thank you WL for hosting us and our **ALPD Awards** at the NTS and congratulations to all of the winners. Did you know our awards for production lighting and programming have changed and you can nominate anyone you have worked with who was exceptional over the year? So why not nominate someone you thought was brilliant whilst it's fresh in your mind by filling in the form on the website? This years' ALPD Awards launch very soon (see page 12), alongside the announcement of the new Profile Awards. We are proud to be involved with these awards and support the event at Alexandra Palace on June 6th.

On that note, I hope we will meet members attending Plasa Leeds in May (see office notes for more info), I very much hope to attend and catch up with as many of you as possible.

'til then, enjoy this packed issue of Focus,



A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Affiliate

Daniel Philipson, Tunbridge Wells
Matthew Craigen, Kilmarnock

Student (Sponsored)

Joseph Dingle, Canterbury
Chiara Bowker, London
Aaron Molloy, London
Nurul Wardani, Croydon
Joseph R V Doody, Solihull
Ghoti Fisher, London
Justin Wu, Cardiff
Dylan Lowe, Hungerford
Harry-Joe McIntyre, St. Helens
Olivia Davey, Relford
James Knight, West Sussex
Luke O'Rourke, Ripon
Isaac O'Brien, Liverpool
Samantha R Kissin, London
Sam Smith, Liverpool
Olivia Burlingame, Cardiff

Richard Pilbrow Memorial Celebration

The Pilbrow family, along with the ALPD and the ABTT, will be celebrating the life of Richard Pilbrow on Friday, May 17th, at perhaps the most appropriate place possible, the Dorfman at the National Theatre, both of which Richard played a key part in creating. Arrival time will be from 1.30pm, with the main celebration starting at about 2pm probably through to about 3.30pm – then in the time honoured theatrical tradition, we'll adjourn to the bar! We would just ask that you let us know if you're planning to come: like the producer Richard sometimes was, we want to be sold out, but not to end up overflowing. You can let us know via this link:

www.celebratingrichard.com

If you can't make it but would still like to commemorate Richard, a good way of doing so would be through supporting the entertainment charity Backup Tech, which you can do here:

<https://backup-tech-tribute-fund.raisely.com/richardpilbrow> #



Membership Subscriptions

As ever, at this time of year the office is very busy doing renewals of membership and insurance. It's a good opportunity to check your own membership page on the website, maybe check your contact information is up to date. With a large number of payments coming in it may take a while for your payments to show up on the page. The insurance rates will remain the same as last year: £90 for the Combined Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance.

Shows coming up

Sadly, PLASA Focus Leeds are unable to find any space for the Associations to have stands this year. However, I will be at the show and the ALPD, thanks to the kindness of White Light, will have a base on a corner of their stand. It's really important that we do have a presence at shows outside London: as a northerner myself, now resident in the Midlands, I'm very conscious that a lot of members are active outside of London. Do come along and say hello, bring any queries you may have, or ideas, or just to have a chat. Lucy Carter has volunteered to lead a seminar for us, and will be talking about her design practice and when and why technology enters her process. Currently

scheduled for 13.45 on 14th May. www.plasaleeds.com

We will then be at ABTT in June, where all the Associations will be gathered around the AAPTLE Lounge.

BACS Payments – a tip

We've noticed recently that when setting up new payees on BACS, one of the questions that the bank asks is if it's a business or a personal account. So if you're invoicing someone expecting a BACS payment it might speed things up if you add this information to your invoice. The banks are getting ever more rigorous about checking that account details are correct. If I enter bank details I've been given and guess at 'business' and its actually 'personal', it can result in the bank rejecting the request to pay.

Backup Tech - The Village Fete

Thursday July 11th will see Backup Tech's The Village Fete return to Daytona Sandown Park in Surrey for more fun and frivolity. So, dig out your best tweed and flowery dresses, dust off your cake recipes and get ready to purchase your tickets, which are on sale now on the website www.backuptech.uk #

News and information from the ALPD office by Amanda Laidler

DATES 2024

PLASA Focus Leeds

Royal Armouries

14 - 15 May

Media Production and Technology Show

Olympia 15 - 16 May

ABTT Alexandra Palace

5 - 6 June

Backup Tech Village Fete

11 July

PLASA London

1 - 3 Sep.





This one day course is specifically tailored to the needs of theatre designers and their collaborators, with a focus on freelance artistic practice and decision making processes. It will help you become knowledgeable and confident about sustainable practice both in the studio and in production, and reveal the creative possibilities of working more sustainably. It is an essential part of meeting Theatre Green Book standards for production and is a great introduction to thinking about sustainability in creative practice. The training is broken into 2 sessions:

Theatre Design for Sustainable Futures

Carbon Literacy Training, Scotland

Organised by the SBTD, this is open to all interested in making their practice more sustainable: Accredited Carbon Literacy Training for Theatre Designers & their Associates, led by members of the Society of British Theatre Designers.

Sat, 27 Apr 2024 10:00 - 17:15 BST
National Theatre of Scotland
Course Price: £52.72



Olivier Awards - Best Lighting Design

Congratulations to ALPD members Paule Constable and Jon Clark, nominees for this year's Olivier Awards for Best Lighting Design. Paule for *Guys & Dolls* at the Bridge Theatre, and Jon for both *Dear England* at the National Theatre/Prince Edward Theatre, and *Stranger Things On Stage* at the Phoenix Theatre. Congratulations also to Jack Knowles, nominated for *Sunset Boulevard* (The Savoy). Fingers crossed for Sunday 14th April at the Royal Albert Hall. #

The first session is 2 hours online and is undertaken in your own time. (to complete online prior to the second 6 hour session, which is delivered in person as part of a group. Become part of a supportive network of carbon literate theatre professionals making change in the industry.

This training is specifically for professional designers for performance of all types, and as part of the creative and production team
tinyurl.com/
SBTDSustainableGlasgow #



The Big Freelancer Survey 2024

The Big Freelancer Survey has become an annual survey which provides a detailed report of the past 12 months. The pandemic, cost of living crisis, local arts cuts, Brexit - these factors have brought significant changes to our industry and highlighted the precarity of its freelancers. Your experiences and views are crucial in shaping lobbying of the industry and government.

Please complete The Big Freelancer Survey 2024. Your data REALLY does make a difference.

The first survey (from 2020) was the largest survey of its kind and directly influenced the announcement of the CRF as well as the production of the Routes To Recovery report. Our second Big Freelancer Survey was entitled 'Open to all, but not open all hours', used widely in the lobbying of industry bodies and government. Our 2023 report entitled 'Underpaid, Undervalued, Under Pressure' is available to read now.



<https://linktr.ee/BigFreelancerSurvey> #



Wolfgang Göbbel †

Renowned German lighting designer Wolfgang Göbbel died in Berlin on March 8, as Bühne Halle, his long-standing 'home-stage', announced. He was 70 years old. He had worked there on *La Bohème* for director Walter Sutcliffe, which has only just opened.

Born in Ulm in 1953, Göbbel designed the lighting for the new Berlin Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz in 1980. There he worked with Peter Stein, Luc Bondy, and George Tabori. He opened Claus Peymann's directorship at the Vienna Burgtheater with him, worked at Schauspiel Köln, Kammerspiele München and with Michael Boyd at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Commenting on a career which took the designer from Salzburg Festival, Wiener Festwochen, Aldeburgh Festival, via Edinburgh International and Hong Kong Arts Festival to the ROH and Glyndebourne, Boris Kehrmann, chief dramaturge at Bühnen Halle, says: "Wolfgang's work is so extensive, it is almost easier to list the places where he did not work. We mourn the loss of a great artist and person."

ALPD member Warren Letton pays tribute: "Wolfgang was one of the most welcoming designers that I've had the pleasure of working with. He introduced me to the world of country house opera, opening doors for me that have shaped my career. Teaching me things that I still incorporate in my own work, giving me opportunities that were life changing, but also and more importantly, was just a thoroughly lovely man."



A happy soul and an absolute legend at his art. You will be sadly and sorely missed."

Göbbel was nominated for the Laurence Olivier Award for "Outstanding Achievement in Opera" in 1997 (Best lighting design *Tristan und Isolde* at the English National Opera and *Midsummer Marriage* at the Royal Opera Covent Garden). In 2011 he had been awarded a "Knight of Illumination", in recognition of his work for *Tristan und Isolde* at the Grange Park Opera Festival. Photo: Bühne Halle 🇬🇧

The Old Vic is embarking on its biggest building renewal project to date, the Backstage building. This major capital project will provide a new six-storey hub, designed to be a welcoming destination for local and creative communities, due to open in Autumn 2025.

With an intention in the design by Haworth Tompkins to reuse reclaimed materials, The Old Vic are looking to repurpose 250 theatre barndoors, sourced from performing arts venues across the UK to create a colourful and playful brise soleil. The barndoors will be upcycled with powder coating in a variety of colours and set in open positions to serve its primary function as a solar shading device. The Old Vic are appealing for donations of aluminium barndoors of any size.

Specification:

- Material: Aluminium. We are unable to accept steel.
- Geometry: 4 blades and connecting ring are required
- Condition: Blades intact and free of damages such as cracks, rust or distortion
- Blade Thickness: Approx 1–2mm
- Size: Any size

If your organisation are able to donate any spare barndoors to The Old Vic's Barndoor Appeal, then please contact: Helen Hodge, Associate Director of Special Projects, Helen.Hodge@oldvictheatre.com | 020 7928 2651

Otherwise, feel free to drop these in to The Old Vic's Stage Door. The deadline for any donations is Friday 10 May. 🇬🇧



The ALPD are delighted to announce the successful candidates for their Design Lumière and their Production Lumière for 2024. This is the first year in which the ALPD has been able to offer a Production Lumière placement to complement its successful Design Lumière programme.

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. The Production Lumière Scheme gives the opportunity to work professionally in a variety of settings for four and a half months, upskilling their production electrics and programming skills.

For both Lumières the Scheme begins with time spent at Glyndebourne.

The Design Lumière for 2024 is Imogen Clarke. Imogen will spend three months at Glyndebourne followed by a further three months when she will work with several different lighting designers on a variety of productions.



Imogen started out as an apprentice at Fairfield Halls, moving to Richmond Theatre and then The Peacock Theatre to work full time. As a freelancer she works across Dance, Theatre, Musical Theatre and Ballet as well as Site Specific Projects moving between touring and working on productions as relighter, programmer, associate and lighting designer. Recent credits include Production Manager/Relighter *The Rite of Spring/Common Grounds* Global tour (Pina Bausch Foundation/Ecoles des Sables/Sadler's Wells, Zeynep Kepekli LD Common Grounds); Programmer *Trip The Light Fantastic* - a collaboration with

Paraorchestra with Surgeons Girl, Charles Hazlewood and Limbic Cinema, (Opening Bristol Beacon, Jenny Roxburgh LD, November 23); Associate, *California Connections*, Yorke Dance Project (Zeynep Kepekli LD, November 23 Leeds, March 24 Linbury).

Lumière Scheme '24

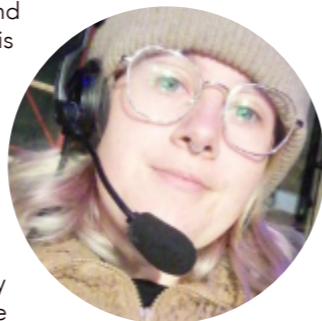
Successful candidates announced

"I'm over the moon to become this year's Design Lumière and gain the opportunity to develop my craft and learn from working alongside the brilliant designers across this year's scheme. I'm greatly looking forward to beginning the course by working at such an extraordinary institution as Glyndebourne and for the opportunities to follow. I'm excited about the journey that this scheme

will take me on and to grow my skills and knowledge in this unique environment."

The Production Lumière this year, Ellen Butterworth-Evans, is already at Glyndebourne and will continue there until mid-April, when she then spends four weeks at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre and two weeks at Lamp & Pencil.

Ellen Butterworth-Evans graduated from LIPA in 2020. She was one of many caught up in the chaos of Covid and its



impact on the industry. Happily, she was able to take part in the ALPD's Team Lumière 20:20 and to network with others in the industry. As the world opened up, she was able to get some casual work and is now a full-time freelance technician. She applied for the Production Lumière scheme, wanting to improve the gaps in her knowledge that the pandemic had created.

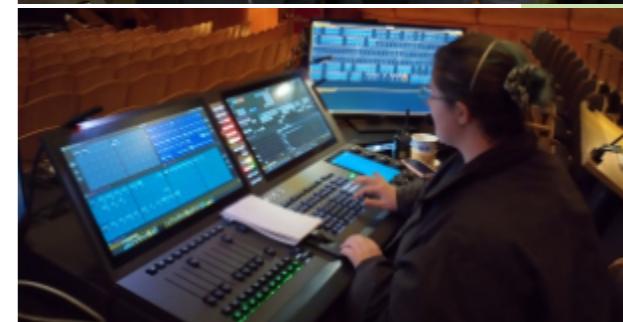
Ellen said "I felt incredibly honoured to be the first participant of the Production Lumière Scheme, and have already learnt so much from my first 6 weeks at Glyndebourne. Having been at this prestigious venue since the end of January it has been nothing short of a whirlwind, making up practicals for each of the operas, rigging the overhead rig and booms, and learning more about EOS and programming. Learning from the inhouse team has been a joy - working with such a kind, friendly team has made this experience even more enjoyable, and meant that no question has felt too stupid! I'm excited as we go into the technical weeks for each of the shows, seeing the practicals come to fruition in each piece of set, as well as see how the lighting designers work in the space."

The ALPD would like to thank Glyndebourne, Regent's Park Open Air

Theatre and Lamp & Pencil, Vectorworks UK, Christie Lites and all who donate to the scheme. If anyone reading this would be interested in offering sponsorship to the Lumière Scheme in future years, contact office@thealpd.org.uk

Between 2015 and 2023 we have supported seven successful participants of the Design Scheme, and in 2020 provided mentorship between 38 participants and 35 Lighting Designers through Lumière 20:20, as well as group discussions and talks with the 22 participants of Team Lumière.

In 2021, we launched our pilot Production Lumière Scheme for emerging production electricians and programmers with 5 participants all receiving mentorship, a paid work placement opportunity and weekly online workshops. #

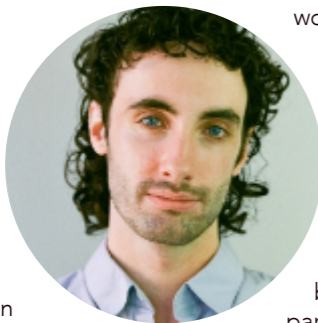


Top: The Lumière Design Scheme interview panel L-R: Jason Addison, Mark Jonathan, Peter Mumford, Jo Town, David Howe, Vic Pyne
Below: Ellen Butterworth-Evans at Glyndebourne
Photo: Vic Pyne

The Association for Lighting Production Design announced the winners of their 2023 Awards at the New Technology Showcase at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

This event, jointly hosted by White Light, the ALPD and RCSSD is an opportunity for lighting professionals to explore and compare the latest lighting technology available on the market.

The Michael Northen Award sponsored by Go Live Theatre Projects, ETC and Vectorworks is this year awarded to **Morgan Moroney**, a lighting and video designer working across theatre, opera, dance and installation. A graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art Sydney, Morgan received the 2020 APDG Emerging Designer for Live Performance Award for his design on *Ghosts*, directed by Priscilla Jackman (NIDA). He has been nominated three times for a Sydney



ALPD Awards for Excellence '23

Winners announced at New Technology Showcase

excited by his portfolio and the range of work he had already undertaken as a young designer and looked forward to following his career.

"I am truly honoured to be the recipient of the Michael Northen Award for Lighting Design. Receiving this award is a testament to the outstanding collaborators I have been privileged to work alongside in bringing these visions to life. It is particularly meaningful to witness the recognition of Australian creativity on an international stage, some of which is direct

Theatre Award in Best Independent Lighting Design, and won the 2023 APDG Award in Lighting Design for *Cleansed* (Redline Productions). Judges commented that Morgan has developed a beautiful lighting design aesthetic, that his work was original and his choice of colour evocative. They were

from the tiny Old Fitz Theatre (nestled in a pub basement!). This accolade serves as a motivation to continue my career with invigorated commitment and passion for storytelling with light."

The ALPD Award for Excellence in Programming sponsored by ETC goes to **Dan Street**. Dan works across multiple genres of the entertainment industry as a Lighting Programmer and Designer; his work encompasses programming for live theatre, large arenas and for TV. He has a



long-standing professional association with the Royal Albert Hall and also regularly works alongside the BBC. He was especially commended for his collaboration and mentoring and his brilliant eye for detail.

Thanking the ALPD, and those who nominated him, Dan said, "I feel very honoured and humbled to be receiving it for my work, which I'm so passionate about. I'm fortunate to work across

multiple sectors of the industry and have had the pleasure of programming some very special and memorable productions."

The Fred Foster Award for Excellence in Production Electrics sponsored by ETC goes to **Michael Scott**.

Michael worked in London and Australia before moving to the Royal Opera House, working for both the opera and ballet



companies in the UK and internationally. Freelance since 2008 a wide range of work has included the West End, theatre installations and the 2012 Olympics opening and closing ceremonies. Michael said: "It's an honour to be accepting this award named after Fred Foster, who was such an important person in our industry and did so much to move on the technology from where I started to where we stand today, in terms of control and illumination." 🌟

Awards for Excellence for 2024: Nominations and Applications now open

The ALPD will again be awarding in three categories; Lighting Design, Production Electrics and Programming, with each of the fantastic prize bundles being tailored to the specific needs of that speciality. The Lighting Design Award is by application; the candidates for the Fred Foster Production Electrician Award and the Anne Valentino Award for Excellence in Programming are by nomination. The ALPD encourages lighting professionals who work alongside a production electrician or programmer whom they consider to be exceptional and worthy of recognition, to nominate them.

The Michael Northen Award

This award is sponsored by the Go Live Theatre Projects (previously the Mousetrap Foundation), Vectorworks and ETC. The winner of this award will receive a £500 voucher prize, a 512 ETC nomad™ Package, a Vectorworks licence for 12 months and a 6-month mentoring scheme with an industry professional to run alongside the initial stage of their career. The winner will also receive a copy of Michael's book – "Northen Lights".

Applications are welcome from current students (not just those on vocational theatre courses), Affiliate members of the ALPD, and recent graduates (who graduated no earlier than 2021) even if they are not currently a member, who have demonstrated strong, imaginative and creative lighting designs, detailed production documents or thorough programming files. (cont p. 11)

The Fred Foster Production Electrician Award

This Award is sponsored by ETC and dedicated to the late ETC CEO, Fred Foster. The winner of this award will receive an engraved trophy sponsored by ETC.

In a change to previous years, this award is open to nominations rather than applications. Nominees will be pursuing full-employment in a production electrics career; they will have predominantly worked in the presentation of live performance in places of entertainment: i.e. on theatre, dance or opera productions in theatres and opera houses or on theatrical experiences in non-conventional spaces either in house or as a freelancer. They will have achieved a mastery of their chosen discipline. They will have consistently delivered at a level of excellence throughout their career. They will have sought to promote best practice and technical excellence while delivering world class performance. They will be a great collaborator. They will be worthy of recognition.

The Anne Valentino Award for Excellence in Programming

This award is sponsored by ETC and dedicated to Anne Valentino, who has been a key contributor to console development and design for both Strand and ETC.

The winner of this award will receive an engraved trophy sponsored by ETC.

The criteria for nomination are:

They will have been pursuing full-employment as a programmer; they will have predominantly worked in the presentation of live performance in places of entertainment: i.e. on theatre, dance or opera productions in theatres and opera houses or on theatrical experiences in non-conventional spaces either in house or as a freelancer. They will have achieved a mastery of their chosen

discipline. They will have consistently delivered at a level of excellence throughout their career. They will have sought to promote best practice and technical excellence while delivering world class performance. They will be a great collaborator. They will be worthy of recognition.

The Awards will be presented at the RCSSD/ALPD New Technology Showcase in January 2025.

Further Information, terms and conditions and details of how to apply are available on the ALPD website. <https://www.thealpd.org.uk/training/alpd-awards-2024>

All submissions MUST be received by midnight on the closing date – Thursday 31st October. 🌟



The Profile Awards have been newly created and are co-ordinated by Durham and Jennie Marengi in association with the ABTT, the ALPD and the STLD. The Awards recognise lighting design excellence in Theatre and Television in the UK and will take place at the Alexandra Palace theatre on the 6th of June 2024.

Alongside eight specific Theatre awards and six TV awards there will be a Student Virtual Lighting Design competition and the Richard Pilbrow Lifetime Recognition Award in the name of Richard Pilbrow by kind agreement with Richard's family and sponsored by Theatre Projects.

The Theatre Awards are judged by UK theatre critics and are not open to nominations whereas the Television Awards are judged by broadcast professionals and can be nominated by anyone. The Awards trophies are Patt 23M fixtures on stands, a miniature LED version of the iconic Rank Strand Pattern 23 profile fixture modelled and produced in limited amounts by Hugh Chinnick.

Profile Awards

New industry-wide award and competition announced

Sponsorship take up has been incredible with all the 16 Awards being taken up by the industry in as many days, the Headline Sponsor is Ayrton with the TV Awards being sponsored by ChamSys, ELP, LCR, Light Initiative, Roxlight and

Version 2 Lights. The Theatre Awards are sponsored by Chauvet, Elation, ETC, Fix8, GLP, TSL, SLX and Vari-Lite; the pre-show bar is sponsored by Ambersphere Solutions.

The awards ceremony will be an informal cabaret style seating affair with plenty of opportunity to network and

catch up with friends and peers with at least half of those in attendance being professional Lighting Designers.

There is also a Student Virtual Lighting Design Award whereby Lighting Design students and programmers from UK colleges are invited to create a

two-minute animation using WYSIWYG 2023 or LD Capture visualisation software to music of their choice in a 3D model of the Royal Albert Hall provided by Durham Marengi and populated with an Ayrton fixture virtual rig.

The student entries will be judged by the professional Profile Awards TV and Theatre nominees and the Virtual competition student nominees will receive an invitation to The Profile Awards event with the winner being announced live at the Awards at Alexandra Palace on the 6th of June, these awards are kindly sponsored by AC Entertainment Technologies. 🌟

www.profileawards.com



The ALPD is delighted to celebrate and congratulate our member Michael Hulls on his well deserved OBE, part of the King's Birthday Honours list in 2023.

Michael was recognised as a Lighting Designer for his services to Dance and the Arts. His career in lighting design has been exclusively in the dance world for the past 30 years. He is also the recipient of the 2014 Olivier Award for outstanding achievement in Dance and two Knight of Illumination Awards (2009, 2016).

Perhaps best known for his long collaborations with leading choreographers such as Russell Maliphant, and Akram Khan in the UK, he is also an associate artist of Sadler's Wells theatre where in 2016 he created the memorable *LightSpace* installation at the Wells, the first presentation on the main stage without dancers or performers.

Michael tells the story about how he almost missed out on the OBE:

"Last May I was in Paris, ostensibly to make some mods to the design of Akram Khan's *Jungle Book reimagined* and whilst

hanging out in a cafe I received an email, purportedly from 'cabinetoffice@gov.UK' or something like that...

It said I hadn't replied to a letter they'd sent me 4 wks previously and needed an answer by end of the next day. Obviously I thought you never sent me a letter. SCAM! So I ordered another cup of tea. And thought...There was an attachment, a pdf, 'Letter' so as it wasn't a link I decided I could have a peek...I immediately saw the letter was addressed

Michael Hulls

Lighting Designer receives OBE, writes Rick Fisher

to a 'Michael Hulls' at an address in Leicester...I've never lived in Leicester. Again I thought SCAM! Or at least mistaken

identity... so I didn't read the letter. I ordered another cup of tea and thought...it might be safe to reply to the email purportedly from the cabinet office and point out this was some sort of mistaken identity...

Almost immediately I'd hit Send I got a reply asking me to call a UK mobile phone number...Again I thought SCAM! A phone Scam! I replied, 'No. I don't ring you, you ring me.' Almost immediately my

phone rings, it's someone, purportedly from the Cabinet Office, they ask if I'm Michael Hulls, LD and start reading my biography to me. So I say, 'Yes that sounds like me and not some random bloke in Leicester'. Then my new best friend Gareth says I've got 24 hrs to accept or not because the PM will then take the list to the King for royal approval. I say, well thanks Gareth, I'll have a think and get back to you tomorrow...And ordered another tea..."

Michael picked up his medal from the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex in November 2023, declining to go the Palace due the lack of any refreshments offered. East Sussex laid on a better spread!

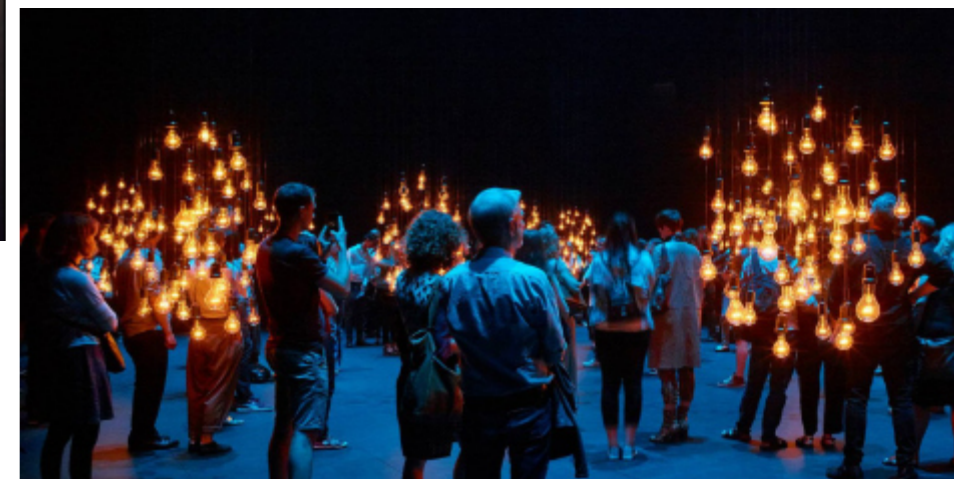
Not only is this great news for Michael and the dance world, it is also something of which the entire lighting community can be proud. Congratulations! 🌸

www.michaelhulls.com



Top: CONCEAL | REVEAL at Sadler's Wells. Photos: Johan Persson (l), Tristram Kenton

Below: Visitors at LightSpace at Sadler's Wells. Photo Stephen White
Portrait left page: Gavin Evans





Simisola Majekodunmi studied Stage Management at RADA "but it became clear I didn't want to manage people!" Without a family connection or school education to lighting, Simi recalls a specific effect seeing *Gypsy* as a spark for her curiosity. "It was so simple yet beautiful - I had to find out."

This edition, Simisola Majekodunmi and Jai Morjaria talk about the Diversity Working Group

Diversity, Access, Representation, Equality, Inclusion - criteria for working together and presenting our work in theatre, which should be a-matter-of-fact nowadays. But beyond the buzzwords, more work than ever seems to be needed. We spoke with member of the ALPD Diversity working group, Simisola Majekodunmi.

Focus: Hi, Simi, what were your hopes when you took on the chair nearly five years ago?

Simi: To create a sense of community for lighting professionals, make people feel welcome, enact change by bringing in more diverse people, including those from non-white European backgrounds. And while feeling successful, there's also frustration at the slow progress

Focus: What's your personal experience?

Simi: For a start: People who first meet me assume I'm the sound designer. The assumption being - black people are good at music, and just don't do lighting. There has been some progress in representation on stage, but backstage there's a lack. It feels like there are phases when young people are put in positions where they have access to a bit of tech work or lighting design, and then it ebbs

off again. There needs to be awareness how much more structural and cultural change is needed. Hiring diverse staff is a start, but not enough. For example dedicated mentoring would help to make them feel safe, and seen, and not just be part of a box ticking exercise.

Focus: Do you see more change in institutions with diverse leadership?

Simi: It often helps with the programming, but change has to come from within an organisation. Attitudes, processes, inclusion on all levels.

Focus: Has the Equality Act 2010 made a great difference?

Simi: Definitely. It's good to be able to say - there are rules, even though having all 'issues' in one law makes it a bit difficult sometimes to keep focus. There's a different need for someone accessing theatre in a wheelchair, than for someone experiencing discrimination because of skin colour, but that's how the law works. I compare this to how women came into the lighting design world, people like Paule Constable, Jo Town, Lucy Carter. First there's pushback, but eventually perseverance slowly changes the outlook. Now, it's great to see when a whole organisation makes an effort to purposefully select a diverse creative

team, often to match the show and the cast on stage. I definitely think that is progress.

Focus: What's your view on positive discrimination?

Simi: I'm heavily for it. We've tried everything else. People need to be radically invited into a space. Change doesn't happen from a position of being comfortable.

Focus: ... and the Prime Minister's negative response to *Black Out Performances* at the Noel Coward Theatre?

Simi: I'm quite disappointed, especially coming from a person of colour. Maybe it's his position of privilege. I found *Black Out Performances* extremely loving, extremely welcoming. It feels like I can be

myself without censure, express myself freely without the white gaze - I can relax. It's not meant to be exclusionary to non-black people.

Focus: Moving onto stage - there was an incident in 2018 when a professor working at the Globe Theatre warned that "traditional theatre-lighting and stage design discriminates" against actors of colour.

Simi: You know, I understood where she was coming from. It's about being educated as a lighting designer, learning when you don't just light for a scene, you light for the individual, adding a key-light here or balancing out there. It seems more obvious with different coloured costumes - you have to work with that, spend some time, and similar some skin tones need a little more love than others. It's great if you

can learn this early in your career. Often it helps to chat with a director beforehand. There are some wrong pre-conceptions, like, "oh I know green doesn't work with an actor of colour" and you have to explain that this isn't true. We just need time to work it out, work out pick ups, or a colour mixture. I lit in 2021 *The Wiz* - a black cast, and for the first time I didn't need to go on stage and stretch out my hand and explain to look at my skin - but still there were many different tones and still work needed to be detailed on that. But experiencing so much diversity on stage as well as off - that was really joyful.

Focus: What's your advice how to move forward?

Simi: It's slow, but I feel we are progressing. There's no reason why young lighting designers or technicians of colour can't enter the industry, and the ALPD is amazingly helpful with that. Sometimes the industry is still not welcoming enough, perhaps out of fear not to be able to relate to a diverse workforce. But people are people, and it's culture that makes us different. If we learn about each other, if we are open minded, and more cohesive, a more beautiful culture can be achieved. True understanding and openness can achieve a lot. ✨

The Equality Act 2010, enforced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, brings together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act so that it is easier to use. It sets out the personal characteristics that are protected by the law and the behaviour that is unlawful. Simplifying legislation and harmonising protection for all of the characteristics covered will help Britain become a fairer society, improve public services, and help business perform well.
www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010



Katharine and Jai collaborated on a workshop idea last year, approaching each other for the project. The online workshop had participants as diverse as designers, directors, producers, and access consultants.

Focus: Jai, you're speaking on behalf of Katharine as well today, could you describe how the workshop came about, and your approach.

Jai: It was Katharine's idea first, and we thought departmental collaborations are key: We can't view the problem from a lighting perspective alone. The goal: identifying and opposing racism, to actively change policies, behaviours, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions. First of all: people on stage and their complexion has changed in the past 20 years. That sounds obvious, but creatives are not being trained in a way that takes this into consideration. Things have always been done in a certain way to suit best. But now, the parameters have changed. Our industry must adapt to a changing make up of complexions on stage and consider this in design

practices. We were motivated to normalise the conversation and to share

Anti-Racism at the Intersection of Lighting, Directing and Scenography

By Katharine Williams and Jai Morjaria

learned expertise.

Focus: So this is a call to change attitude, but also to work on the skillset?

Jai: It helps that we are also addressing the make up of the creative team. There were, and still are, productions where I am the only person of colour in the room. There is still a disconnect between understanding diversity on stage and workforce, and we must emphasize the importance of team diversity in recruitment efforts.

Focus: What other examples apart from



lighting have been discussed?

Jai: Great input came from costume and set, too. Sometimes it's things which seem so obvious: Don't dress this actor in a screaming white shirt, don't block her in front of a very bright wall, the audience can't see her face. Understanding differences in contrast, and perception.

Or understanding hair and make up: That it needs to be treated differently according to culture, needs different products. And how a hat has to be to work with this hair. Getting it wrong leads to wrong perceptions by the audience, and that leads to subconscious racist stereotyping.

There are so many little things you can get away with, in general, with lighter complexions. So you need to develop understanding: let's find something from a different department. We don't just talk about lighting.

Focus: Why do people not address racial inequality more openly?

Jai: Bluntly - they are scared. That's why we did the workshop in a fairly closed framework, and didn't record. We wanted people to feel that any question could be asked, and discussed. The participants discussed creating a network of anti-racist lighting designers to pass knowledge to

next generation.

Focus: Have you got any support from the industry?

Jai: Freelancers subsidise the arts, because we care a lot, and this project wasn't any different. But we've reached a point where producers must acknowledge and budget for extra time and work to achieve equality. We all have to acknowledge that there isn't going to be a quick, cheap fix. Access consultants help make theatres more accessible, providing support for patrons with disabilities. We need the same roles for diversity, understanding the needs and limitations of a production, including time constraints and the need for extra time for certain tasks.

Jai: The workshop created tools for productions to line up with anti-racist values, including understanding the needs of the production and acknowledging the presence of people of colour in prominent roles. And we got very positive feedback. We wanted everyone to leave with one thing that they could implement within their practice to make the industry a bit better. My hope is that the next little Indian kid who loves theatre is not going to be treated the same way that I've been treated. And that is my hope for the future. #

Resources and Further Reading

A great starting point are these collections of resources and links to documents, toolkits and relevant organisations:

- <https://freelancersmaketheatrework.com/anti-racism/>
- <https://tinyurl.com/ABTTDiversityResources>
- www.artscouncil.org.uk/equality-action-plan-guidance



- Socio-economic Diversity and Inclusion toolkit: Creative Industries
A government issued resource, to ensure your creative business is adopting an inclusive approach.

<https://tinyurl.com/InclusionCreativeToolKit>



Diversity Working Group

If you would like to be part of the Diversity Working Group, or discuss any issues raised, please email the office or diversity@thealpd.org.uk

Disability

We would like to hear from lighting designers, programmers and technicians who identify as disabled for a future edition. If you would like to be interviewed or share your experiences, please contact editor@thealpd.org.uk

ALPD resources can be found on the website and include:

- www.thealpd.org.uk/blog/203395/lighting-skin-tones-in-theatre
- www.thealpd.org.uk/resources/bectu-theatre-diversity-action-plan

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Simi Majekodunmi and Tom Lightbody invited fellow ALPD members to discuss their lighting of *Metamorphosis* by Frantic Assembly, who had turned Kafka's tale into a highly dynamic and acrobatic show of physical theatre.

At the last stop of the tour, Lyric Hammersmith, quite a crowd (who also enjoyed drinks sponsored by Vari-Lite) listened to the candid details of the

creative process, and how trust and collaboration between LD Simi and Associate LD Tom became crucial on a tour of very varied venues. This became evident during the talk, with Tom and Simi finishing each other's sentences - but for clarity we let the LD have the main voice:

"The show started its life in Plymouth, a very different theatre to the Lyric. We had a lot of issues there with angles and getting things in. Plus there is a video design, coming in flat from the front from Dress level.

About my process: I started talking to the director and designer fairly early on and discovered their idea of a closed box, including a ceiling - everybody's favourite!

First the stage was to tip much steeper forward and I hoped to get better under the ceiling. But that couldn't be done in the end, and, to complicate matters, the set arrived late, with parts of the floor missing. So the first focus involved a lot of guesswork. Another struggle was to get two layers of beams in, at least an US and a DS to avoid angles coming flat in. Then there was a wish from the director to make

the DS look 'outside' in contrast to the claustrophobic inside, added side booms took care of this, and Tom found that this

gave also more flexibility for the tour and its variations in stage width - booms doubled up when needed. Four moving heads - Vipers - added dynamic options, two FOH at Dress level, and two DS on the floor shooting up into the set towards the ceiling. I think they became Tom's bane during the tour - there was a constant discussion about sightlines.

A big element were the fabric walls. Being able to glow them and change their colour from the offstage added some really cool options, but also necessitated a

lengthy discussion between director and designer, who preferred the rig on stage to be in full view. The director didn't, so I had to be quite sneaky about using them, and initiate diplomatically a chat between them.

For footlights we added ChromaQ Colourforce 72s, being able to address single LEDs was such a help to pinpoint an actor for drama or sometimes just not getting into the video's way. There are effects when the video content creates a 'shadow' of the character on stage. So the lighting had to be able to light the actor without creating an additional shadow behind or left or right or the ceiling! Shadow-free lighting!"



Adds Tom: "That became a fine line to walk during the tour, as we didn't bring any conventionals, and had to adapt and re-plot with the venues lights for levels and angles, sometimes a nudge of just a couple of points making the difference between 'lit' and 'wash-out'. Plus this is a dynamic show - reblocking and changes from the director happening frequently. An extra challenge, and you have to love compromises!"

Another essential aspect got frequently mentioned: all of the process happens under the circumstances only really known to freelancers. After prep work, Tom could only join the show again towards the end of its initial production week due to family commitments. Like every lighting designer, Simi had to keep checking progress and to keep planning on other projects too. Full documentation, written, video and photos, with the help of programmer Matt Whale is as much part of the teams toolbox. Says Simi: "Part of the process is to decide how invested you can

Metamorphosis

ALPD lighting talk with Simisola Majekodunmi and Tom Lightbody at the Lyric





be in the project early on, and when to join the conversation between director and designer. That's also useful to gain trust, if you haven't worked together before." And, of course, hire and equipment lists have to be in ever earlier, way before the design can be known. "There is a fair bit of guesswork involved, and often I go just with my best wishlist and find later how it works out." Tom adds: "As the relighter, I hope to tour as much as we can hired kit, to have fewer variables with the venue kit." Simi: "And I'm trusting Tom's creative judgment."

And the trickiest element? "The large mirror - oh my god - Again a design decision which is left to the LD to battle with. Frosting it was refused, and we ended up with reflections all over the place - not by design. I did lose my cool a bit about this to be honest!" 🚫

Photos Arnim Friess. Production photos Tristram Kenton. For more photos see www.franticassembly.co.uk



Credits

Produced by Frantic Assembly.
 Director Scott Graham,
 Designer Jon Bausor,
 LD Simisola Majekodunmi,
 Associate LD Tom Lightbody,
 Programmer Matt Whale
 Video Designer - Ian William Galloway

Wales Lighting Designers meet up

'It is very rare to get lighting designers in the same room' writes Jane Lalljee:

We managed to get quite a few Welsh and Wales based LDs in the same place. We met for lunch at the Sherman Theatre thanks to Elanor Higgins recognising that a fair few of us were in Cardiff and available. What a joy it was for us all to meet and discuss all things Wales and lighting!

Hot topics discussed - where has all the lighting design work gone and why do some organisations in Wales only use London creatives?

We're hoping to have another catch up in the summer.

L-R Rachel Mortimer, Ceri James, Katy Morrison, Garrin Clarke, Jane Lalljee, Elanor Higgins, Ace McCarron, Joe Price (who also took the photo.) 🚫



ALPD meeting Bristol with Chris Swain

Stuart Porter writes: Chris Swain makes good use of GLP X4 bars and shows how he used them with great effect on the production of *Oliver Twist* at the Tobacco Factory Theatre in Bristol. As budget and height were an issue, a lot of thought went into rigging points to make full use of the tilt of the units. Organised by Joe Price, the talk also gave the ALPD the opportunity to have a "South-West" social in this great venue with the drinks being sponsored by White Light. 🚫



The New Technology Showcase returned to the Royal Central School of Speech & Drama's Embassy Theatre in February. The annual showcase provides a unique opportunity for practitioners from across the lighting industry to see and experience the latest technologies in a live environment.

The event, hosted by White Light, featured representation from a wide range of manufacturers including ALPD Company Members such as ETC, Martin, GLP, Robe, Ayrton, SGM, Ambersphere, Chauvet and Rosco.

This project provides an excellent opportunity for students across every year group of both the Lighting Design and Production Lighting courses at RCSSD to design, plan, rig and programme a public facing event alongside leading industry professionals using the newest, cutting-edge technologies. The rig required 32 universes of DMX controlled via two consoles and students were each able to programme a short 'sting' in time to music between each talk. Huge congratulations to all the students involved!

There were a number of impressive products on display but some stand out. Features included a new tungsten snap

delay on the GLP X5 range to emulate the small but noticeable delay we all know and love on our incandescent lanterns. Robe's Footsie 2 footlights also now include features such as a low-level blue LED indication of stage edges for additional safety and discrete RGB LEDs at 10 cm spacing to provide performers with alignment marks; no more shouting "find your light" from the production desk!

Eco-friendly considerations have become an increasingly vital factor in product development and there were some intriguing new offerings including additional 'flaps' on Astera barn door sets to reduce the need for black wrap between the four primary doors and further innovations within Robe's series of transferable LED engines. Commendably, Martin are now exclusively using cardboard for all of their packaging as well, doing away with plastic bags and polystyrene for good (we hope)!

Once again the show concluded with a Q&A session, which this year resulted in

New Technology Showcase

By Joe Price

some fascinating discussions regarding affordability in product development from an education point of view and how we can ensure young people have access to a more basic range of kit that they can practice on without blowing their school's budget. Various companies highlighted their continued and increasing efforts to visit schools and higher education institutions in order to showcase their equipment, as well as apprenticeships and other development opportunities. The wonderful *Inspiring The Future* service was also highlighted and, as has been done previously, the ALPD would encourage all its members to consider signing up for this brilliant scheme.

When all the formalities were concluded, attendees gathered onstage to enjoy a piece of cake, a drink and a catch up with friends and colleagues, as well as to take a closer look at the products being displayed and ask questions of the company representatives. Another stellar success for the New Technology Showcase and we hope to see many of you there again next time! 🍷

Clockwise from top left: White Light Technical Director Dave Isherwood.

A manufacturers rep demoing an app to students.

Audience – Ian Jackson French in the foreground, Bernie Davis, mid shot and student Tegan Leggett behind Ambersphere's MA3.

Elliot Smith, professional programmer, not only demo-ed the new tech (working closely with each of the manufacturers), but also wrote fixture profiles on the fly.



Photos by Nick Moran

Bristol Light Festival 2024

SLX, Lightworks and Hannah Peel & Paraorchestra teamed up to produce 'The Unfolding' as part of this year's festival. Lead by Alex Keighley from SLX. The ruins of Temple Church were lit by Kate Bonney, programmed by Neil Foulis, with additional design support from Joe Price. The building, usually closed to the public, was brought back to life by dancing beams of light and colour, timecoded to an enchanting soundtrack! 🌟

Photo Andre Pattenden



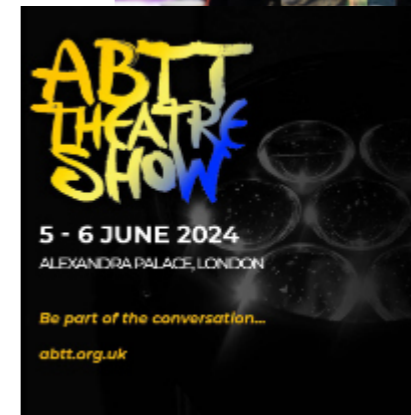
ABTT Theatre Show 2024 coming up

At the Alexandra Palace, London on the 5th and 6th June.

This renowned FREE event, running for over 40 years, promises a melting pot of specialist suppliers who support live performance technology, production, and education. It's a vibrant hub where the world of theatre, performance, events, festivals, and music intersect.

With over 3,000 attendees, it's the perfect opportunity to expand your professional network and discover the latest trends and innovations in the industry through practical skills workshops, equipment demonstrations, educational sessions, and inspiring seminars.

The ABTT Theatre Show opens doors to careers advice, networking opportunities and access to industry specialists. You can engage with exhibitors showcasing everything from lighting, production, design, sound,



automation, to wigs, hair, makeup, costume, rigging, engineering, special effects, stage management, and pyrotechnics.

Don't miss out on this exciting opportunity to immerse yourself in the full breadth of our industry! Make sure you are part of the conversation. www.abtt.org.uk 🌟

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When I was first approached last April about lighting a new Chinese language musical in October, I assumed it was for 2024. But I was assured, that it was Oct '23 despite the fact that there was not a script or a score.

This was the first indication that things happen a little differently in Chinese musical theatre production. I liken it to booking the wedding venue and reception dinner menu before you have found a partner! The theatre and a 10+ week tour was booked, so maybe now was the time to make a show!

San Xing Dui is the name of the site of a major Bronze Age archeological discovery. Thousands of Bronze, pottery and gold artefacts of a clearly advanced civilisation were first uncovered partially in the '20s and then further excavations in the last 50 years have unearthed a mystifying rich trove of objects but no real clues as to how the society lived and disappeared.

The Director, Thom Southerland and the Chinese producers hammered out a story line that contained both ancient and modern elements, a score was commissioned in late June, and in the middle of August a cast was assembled to

begin rehearsing even though there was not a complete script.

I was to be part of a small team of non-Chinese creatives; in addition to the director, Morgan Large was designing the scenery, and Nathan Mark Wright was the choreographer. The rest of the team including Costume and Video design would be China based.

After an initial visit to China for a few days and a few screen shots of a proposed set

design. I started to formulate a rig plan. I had met a few lighting

people during the short visit (but none who would be working on the show!) and seen the first venue. It was clear that I had to plan for a lot of flexibility and moving the show weekly presented the usual touring challenges. This type of tour is quite normal and shows generally only play 3-4 performances in a different city each week.

There were many surprises along the way and with the help of Rob Halliday, who was to be my associate and programmer, we developed a system of circular trusses to echo the set design and

ensure that the lights would be in the same place in relation to the set in all the venues.

But it was not as easy as we thought. In a move that surprised the designer, a full stage drop was added that cut through our circles - it was designed after it was commissioned. So we modified to semi circular trusses for the upstage section of the set, which was a big ceremonial stepped circular mound.

Downstage LX went onto straight trusses. While controversial, I was able to argue their purpose and they were agreed. Not masking the rig made sense to me and while it was explained, it still seemed a bit of a surprise to some of the producers.

Another surprise was never really knowing what lights we were going to get. I was pointed to a catalogue to choose from very familiar-looking Chinese moving lights, that seemed to be able to do all manner of things. We chose models that best suited the challenges we thought we would face but heard nothing for a month or so after submitting a design.

In China, as in some other Asian markets, the lighting supplier also

San Xing Dui

Lighting a new musical in China

By Rick Fisher





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supplies the crew and the control and programmer. The contract for this was signed about a fortnight before the load in, which added to uncertainty as to specific unit types. This uncertainty really lasted up until just before load in, but it was impressive that they could supply such a big rig at very short notice, with many units purchased for the production.

We had hoped to use two followspots to make sure principals would always be picked out. I appreciated these would be local to the theatre, but I was surprised to find out that in the first venue, our follow spots did not have irises and were at such a low flat angle that they looked terrible. So I was happy enough to cut them, though that meant lighting the ever changing blocking was more

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challenging. In retrospect I should have demonstrated how bad they looked to the producers who wondered what happened to the follow spots.

Other surprises were that everything



was left until very late. There was no real production manager or chief LX, and the usual feedback on the viability of a design never happened. It is interesting that

after decades of fighting budgets I missed the to and fro and how to refine the initial plan into something workable and affordable.

While I was very proactive in getting my work visa and travel dates confirmed and booked, others were not so lucky. Despite constant pushing, the work visa application for Rob was delayed and not issued in time for his travel for the fit up. I was not too happy about having to plot the show during what I knew would be a 3 or 4 day tech via a translator. After a lot of phoning around I was very lucky to have Gabriel Chan a Singapore based Lighting Designer and programmer arrive just in time for the

tech. I am so grateful to him for stepping in at the last minute. I know we would not have managed to get the show on without him.



The show also featured a very large video wall, this is very common on Chinese shows and it was not easy getting input into what the imagery was going to be. There were lots of surprises in this area.

Also it is common to have multiple casts of principals, which they feel

All departments ultimately answered to the producer who had final say over all aspects and getting clarity on what the producer wanted at any time was not always straightforward.

Big pluses were the delight in meeting some great theatre people in all areas of production, who were great collaborators and excellent at their roles. There was great courtesy and respect for the foreign creators but I knew the show would be modified and changed after we left.

I am proud of the show we created together and I am truly in awe of what was accomplished in



increases ticket sales as some of the casts involve celebrities from TV or pop music. This also meant time re-teching the show to accommodate new performers.

such a short time span. While I am pretty sure the script and score would have benefited from more time and some workshopping I think we made a good show and I admired how hard the cast, crew and producers worked. #

CREDITS

Music Director: Hu Xiaoou
General Script Writer: Wang Yong
Script Writer, Lyrics Writer: Yang Shuo
Director: Thom Southerland
Set Designer: Morgan Large
Lighting Designer: Rick Fisher
Choreographer: Nathan Wright
Costume Designer: Yang Donglin
Make up Designer: Wang Qian
Digital Visual Director: Wei Kai
Digital Visual Production Director: Wang Dong, Wen Jianan
Sound Designer: Yu Naikun
Sound Effect Designer: Li Ziwei
Composer: Hu Xiaou, An Xin, Chen Jingwei, Zhao Se, Xiao Mo, Chen Junwu
Lyrics Writer: Qiao Chen
Technical Director: Wang Hao
Associate Director: Max Lindsay
Associate Choreographer: Tracie Morley
Associate Lighting Designer: Rob Halliday
Lighting Programmer: Gabriel Chan
Acting Coach: Zhu Tianjian
Assistance Director: Wang Yihao

Based in Nottingham, Architects of Air have created monumental, yet ephemeral structures for the past thirty years. Made from inflated, joined up geometric shapes in deeply saturated colours, walking through (and getting lost) the 50 meter wide installation evokes a unique sensation. Focus spoke to founder and artistic director Alan Parkinson at his base in France, and with Geraldine Collinge and Hannah Taylor at Compton Verney Art Gallery in Warwickshire.

Focus: Alan, as a lighting designer I thought I had a good, professional grip on experiencing and processing colour - and yet visiting the *Luminarium* at Compton Verney was almost a shock to the system - a pleasant one, though.

Alan: Yes, we get always a reaction, but there's a great variety: For some such a stimulating environment can be exhilarating, for others it's a calming, comforting experience. It's a paradox. Many people find the *Luminarium* a place for rest or contemplation, and then there's the kids who run wild and bounce off the walls!

Luminarium by Architects of Air

Light and colour space immersed in Warwickshire landscape

Focus: The saturation is so intense, it's impossible to photograph. And unlike other art exhibitions you're allowed to touch.

Hannah: This was one of the reasons why we wanted a *Luminarium* to visit: We are a gallery, but not confined to the mansion, 120 hectares of nature surround us and are part of art and creativity. We have precious art to view, but we also like families to experience art as something tangible, exciting all senses

Geraldine: For us this was a large hands-on project. A lot of stewards are needed and a large number of people

with disabilities can attend - the structure is wheelchair friendly.

Alan: We started as a theatre project for people with learning disabilities and inclusivity is central to its work. A *Luminarium* embraces all ages, all abilities, all cultures and communities.

Geraldine: A lot of people asked to go during the night and we had to explain that this wouldn't work! On the other hand we had visually impaired visitors who got a lot out of the installation. And a



baby made its first steps here!

Hannah: We made some interesting observations. Kids seem to be drawn more to red-coloured rooms. And we've been told that people suffering from claustrophobia found that they did not experience problems in the *Luminarium*. On overcast days, it was a little more muted inside, and calmer, and people who came several times commented on that.

Focus: At some point I also had to remind myself that the only lightsource is the sun.

Alan: No two visits to a structure are alike! The atmosphere, colour, contrast inside alters according to changing weather and light outside. There's a response of the structure to its natural environment which we can't control, and I like that.

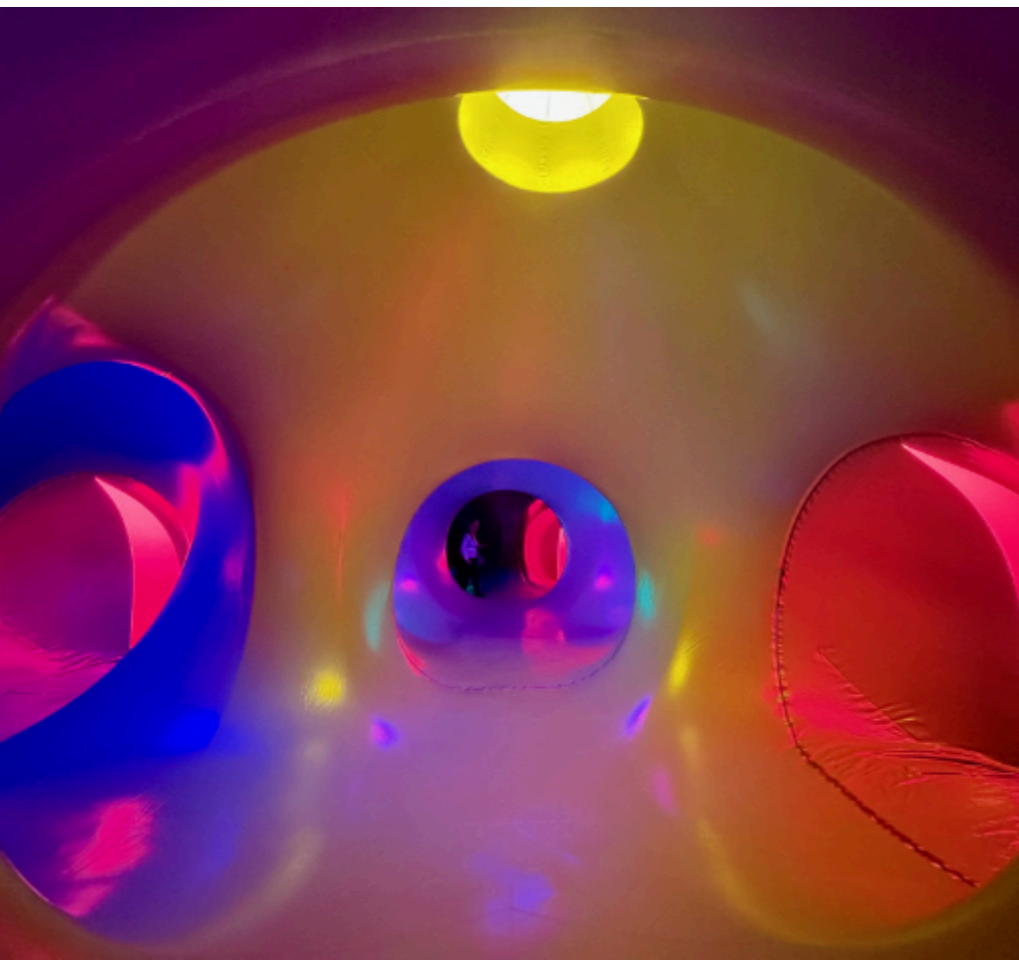
Focus: It's almost as if you could feel the lighting, as if it's liquid or jelly. There are loud clashes of primary colours in one space, while another might display long-stretched blends from one hue to another. I recognised a lot of the principles we work with, but was jealous when I realised lots of this would be impossible on stage with our instruments.

Alan: I might have to disappoint any notion of colour-psychology or theory here! We are obliged to work with a special

Alan Parkinson,
Architects of Air
www.architects-of-air.com



IT'S LIGHT, BUT...



PVC, custom-made for us by Renolit in Germany, and I intuitively design in my preferred red, blue, green primaries, occasionally yellow, that's for the translucent light, but opaque grey-silver makes up around eighty percent of the main structure. What excites me is ambiguity: What is surface, what is light? The refraction and reflection causes us to think about our perception.

Focus: Visitors have compared it to a cathedral, or a womb?

Alan: Sure, if they like that! (Laughs) Shapes are inspired from nature or other architecture, but we keep it abstract, to maintain freedom of imagination. We are touring several different models, and Timisien in Compton Verney is an experiment in stripping back the light entry points, using multicoloured finials atop quadraxial domes and control how it subtly plays inside on the matt silver-grey surfaces.

Focus: And the main light source is always the sun?

Alan: We've tried to work with spots and floods, but you would need rather a lot of them, and it still looks most beautiful in daylight.

Hannah: We loved to have an immersive artwork inside our landscape - the most immersive artwork there is! 🌸

Luminarium in Compton Verney, contrasting with the park, an ongoing restoration project after a design from 1768 by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

www.comptonverney.org.uk

Photos: Arnim Friess

In our series *It's Light, Jim, but not as we know it*, we are looking at ideas and exploration of colour, texture, luminence - whatever makes lighting people tick, away from performance spaces and instruments. We'd love to show your inspirational photos. Only rule: No plug attached. Email to editor@thealpd.org.uk



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"For all the people in performance lighting"

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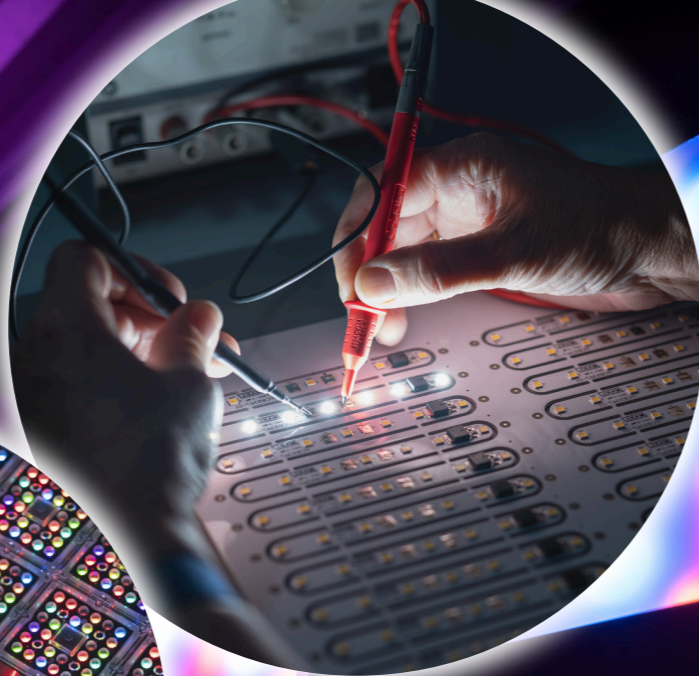
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Stand **G77**
**THE
MEDIA
PRODUCTION
& TECHNOLOGY
SHOW**

15-16 May 2024
Olympia London



MARL is returning for a second time to the Media Production & Technology Show (MPTS) at Olympia London on 15-16th May. Having exhibited at the show last year we found it very useful for strengthening our understanding of the broadcast media, production and technology industry and its requirements, and showing what we have to offer.

We will be demonstrating our range of High CRI LEDs and Flexistrips, which are perfect for the film and photography industry thanks to their accurate rendering of colours, allowing creative directors to realise their exact vision and produce vibrant, visually appealing scenes. We have enjoyed great success in this market and look forward to further strengthening our position through the show.

Whilst MARL's products have a lot to offer "out of the box", we'll also be discussing our in-house design capability. Where existing products won't work for a particular project, MARL's highly experienced design team can work with the customer from start to finish to design, prototype, manufacture and test semi-custom and bespoke solutions. As a member of Made In Britain, MARL has a 180,000 square foot research, design and manufacturing facility at UK-based MARL Business Park in Cumbria with a wide range of services and capabilities.

MARL can be found at Stand G77 of MPTS. We can also be found in The Knowledge Online, the definitive source of UK film and TV contacts.

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