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ALPD #

For all the people
in performance lighting

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



**RICHARD
PILBROW**

Family, friends and
colleagues remember at
memorial tribute

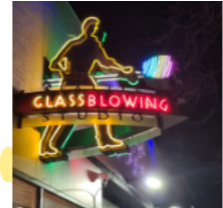
**HARD
CONTRAST**

Robbie Butler lights
Punch at Nottingham
Playhouse

**LIFEWIRE
CAREERS**

Looking at career options
with tips by established
lighting designers

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Titlepage: *Punch*, Nottingham Playhouse, LD Robbie Butler, Photo Marc Brenner

Welcome to Focus. This month our Lifewire theme focuses on careers advice. What would you say to someone starting out today, with all the issues facing our industry? Some would say that suggesting a career in the arts at all is bad careers advice, but I disagree.

My own career advisor said I would be lucky to have a career, that my "what is now called neurodivergence" negated me that opportunity. Luckily for me, my parents and I had other ideas. As many of you know, I started as an apprentice at the Royal Exchange in Manchester and I am looking forward this month to going back again as a lighting designer, even though I initially trained as a technician. My programmer will be Grace Bastyan, featured in Focus in 2022. Grace came to the Rex on a placement, funded by the Hodgkiss Collective, to observe as a lighting designer. Since then she has been taken on full-time by the Exchange and will be my programmer on the show. I am looking forward to hearing where she feels her career will be going in the future.

This is why it is so hard to quantify advice, as there are many horses for courses, and so many opportunities to take if and when you want to take them. For some people it's college, for others like me it's an apprenticeship and then after all that training you need to think about what you want to do, and that's not necessarily what your peers are doing. What is it that makes

you feel happy, what makes you feel a passion for the work? Is it working in a theatre making shows, or as warehouse technician fixing lights, or maybe you want to building a career as a freelancer. The advice I always give is do what you love.

I can't deny that it is tough out there at the moment, but has it not always been a tough career path? When I started, we were mid Thatcher years, theatres were closing, studios were shut, grants were miserable, salaries worse. But the industry survived all of that and it will again. It is a survivor and has over those years created many more exciting and interesting career opportunities. Be that in concert work, broadcasting, video games, to even the Secret Cinemas, the roles have grown and there is a place in there for everyone. Or maybe try all of them, because ultimately, if you have the passion, anything is possible.

Now don't get me wrong about passion, in this over worked, under funded industry we are often made to feel we should work just for the love of it! Well we shouldn't and we mustn't. It is important to fight for your rights and your craft, I have spoken passionately to producers about the skills needed on say a certain type of production, or the time required to make it. These conversations are important for them to understand what we do and how we achieve the work, its important to have that conviction and own it. In the ALPD we have many (cont.)

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



talented and passionate people in our working groups who are fighting for a better industry for us all, they are driven by their love for their work and its infectious to be around.

I was reminded of all this passion and drive when I attended Richard Pilbrow's memorial in May. Richard was so much more than just a lighting designer, he was interested and passionate about so many different parts of the industry. I was moved by all the amazing speakers as they reflected on the different areas of his life. A life driven by his joy for the work, his love of theatre, and the beautiful spaces he created. Or maybe it was that time he decided to produce a movie or he began writing books or was it when he started one of the many associations that are still here today, everyone who spoke talked about his infectious passion in everything he did. Richard managed in his lifetime to forge a career in our industry, because he was so passionate about everything he did.

Therefore my careers advice is to have passion, love what you do, with the people you are doing it with. Our jobs make people smile and hopefully will make you too.



A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Professional

Ben Virgo, Nottingham
Shaun Robertshaw, Nottingham
Pete Davies, Nottingham

Affiliate

Harry Wynne, Ilton

Student (Sponsored)

Samantha R Kissin, London
Fabian Oley, Bromley
Charlie Moore, Cardiff
Gabe Reis, Newbury
Ryan G Williams, Warrington
Massimiliano H Neri, Sidcup
Bopeng Hao, Glasgow
Peter Bird, Liverpool
Eleanor F Morris, Camberley

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

I hope that by now you have all had your E-Membership Card updated. If you haven't, please let me know! When the new website is designed and launched, this will be integrated with the membership system and your card will be

updated as you pay your subscriptions, but it's a little more manual at the moment.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thank you to those of you who have paid your subscriptions – if you haven't already, please remember these are due by July. If you pay monthly, your payments continue through the year. Please be aware that if a payment fails, GoCardless now charge us each time.

And a reminder again: Our bank has changed, and the NatWest account will be closed shortly. If you have a Standing Order, this needs to be changed to our new bank:

HSBC, The Association of Lighting Designers Ltd, Account no: 62666499
Sort Code: 40-07-30

BACKUP TECH

Come to The Village Fete in Sandown Park, 11th July, and support the entertainment industry's main charity for technical personnel in hardship and difficulties. www.backuptech.uk

PLASA and ABTT

We were very grateful to Corporate Members White Light for hosting us on their stand at PLASA Focus Leeds this

year. It was good to see and talk, especially to northern members. If you're coming to ABTT, find us on our own stand D74 by the AAPTLE Lounge. Come and say hello, ask questions, let us know what topics you'd like us to be pursuing.

WORKING GROUPS

A number of our working groups have spaces for new members. Would you like to get involved more with the work of the ALPD? The working groups cover a range of subjects and skills. If you would like more information, contact the office (office@thealpd.org.uk), speak with a member of the Executive, or chat to us on the stand at ABTT. Individual emails and contacts can also be found on the contacts page or the website.



ALPD AWARDS

Whilst in Australia working on the tour of The Lehman Trilogy, Charlotte Burton (Associate Lighting Designer for the show) took some time out to meet up with Morgan Moroney, winner of the Michael Northen Award this year. Don't forget that the ALPD Awards 2024 are open already. If you've worked with a programmer or a production electrician whose work you feel is worthy of recognition, take a few minutes to nominate them. You can find more information here: [#](http://www.thealpd.org.uk/training/alpd-awards-2024)



News and information from the ALPD office by Amanda Laidler

DATES 2024

Face to Face: Graduate exhibition Rose Bruford

4 June

ABTT Alexandra Palace

5 - 6 June

Backup Tech Village Fete

11 July

PLASA London

1 - 3 Sep.



UPDATE

“Our celebration takes place at perhaps the most appropriate place possible: a theatre in a building, both of which Richard played a key part in creating, the Dorfman, formerly Cottesloe, at the National Theatre. We'd like to thank our friends at the National for making this possible.”

So welcomed Richard's son Fred the many family members, friends and colleagues, who had followed the invitation to celebrate the lighting designer, producer and consultant, who had passed away last December. During an afternoon of mixed emotions, speakers cued up to pay tribute, testament to the many talents, professions and interests of Richard.

But first, Fred continued with sharing early memories of growing up in the Pilbrow household, and bridging to the past months of Richard's life. “It was very difficult”, despite his wife Molly supporting him, having health challenges of her own. “My sister Abigail flew out to Ridgfield to be with him. He and I were physical cowards and had to steel ourselves to visit the dentist, so Richard reassured me in his last months.”

Vicky McHugh, Richard's first wife, fol-

lowed on stage, and remembered how they met on the stage management course at CSSD. During the last term of the course, their marks got downgraded, as they, together with Bryan 'Kipper' Kendall, co-founder of Theatre Projects, chose to take on a job at Her Majesty's, which Richard recalled when the now

Richard Pilbrow Memorial

An afternoon of tributes and memories at the National Theatre

Royal CSSD bestowed a Fellowship on him. “Richard didn't mince his words!”

David Collison added a reminiscence of those early years, after they'd met at the Lyric Hammersmith in 1959. “Producers saw lighting as an unnecessary luxury. Often shows were lit by the director with the chief electrician. The fees were pitiful, so Richard early caught on to hire out and develop equipment. I asked him why his new company was called Theatre Projects, and he explained that he wanted to look after all aspects of theatre production, which I found a bit grandiose. Little did I

know that only six years later the company had smart offices in Long Acre, and a house in Neals Yard. It was rather wonderful to go to any stage-door in the West End, and the magic words 'Theatre Projects' opened them immediately.” On a short break on the Isle of Coll, Inner Hebrides, they found themselves drawing the highly secret Olivier plan in full scale on the beach. Collison heard his friend call out in shock 'My god, the auditorium is enormous!' But by then it was too late to intervene on the dimensions of the new National Theatre. “And as he had given his word to Laurence Olivier, we scraped it all out afterwards! On our last telephone call he sounded very frail, but still positive: “Whatever happens, we have achieved a lot.”

Lighting Designer Bob Bryan sent a note to remember how TP became a band of brothers, born out of friendship, in the 60s and 70s, and how they pioneered with Robert Ornbo the use of large scale scenic projection. “I owe my whole career to Richard and his foresight.”



Fred Pilbrow

David Hersey paid tribute, and how Richard had loaned him the money for a boat to live on, after the freshly arrived lighting designer, eager to learn about the West End had knocked on the door:

“The TP offices were truly the place to be as a lighting designer - Richard's generosity knew no bounds, we were excited by lighting design. He had a profound effect on my understanding of lighting, and I'm forever in his debt.

Julie Andrews sent a note, regretting that she was unable to attend in person. She recalled “deep, loyal, everlasting

friendship, since my husband, designer Tony Walton, brought home this lanky young man who looked in need of a haircut and a good meal.” A lifelong partner-

ship evolved, and Julie Andrews remembered “...how much I learned from him, from the early days, the collaborations with our friend Hal Prince, to my directing the 60th anniversary production of *My Fair Lady* at Sydney Opera House, which Richard agreed to light. It looked so magnificent. The two English muffins, as he and Tony Walton introduced themselves, revolutionised theatre design, and are so dreadfully missed.”

Interspersed with musical numbers from productions Richard had been involved in, many tributes followed, but the tenor was often similar, remembering often movingly ‘an incurably optimistic, generous, kind-hearted man, one of the most accomplished multitaskers ever known’. Whether producing the much loved movie *Swallows and Amazons*, or helping to realise the TV series *The story of popular Music*, Richard had ‘an almost uncanny ability to get to the heart of any problem, and a natural ability to draw the very best from everyone working for him, and inspire loyalty.’

Iain Mackintosh, joined by Jason Barnes, introduced himself to applause with “I am the designer of the Cottesloe Theatre”, and recalled how



Point your phone's camera at the QR code for the digital programme

Richard insisted to Denys Lasdun, that both Theatre Projects, and Iain as the architect, received official credit.

Durham Marengi announced that the new Profile Awards will include a Richard Pilbrow Lifetime Recognition Award, with support from the Pilbrow family.

One of his many legacies are the organisations Richard founded and co-founded, expressing his many passions.

Mark White spoke for the ABTT, "He was so delightfully confident in his own knowledge - he was exactly the right man, at the right place, at the right time."

Rick Fisher for the ALPD said: "This room is filled with people who feel privileged to have known him and be inspired by him. We will continue his legacy and his excitement of this project, which is the theatre." He recalled how Richard was fully on board when the association recently became the ALPD, as teamwork, programmers, electricians, suppliers all work hand in hand. "He will always be our member No 1."

Paule Constable sent a video message: "Richard never felt old, but he is the Godfather of lighting design. Without whom many of us would not be here"

Pat MacKay recalled: "... the magic dust of Pilbrow charm who could talk you into

the most amazing things - and sometimes you could even think it was your own idea all along!"

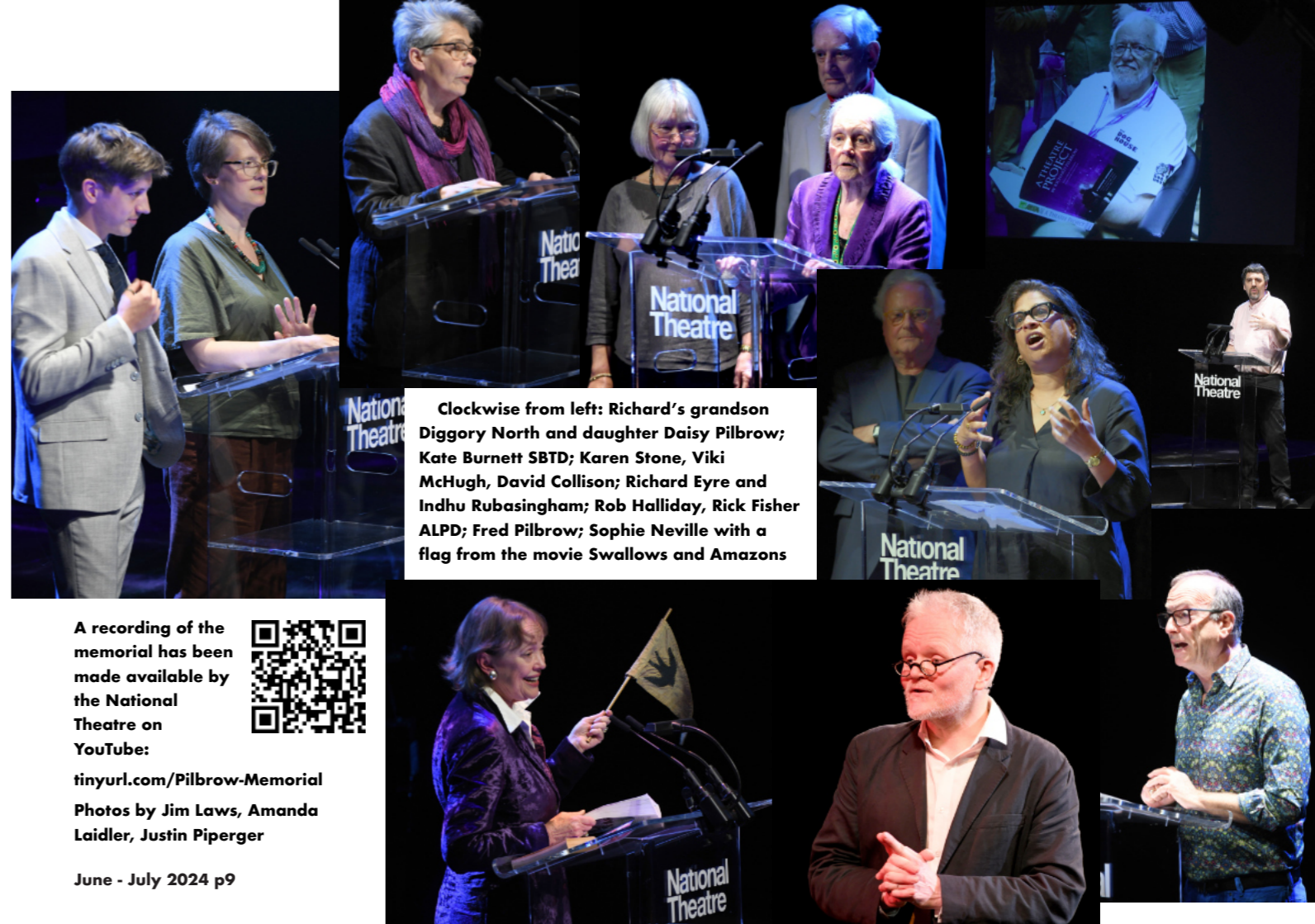
Rob Halliday, who had co-organised the memorial with Fred Pilbrow, introduced Richard Pilbrow's last book, also co-edited by the two, *A Sense of Theatre*: "Words were Richard's real superpower, and it's fitting that his book about the creation of the National Theatre, with all its tribulations, will form the last chapter of his enormous legacy." (See page 10).

About his involvement, Richard Eyre recalled "... a remarkable man, who played a very large part in the making of this building. In his last decade he embarked on an extraordinary journey of self-examination of his involvement in this process. He sought to answer the question, how the Olivier and Lyttelton came with so many defects, how so many experts in their field sanctioned spaces that in so many respects are so ill-suited for the art form they were designed to serve. He came to realise that he was mistaken to see the challenge in technical terms, rather than theatrical terms. He doggedly examined the relationship between the actor and the audience. This is his lasting legacy."

Indhu Rubasingham, the new artistic director designate, added: "I'm three

weeks in the job, and I've been taken around the spaces, literally from underneath the drum right to the top of the fly tower, I find this building extraordinarily powerful, beautiful and really special, and I'm really sad not to have the argument with Richard about the Olivier and the Lyttelton - I love these spaces! It's always about the people - I can feel Richard's energy, and philosophy, in how everyone I meet talks about this theatre. There's a quote by Richard: "Creating magical performance spaces needs humility, listening and true collaboration - and that is the power of theatre."

With a moving, and perhaps for some, surprising insight, Richard's daughter Daisy closed the afternoon: "It's ok to be afraid, take big breaths and do it anyway - Dad admitted to feeling imposter syndrome. He was a loving man, but he also suffered from self-doubt and fought anxiety all of his life. His escape was the Isle of Coll, where he could fully relax." According to his last wishes, she shared a video showing how last week, Richard's ashes were scattered off the point near the house, and a wee dram was had, while a large firework display spectacularly filled the sky. "This is how he wished to be remembered. And the lighting, of course, was excellent." #



Clockwise from left: Richard's grandson Diggory North and daughter Daisy Pilbrow; Kate Burnett SBT; Karen Stone, Viki McHugh, David Collison; Richard Eyre and Indhu Rubasingham; Rob Halliday, Rick Fisher ALPD; Fred Pilbrow; Sophie Neville with a flag from the movie Swallows and Amazons

A recording of the memorial has been made available by the National Theatre on YouTube:



**tinyurl.com/Pilbrow-Memorial
Photos by Jim Laws, Amanda Laidler, Justin Piperger**

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This is not a book review, per se. That would be futile. In the same ilk, *A Sense of Theatre* is not actually a book. It is more like the collection of documents, papers, eye-witness accounts, expert statements, victim and survivor affidavits, that lawyers are seen wheeling on strong trolleys into courtrooms.

It is a forensic examination into one of our best known public and national buildings, its long, protracted planning and problem-filled construction and why, as Sir Richard Eyre noted at Richard Pilbrow's memorial, "so many experts in their field sanctioned spaces that in so many respects are so ill-suited for the art form they were designed to serve."

King (then Prince) Charles, likened it to a nuclear power station, unaware about the real explosions of personalities clashing and egos in meltdown during its gestation period. If he wishes to, it is now possible, for the first time, to recall those abrasive meetings, acidic notes and increasingly frantic memorandums minute by minute, including a very important visitor asking at the 1976 opening "Is the theatre ready, Mr

Pilbrow?" to which the answer was "Not quite, your majesty".

In extraordinary detail, structured in seven parts, edited by Rob Halliday and Fred Pilbrow (in what must have been an equally extraordinary task), the building gets literally turned inside out for the reader to examine all its organs, nerves and vital parts. A special mention is

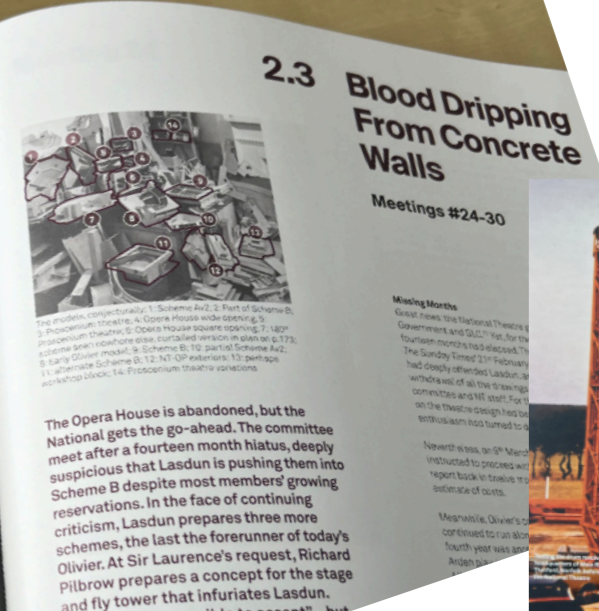
reserved for the mighty drum revolve, which took a further seven years of work to finally make a full contribution.

At some point,

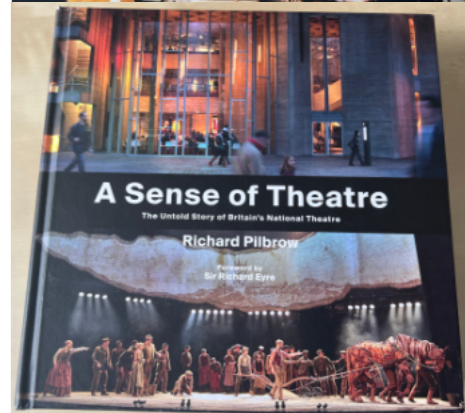
Pilbrow must have thought "Why stop just with the NT?" and so, for the benefit of a reader who wants to understand every aspect of the undertaking, there are a more or less complete history of theatre architecture in the UK, biographies of key personnel, a rundown of important NT productions of the past (nearly) fifty years and quotes, interviews and thoughts of all six artistic directors so far. Then there are further interviews with the users: Directors, designers, and actors like Judi Dench and Mark Rylance tell of their experiences - often just touched on in 'highlights',

suggesting that the book could, easily, be three times the volume of its over 500 pages. If you want to dive even deeper, there are comparative schematics about sightlines, and exploration of sound problems - plus the actors complaining about them. Anecdotes and facts chasing each other. Curiously, the one group of users everyone wishes to serve, doesn't get a say: The audience.

It might have escaped most friends and colleagues attending the May memorial at the NT, that the day fell exactly on Frank Matcham's death 104 years ago. Richard Pilbrow probably would have mentioned it: in 'a personal conclusion', closing the book, he observes that 'after sixty years of planning, making and producing theatre, it has become clear to me' that it's



Abandoned models in the office of DLP and the drum set up in the contractors car park.



exercised by the ideas of the sixties and seventies and exemplified at the NT, is due for a re-evaluation. "We will see." is Pilbrow's closing remark, and so this Renaissance man of skills, passions, interests and knowledge, leaves us not with an epitaph, but a blueprint of how to examine our future desires for a better theatre design.

www.asenseoftheatre.com
- editorial- #

The ALPD is delighted to announce that longstanding member, and co-chair of the awards working group, Steve Huttly, has himself been announced to receive this years Lightmongers Award.

Steve says: "I'm very grateful to be recognised in this way by my peers, so thank you. I feel privileged to have played a role in the education of theatre technicians and lighting designers through Guildhall, and the promotion of emerging lighting designers through the ALPD awards scheme. It's very rewarding to see them go on to succeed in their careers and to produce great work in such a worthwhile industry, and I have been very lucky to work with so many lovely and talented people."

Steve has dedicated his career to helping young people enter the world of production lighting. After an established career in theatre, Steve moved to a teaching post at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he has over the years mentored many now well-known lighting designers and production staff, several of whom have received the

Lightmonger Award in the past.

Since Steve's retirement, he has not stepped back from his commitment to the next generation: he has continued his work with the ALPD and is still involved in mentoring students at Guildhall as well as taking time to give talks at school and colleges through the Inspiring Futures Initiative.

Steve has been an active member of the Association for Lighting Production and Design over the years, promoting educational advancements in the industry, as well as looking after our ALPD Awards for Excellence, creating and making these awards more relevant for our younger designers and technicians in our ever-changing industry.

Steve started his career in lighting whilst studying History and Politics at the University of Kent, and has been working in producing theatres ever since. His first post as a Chief Electrician/Lighting Designer was at Basingstoke. He subsequently worked at the Nuffield Theatre Southampton and at Greenwich Theatre for seven years, and he has lit over

60 professional productions in his career. While at Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Steve has been responsible for the complete overhaul of the main theatre electrical installation and the purchase and introduction of a moving light rig. #



During an informal lunch in the City, a few members of the Lighting Industry formed a Society called the Lightmongers, to foster fellowship within the industry. At the inaugural meeting in 1953, Max Millar was appointed President and the appeal of the Society was immediate. Membership is capped at 110 - the City voltage at that time. This oil lamp donated to the Society in 1957 inspired the symbol incorporated into the Company's coat of arms. Today "the modern livery company" supports many good causes and awards.

Lightmongers.co.uk #



Profile Awards

Nominations announced

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.

The Nominations have now been announced.

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.

www.profileawards.com #

PROFILE AWARDS 2024 TELEVISION NOMINATIONS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Entertainment Series Award
sponsored by Version2 Lights

Dave Davey and Team for 'The Masked Singer'
David Bishop and Team for 'Strictly Come Dancing'
James Tinsley and Team for 'The Traitors'

Entertainment One-Off Award
sponsored by Lights Control Rigging

Ben Cracknell and Team for 'The Olivier Awards'
Tim Routledge and Team for 'Film BAFTAs'
Tom Sutherland and Team for 'The Brit Awards'

Drama Award
sponsored by Chamsys

Gavin Finney and Team for 'Good Omens Season 2'
Matthew Lewis and Team for 'QI'
Toby Moore and Team for 'Call the Midwife'

Small Studio Award
sponsored by ELP Broadcast Lighting

Darrel Thornton and team for 'Champions League Today'
Gemma O'Sullivan and Team for 'QI'
Neil Kent, Ben Richards and Team for 'The Repair Shop'

Newcomer Award
sponsored by Light Initiative

To be announced on the night

Special Merit Award
sponsored by Roxlight

To be announced on the night

The winners will be chosen by the Television Judging panel

PROFILE AWARDS 2024

THEATRE SHORTLIST

- Robbie Butler** for 'Death in Venice', WNO and tour.
- Erinna Chapman** for 'The Third Man', Menier Chocolate Factory.
- Jon Clark** for 'Dear England' and 'The Motive and The Cue' National Theatre and West End, 'The Effect', National Theatre, 'Stranger Things - The First Shadow', West End.
- Paule Constable** for 'Guys and Dolls', The Bridge.
- Lee Curran** for 'Romeo and Juliet', The Almeida and 'King Lear', The Almeida.
- Jon Driscoll** for 'Symphony of Sorrowful Songs', English National Opera.
- Oliver Fenwick** for 'Dear Octopus', Lyttelton, National.
- Guy Hoare** for 'Frankenstein', Frome Memorial Theatre and tour.
- Ali Hunter** for 'Red Pitch' @ashoplace.
- Aideen Malone** for 'Dracula: Ming's Reckoning', National Theatre of Scotland and UK tour.
- Túpac Maitiri** for 'Find Your Eyes', Manchester Academy, Manchester International Festival.
- Jai Morjaria** for 'Macbeth', UK tour and 'The Real and Imagined History of The Elephant Man', Nottingham Playhouse.
- Christopher Nairne** for 'Blackout Songs', Hampstead Theatre.
- Lizzie Powell** for 'The Grand Old Opera House Hotel', Traverse and 'The Snow Queen', Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh.
- Adam Silverman** for 'Wozzeck' at The Royal Opera, 'Machinal', Ustinov Studio, Bath and The Old Vic.
- Skylar Turnbull Hurd** for 'These Demons', Theatre 503.
- Tom Visser** for 'La Ruta', 'Assembly Hall', 'Carmen', all at Sadlers Wells; 'From England With Love', Queen Elizabeth Hall.
- Simon Wilkinson** for 'Ragnarok', Tortoise in a Nutshell, Traverse, Edinburgh and tour.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



AWARDS & EVENTS

Exciting News! Showlight, the much-loved quadrennial networking event for lighting professionals, will return in May 2025. The host city for the 12th Showlight will be the delightful city of Dijon in France.

Ranked as a must-visit destination, Dijon is one of France's most beautiful cities and promises to be the perfect setting for this popular industry networking event.

Showlight cannot wait to present a brand-new programme of Papers: be prepared to share the wealth of knowledge from lighting practitioners across theatre, television, concert touring, themed

attractions, events and architecture on a diverse range of topics, in a relaxed and convivial environment. There's plenty of time to network and socialise in between Papers, enjoy face-to-face discussions with

lighting designers and manufacturers alike, and browse the supporting exhibition that runs alongside the Papers presentations. Students are

actively encouraged to attend for an unprecedented opportunity to learn from those already working in the industry.

Details of the programme, Speakers and Papers will be revealed over the coming months but you can hear all the breaking news by signing up to the Mailing List on the Showlight website: www.showlight.org

Interested in becoming a Showlight Speaker?

Our search for Showlight 2025 Speakers to present Papers in Dijon is about to begin! Got an idea or a recent project you want

Showlight 2025

Showlight is back! Save the date! 19-22 May 2025, Dijon, France



Besides the famous mustard, Dijon is known for the Palais des Ducs, once the seat of the awesome power of the court of Burgundy, and now a leading art museum.

to share? Contact the Papers Committee at papers@showlight.org with an outline of your idea. We want to hear from you!

Become a Showlight Sponsor or Exhibitor

Showlight could not take place without its generous sponsors and we thank Robert Juliat for remaining as our Headline Sponsor for 2025. Plenty more opportunities exist to become a sponsor, including sponsoring a student or a speaker.

Contact Matt Hallard on sponsorship@showlight.org for more details. #

ABTT Theatre Show 2024 coming up

Alexandra Palace, London, 5th and 6th of 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.



Be part of the conversation...

abtt.org.uk

Don't miss out on this exciting opportunity to immerse yourself in the full breadth of our industry!

Final spaces remaining for skills workshops! Check: www.abtt.org.uk #



CONTACTS



We will be looking for Exhibitors in the near future. If you'd like to support Showlight 2025 by taking a space, contact us on exhibit@showlight.org

**Website: www.showlight.org
Facebook: [@showlightevent](https://www.facebook.com/showlightevent)
Twitter/X: [showlight_event](https://twitter.com/showlight_event)
LinkedIn: [@showlightevent](https://www.linkedin.com/company/showlightevent)**



PLASA Focus Leeds attracted many visitors again, with the ALPD guesting on White Light's stand. It is perhaps the mostly low-key, friendly and (dare I say it) useful trade shows in the UK right now. With no big centre piece stands, and limited space to show products, and a good range of seminars alongside the show, it seems somehow less combative than the main PLASA Show in London.

For those of us based in the South East, its almost as easy to get to. (Though I did learn that the train journey from Cardiff to Leeds can be a nightmare.)

I was there in part to dep for Lucy Carter, alongside Elanor Higgins, talking about when technology meets art in lighting design practice (photo bottom right). El had some experiences to share regarding making trails for lighting the side of a mountain, and using pre-vis to help her design for a two storey, all white set on a revolve for WNO's *Madam Butterfly* (check it out on their website).

I talked about technologies that can link and record the state of your lighting desk

as you video the stage, really useful for doing notes "off line. No more guessing where the actor was standing in the last run, or what cue we were in, or how far through the cue we were at the point when the star walked into an apparent black hole!

I also talked about using AI to generate images for inspiration and to share visual ideas.

PLASA Focus Leeds

Nick Moran writes from the annual trade exhibition serving the north of England

I think this is something that will become increasingly useful, and in a way it can help level the playing field in creative discussions. If the LD is using a visualisation software to share ideas, its likely nobody else in the room can use that software. But if you are all sat round a computer running an AI image generator such as Dall-E or Adobe Firefly, or dozens of others, everyone who can speak or type can contribute. *Women in Lighting* brought Katy Morison to Leeds



to talk about the life of a freelance LD with a child. She has done some great research and this presentation was an eye-opener into just how easy it can be to accommodate a working parent, but also how some people and organisations just are not trying. (See page 28 for Katy's exclusive version of her talk, written for Focus). The formal part of the afternoon was rounded off by HSE Inspector Karl Raw (photo top left), introducing the HSE

initiative Working Minds. It is the responsibility of every employer or contractor to safeguard the health as well safety of everyone they are responsible for, and that includes their mental health. We are all going to hear a lot more about Stress Risk Assessments, which are already

something we should all be considering. There is a lot of useful free support available from HSE, including guidance and templates.

Then it was off to The Wardrobe to join ALPD colleagues for a social, organised and sponsored by Encore – and a very jolly time was had. #



The United States Institute of Theatre Technology, known as USITT (almost always named by its initials rather than e.g. “you-sit”) was founded in 1960 to: “...to promote dialogue, research, and learning among practitioners of theatre design and technology.”

There must have been something in the air around that time since both the ABTT and our own association were both founded the following year. At the heart of all three organisations (and many others in our sector) is the desire to provide a home for people working backstage.

Today the mission statement of USITT is to connect “performing arts design and technology communities to ensure a vibrant dialog among practitioners, educators, and students.” This reflects the much greater role and longer history of formal education in all things back stage that exists in North America generally and in the US in particular. Even taking into account its much larger size compared to the UK, The US has many more university courses in all areas of theatre design and technology, publishes many more text books in every area of technical theatre

and performance design, and a much higher level of graduate and post graduate qualification in the workforce.

USITT is able to leverage its links to universities and industry to stimulate and disseminate an impressive number of innovations. It was at a USITT conference that Steve Terry persuaded the US lighting industry to adopt DMX512 as a universal lighting control standard for example, inter-operability of equipment from different manufacturers

winning out over corporate isolationism. It’s this approach that lead on to common standards in ethernet networks for lighting sound and automation, and developments like OSC (Open Sound Control).

In recent years, USITT has provided leadership and support in areas of inclusion and representation across the sector. Its core values include: “Acknowledging the inequitable structures established by the dominant culture, and the industry’s conscious or unconscious participation in these unjust systems, USITT commits to the ongoing struggle to create equitable spaces, to embrace

diverse experiences, and to uplift and encourage multiple perspectives.”

USITT has developed its initiatives to broaden recruitment in the sector, support people from under-represented groups, combat and, where necessary, call out discrimination, and champion inclusive practices. Although the history and culture of the US is different from our own, there are undoubtedly things we can learn from these initiatives.

From the start of the USITT, designers and technicians, makers and managers, have all had a voice in the organisation. This is something I think the ALPD has learned too. Progress towards our goals is more effective

USITT 2024

News from the conference in Seattle by Nick Moran (text and photos)



when we find places to stand together with everyone involved in making performance.

The Annual Conference, what to expect

The big event for USITT is the annual conference – which incorporates the “show floor”, a trade show that this year in Seattle stretched over two large exhibition spaces. Unlike the PLASA show however, the conference comes first. When I first attended in 2008, the trade show was little more than a hotel ballroom filled with shell schemes. It’s a lot bigger now, but the main event is still the conference. Four days packed with lectures and master-classes, panel discussions and debates, formal and informal meetings, award presentations, and plenty of opportunities to socialise with old friends and new.

USITT is organised regionally, and by specialist

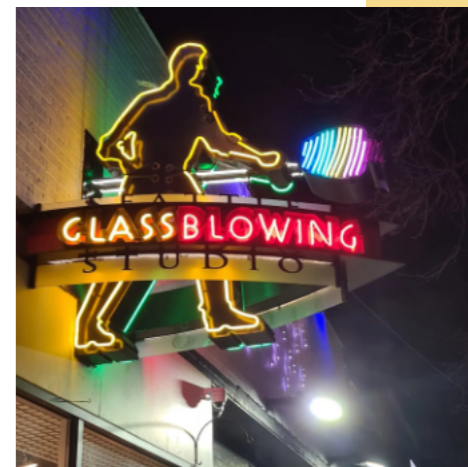
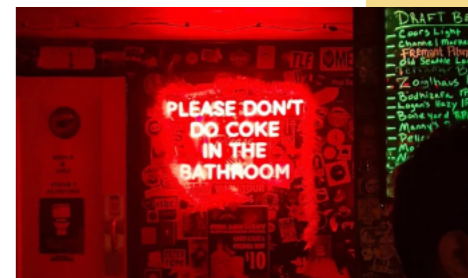
commission. In the past, I have been a guest of the Lighting Design and Technology commission and the Digital Media commission.

In Seattle I attended useful and interesting sessions programmed by both commissions, and finally got to see Mig Burgess give her brilliant Star-Fish Thrower presentation on supporting peers when they have poor mental health, thanks to the Health and Safety commission.

I took part in a session titled “projections on a shoe-string” (though I have to say that some folks idea of a “shoe-string” is other folks idea of a well-funded production!)

I heard LDs Dawn Chiang, Darren McCroom, Rober Aguilar and Jorge Arroyo talk eloquently about their work, with Tori Mays of the Lighting Commission chairing (pictured).

I had the chance to join them in an informal discussion and Q&A, organised by Michael Ramsaur, Emeritus Professor of Lighting Design at Stamford University, at



his latest initiative – the Nexus International Hub.

There is a lot for students, and their tutors and professors too. For the students, there are opportunities to show portfolios, and talk with CV and Portfolio doctors, and there's recruitment opportunities – formal and informal. Most of the cruise operators were active on this front. All the commissions run student-focussed socials too. These provide a chance to meet people studying across the country in a safe place. For educators, there are coaching sessions for those in their early career, generous sharing of ideas and material in the poster sessions and, and for me at least, thought-provoking group discussions on the ethics and morality of having such a strong influence on forming young peoples' view of the world. Around a third of the conference sessions are aimed at students and educators, mostly people involved in studying or teaching at Bachelors and Masters level.

As well as the "Classes" there are "Labs" too, anything from a hour to all day, offering the chance to play with colour, or pixels, learn skills on lighting desks or wig-making, practice flying people, or being flown, or perfect your marbling skills with top scenic painters!

On the Expo Floor there were equipment demos and shoot-outs, give-aways and bargains, as well as the usual trade show opportunities to ask tricky questions, pass on comments and just make new friends.

Social Highlights

It was my first trip to Seattle. It has a monorail! So trying not to think too much of the Simpsons monorail episode (season 4 episode 12 if you are interested – I looked it up!), I took the ride. The monorail has only two stops – downtown and the futuristic cluster of building that includes the Space Needle (think title sequence of Frasier) and Frank Gehry's rock guitar inspired Museum of Pop Culture building.

The monorail and Space Needle date from the city's hosting of the 1962 Worlds Fair, and it's interesting to see how we humans saw the future back then. Where is my hover scooter by the way?

MoPOP was the excellent venue for USITT 2024's Friday Night Party – and what a venue! It houses an outstandingly well presented collection of Sci-Fi artefacts, including a Dalek and a Cyberman, reminding us Brits that Dr Who is now a global franchise. It also has some guitars with extraordinary histories, and a whole

section dedicated to local band – Nirvana, and a lot more. Definitely worth a visit.

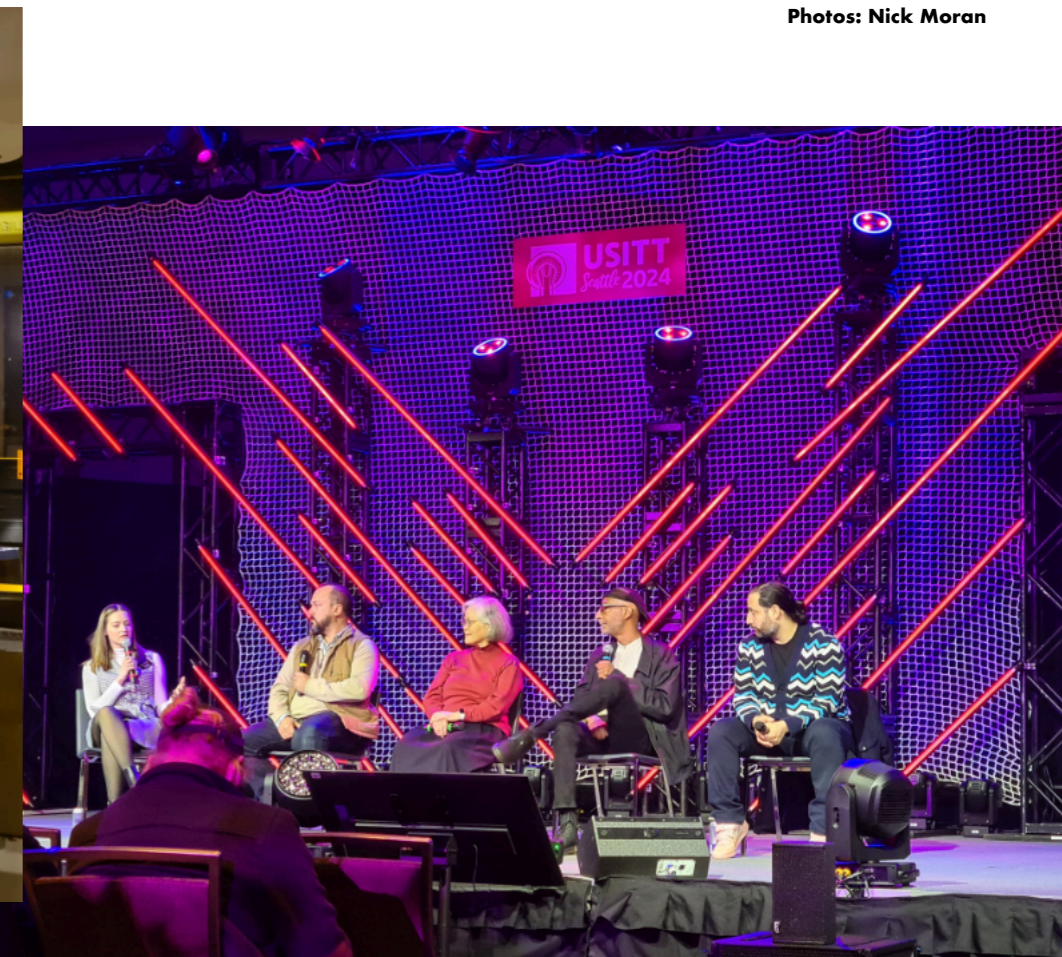
Down town is the Public Market, with plenty of fish and fresh vegetable stalls. There are also food outlets selling the products to eat while overlooking the port, and views out across the bay.

The night life is as colourful as you might expect from the city's reputation, though it has to be said that – at least for a visitor – there are a lot of people living on the streets, apparently many as a result of the opioid epidemic.

USITT does lots more than just run an annual conference with a trade show. It helps to unify a geographically disparate community of theatre and performance makers, students, and educators. It is perhaps a testament to its success in doing this that the US does not have the equivalent of the ALPD, ASDP, ABTT or PLASA, and that the education sector appears much more closely aligned to industry and practice than that in the UK.

Next year the conference is in Columbus, running from March 6th to 8th. Much of the Expo floor looks to be already sold, but there is still time to propose a session if you feel so inclined. You can find out more about the Conference and the organisation at www.usitt.org #

Photos: Nick Moran



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CORPORATE MEMBERS

This edition, the first part of a career special, has Mark Jonathan reflecting on mentoring, Jacob Gowler giving insight into his work as a programmer, and we have two views on how to navigate motherhood with a career as lighting designer, by Katy Morison and Zoe Spurr.

Next edition (out August 1st), we'll continue the theme with voices from agents, a look at current university courses, jobs at hire and production companies and more advice from your colleagues - some serious, some lighthearted. We'd love to hear from you if you can contribute - contacts page 41.

When Peter Mumford became Chair of the Association, he outlined a bold plan to develop opportunities for emerging professional LDs, as associates and assistants. Great idea - I doubted there would be enough funding. Oh me of little faith!

While funding for assistants and associates was commonplace in the USA, it's hard to add a new line in the ever-stringent financial times faced by UK arts. Peter was not going to be put off. The design scheme was up and running in 2015 with Charlotte Burton as the first Lumière based at Chichester (Focus April/ May 2024) - so successful that a production scheme has been added.

Without the members to the schemes committing finances, time and expertise, none of this would have happened. Notably demonstrated in 2020, when LDs stepped up to develop emerging LDs in one-to-one sessions through lockdown, as well as the brilliant interviews that Rory Beaton ran for Team Lumière.

Many LDs of my generation will talk about what we learnt from the eminent

LDs who we worked for. My dream came true when I went to work for Robert Bryan at Glyndebourne in 1978 joining Paul Pyant, Keith Benson, Gerry Amies and Hugh Chinnick; (Howard Eaton and Andy Bridge had already moved on). I think I have seen it come full circle, courtesy of

Vic Pyne, Glyndebourne's Head of Lighting and Video, as the Lumière scheme continues in its 3rd year and the production Lumière its first year there, allowing the participants to

experience what goes on to make world class opera in repertoire with five very different LDs and that's just the first half of the scheme. Having sat on the Design

Lumière panel with Peter Mumford, Johanna Town, Charlotte Burton, David Howe and Vic in 2023, with former Lumière Jason Addison joining this year,

In Praise of Mentoring

By Mark Jonathan, ALPD Deputy Chair



we realised that one Lumière place wasn't sufficient. Last year we added opportunities, with Lucy Adams assisting me for some ballet experience and then going on to join Ken Billington on the West End transfer of *Crazy for You*. Jon Stacey was able to assist Peter Mumford on *Pearl Fishers* at Opera North. A number of others were able to spend two or three days shadowing: Marcin Miloszewski spent some time with Ben Cracknell on the *Wizard of Oz*, 42nd Street at Sadlers Wells, Luke Marino with Howard Hudson on *La Cage aux Folles* at Regents Park Open Air Theatre and Sam Levy with Ben Cracknell on *42nd Street* Sadlers' Wells.

I'm delighted also to find that the National Youth Ballet has a scheme, where this year the Assistant LD is Ros Chase, who is mentored by LD Andrew Ellis while she also develops her own LD practice. Recently, I met Teresa Nagel who is the recipient of a one year placement with Cameron Mackintosh as 2nd Associate Lighting designer working with her LD mentors Paule Constable and Warren Letton. That sounds like an amazing opportunity which includes putting *Oliver!* on at Chichester with Paule and the transfer to the West End.

I know there will be many more examples of LD and LX mentorships going on around the country and it's a very good thing, but we need to get more companies to follow these examples and provide much needed funding and opportunities. I'm in no doubt that ALPD members will be up for it as has already been demonstrated by the number of LDs, Programmers and Production-LX who have already taken part. I was pleased to see that one of my "lockdown" Lumières, Callum Macdonald, went on to get funding from the Arts Council which allowed him to get various placements. I benefitted by having him as my associate on the ballet *Anne of Green Gables* at London Children's Ballet and on *Don Giovanni* at Scottish Opera. I was especially pleased, that Scottish Opera stepped in, when the Arts Council did not repeat his funding in 2023, with full billing, PDs, travel expenses and fee.

In my experience mentoring the next generation often has a payback: in growing acceptance that LDs have assistant and / or associate. What starts as mentoring, we all benefit from a more supportive work-force and a better career progression for both emerging LDs and production LX. #

RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- uk.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/creative-careers
- **Mandy:** www.mandy.com/uk/jobs/stage/ The jobs platform for creative professionals
- jobs.thestage.co.uk The biggest selection of jobs in theatre and the entertainment industry.
- **Bectu offers its excellent career toolkit for free:** www.creativetoolkit.org.uk
- **Prospect:** <https://careersmart.org.uk> - links by the union
- www.equity.org.uk
- **Freelancersmaketheatrework.com - links and workshops**
- <https://www.thealpd.org.uk/training/so-you-are-thinking-of-a-career-in-stage-lighting>
- **WeAreCreative:** www.wearecreative.uk/manifesto-launch



We caught up with lighting board programmer Jacob P Gowler, while he was preparing for tech at Holland Park Opera, Tosca for LD Tim van 't Hof.

Focus: Could you tell a little bit where you're from and how you got into the industry?

Jacob: I'm from the countryside up in Norfolk, and my first job was in a cinema. There was a theatre down the road, advertising for a technician job. This came next, then I went on to RADA, the stage management and technical theatre course, and specialised in my second year in lighting.

Focus: And after Graduation?

Jacob: My first job was where I'm sat now actually, I came to Holland Park Opera as a programmer in 2019 and I've been coming back every year since. Through meeting lighting designers here, I've worked with them in other places, mostly in opera and ballet. I've done other things as well but a lot of lighting designers who I've met here have carried me.

My specialism at college though was lighting design and I did say to my tutor, after programming my first show, - I will not do this ever again! Now, being on the production desk next to a lighting designer, you feel you are helping them in the process of creation, and that you are taking part in a well respected art form. I

never felt that I was not part of the process as a programmer, so I quite prefer it over big commercial productions like musicals.

Focus: Can you describe at what point do you join the process?

Jacob: I think it changes from job to job really. It can happen to get booked incredibly last minute, but generally I've been booked quite far in advance, as Opera and Ballet companies have to schedule sometimes years ahead, due to artists availability. Especially the company I've been involved with now,

we've developed a relationship over years, and this benefits all sides.

Other productions though, I've been brought on with two weeks notice. It really does change, depending on a manner of different things, but most of the time I get brought on via the lighting designer, or I work at an Opera festival, get noticed, and they suggest me to a different LD the following year.

Focus: Would you say much depends on being able to build a personal working relationship?

Jacob: Having a good technical knowledge of board and process comes first, having a good eye second, but yes - you spend 13 hours a day with people, it's necessary to get along! With a new designer, you have to trust each other. Very quickly! It also helps, if you can offer technical experience with a venue. On my next job, I know the nuances of the rig: It's a very wide stage, a very low trim height. I can bring in five years of information, I know what that position can do, I know what the lights can do for me and how I can help the new LD. On the other hand, if you do five or six



Career focus: programmer

Focus in conversation with programmer Jacob P Gowler

different shows in different theatres with the same LD, you've got that relationship already, you know how they like to work.

Focus: Are there other occasions when you are being brought in earlier? Pre-visualization for example?

Jacob: Not quite at the scale I work in. It has happened once or twice, but seems to be more the resort of the ROH or really large scale shows.

Focus: How do you prep, do you meet the lighting designer in advance?

Jacob: It's good to have a conversation beforehand, whether we already know each other or not. So there's a little bit of language when we get into the theatre. I need to be there for the focus, to start learning what the rig is. Quite often, if they've not got an associate or an assistant, I get asked for my opinion, or we talk about ideas for the show or what the rig is capable of. Especially important at Holland Park, as it's a fixed rig.

I'll try to find out as much information as I can about the show. If it's a musical or an opera I'll probably listen to it - but this can get in the way as well! My big problem is, that I'm a pretty terrible operator (laughs): my sense of rhythm takes over, and I have to switch off, so I'm not pressing go in time

with the music, and really will myself to listen to the DSM instead!

Focus: Do you feel sometimes you should give artistic input?

Jacob: I'm not an associate, and I think roles need to be clearly defined. I only ever offer my opinion when asked. The first session with a new designer is really important, to find your feet with them, what they're expecting from you and what information you need to gather from them.

My main job is to support the lighting designer and the other members of the lighting team, or helping a follow spot. It's important to be attentive, and allow the designer to keep their eyes free for the artistic elements, and avoid them being distracted by technical niggles.

At Holland Park, it extends the role of the lighting programmer: I help making sure that the bars have got lights to lift, that the producers are happy with the colours in the bars, because there isn't a site lighting designer, it's part of my job here. I try to meet the producers as well on the project, because at the end of the day, everyone's footing my bill.

I only ever offer my opinion when asked. The first session is a really important session when working with a new lighting designer - to find your feet with them and

find out what they're expecting from you and what information you need to gather from them.

But I see a point where the relationship is fluid: It can be a combined effort between LD and programmer to find the language. It depends on the LD. There are some that very clearly direct and there are some where I'd ask "Do you want me to cut that into that piece of scenery, do you want me to shape it around that piece of scenery?" Some are just happy for you to ask that question, but it's not my place to unnecessarily offer up my opinion

Focus: How do you deal with the long hours?

Jacob: Quite luckily I will often get a longer break, as is the nature of Opera scheduling. Luckily, we are in the middle of beautiful Holland Park and I like to go on a walk! Eating healthily is very important. No big sweetie jar at the programming table. I try to stay active on my day off, and socialise with my friends. And colleagues - a lot of jobs come about through being social! After Tosca I'm covering a program, a cathedral bar in the West End, than up to Buxton for a month, and back here. I'm lucky to be very busy: About twenty shows per year. #

When I was approached by Women In Lighting to talk at PLASA Focus Leeds, I was right in the middle of a tech week for a show at the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff. I was full time in the Lighting Department there for 7 years, before I left in 2012 to pursue my freelance design and Re-Lighter work, but as my closest producing theatre, I'm often back there lighting shows.

On my lunch break I was pouring over my multi-colour-coded shared calendar to see how I was going to be able to stay for the second preview when my husband had also booked some work in on the same evening; Who would be at home with our 6 year old? It seemed like an obvious starting point for a talk - my daily life of juggling this precarious freelance career with the needs of a small child, and the journey I have been on so far.

It's a niche intersection I know - freelance Lighting Designers and Mothers. But I so rarely get to meet others in my position and even more rarely hear it written or talked about.

I wanted to share some of my own ex-

perience of mothering as a lighting designer, and to understand the experiences of other mothers and parents in this sector. There is very little data looking at the specific role of Lighting Designer in relation to parenting, so I set up a small survey of my own to try and get some statistics.

BEGINNINGS

One question I am often asked is - how did you decide when it was the right time to start a family? My answer: there is no perfect time. There is always the chance that the moment you look up from seeing the two lines on the pregnancy test - your

phone will ring with the job of a lifetime. Or not at all - we just don't know!! For me, at the time, it felt really scary turning down a

year of work offers, it felt like I would miss so many opportunities...but I didn't. I continued to get offers and the good people just waited and came back the next year.

As a self-employed worker, I was entitled to only the government's statutory Maternity Allowance which in 2017 was £140.98 per week for 39 weeks. Currently, the maximum weekly allowance is £184. This does depend on your National Insurance contri-

butions among other things, so it's not totally guaranteed to be that full amount.

An important point to note here is that there is no such thing as statutory paternity allowance. Any self-employed parent who is not actually birthing the baby, has no financial support whatsoever to take time off work to spend time with their newborn and support the mother at this crucial time.

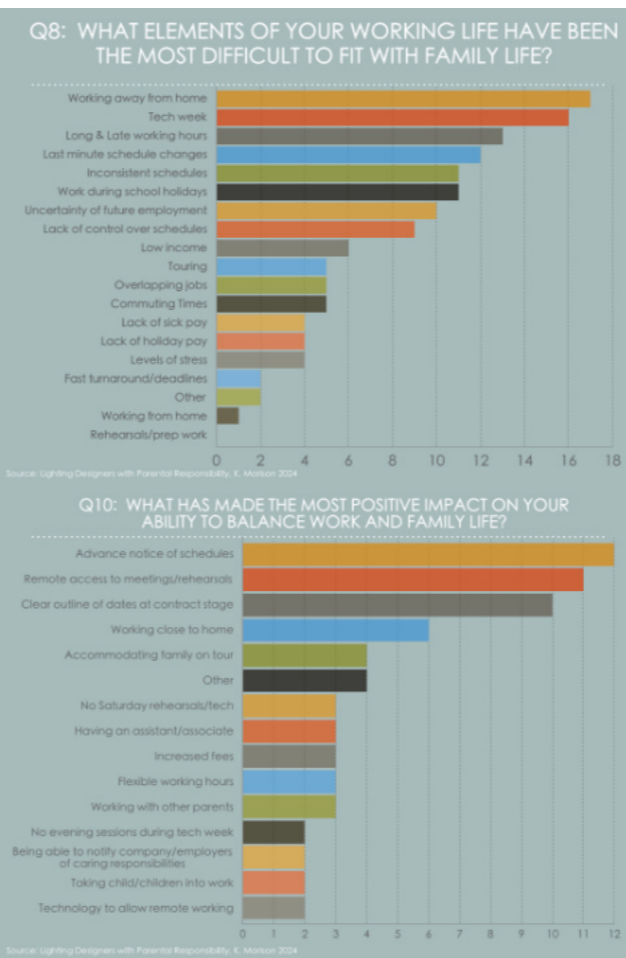
I was very lucky; a re-lighting job came up just at the right time, and even luckier was that the LD was Tom White, himself a father of young children. He made sure I was able to do the bulk of the tour! It was certainly an adjustment to touring at 7 months pregnant, but I was looked after so well by the company and the in-house technical teams on the tour. It sadly didn't exclude me from last minute LED tape soldering whilst crouched in a very ungainly way on the floor of the set, but such is the touring life!

MY SURVEY

Looking at the first question of my survey, there was a split of 64% Fathers and 36% Mothers. I have struggled to find data specifically on Lighting designers in the UK entertainment industry in order to see if this split in gender is representative of the role as a whole. Of my own observation of the directory listings on the ALPD website,

Losing the Plot?

Navigating Motherhood as a Freelance Lighting Designer By Katy Morison



84% of ALPD members are male with just 15% female and 1% Non-Binary. Disclaimer: this is not an official survey and has not given people the chance to specify their own gender and therefore is not totally accurate. However, I do think it gives us a good indication that Lighting Design continues to be a very male-dominated profession.

A survey by Creative Scotland in 2020, which showed only 28% of Lighting design roles were taken by females, which is actually an improvement of a slightly shocking statistic of 6% in 2014.

One of my questions was about concerns people had when considering their return to work after taking leave. Far and away the biggest overall concern was about childcare and our working hours. 72% of respondents said it was difficult to find childcare that fitted with their working patterns, and 72% also said the cost of childcare worried them.

This has certainly been the case for me - as a lighting designer, when it comes to technical rehearsals, we can't ask for flexible

working or working from home, and that's a lot of night-time child care across the year.

Other concerns that were shared by respondents included: finding enough work, losing industry connections with previous employers or collaborators and needing to diversify their work to fit around their childcare. On a positive note, at least 33% said they were looking forward to getting back to work.

RETURNING TO WORK

After Daisy was born, for a good 6 months, I didn't really think about my job at all. I was fully immersed in baby world - utterly exhausting, utterly amazing. I used to think I was tired after a tech week of 3 session days? Easy. Try having a child who doesn't sleep unless you are holding them, rocking them, walking them in the pram or driving them in the car. It's 4 session days, overnights, and you don't even get Sundays off.

However, we had bills to pay and with my husband's job also being freelance in the music industry, and my maternity allowance coming to an end, I had to start earning. I was offered a job with NTW on their NHS70 season, lighting 3 new plays across Wales. I wasn't sure how I was going to make it work with a baby in tow, but they were really helpful and booked ac-

commodation that would allow me to bring Daisy and my husband along for the duration of the tech weeks.

It was quite an adjustment to work again after nearly a year of focussing on Daisy - it took some time to switch my brain away from constantly worrying about her, but I soon really loved to concentrate fully on the creation of a show again.

My lunch breaks were now carefully planned so that I could sit somewhere to eat whilst I gave Daisy her lunch (yes I was still breastfeeding!) However, Daisy always woke up in the night and didn't really settle for anyone but me. I rarely got the proper rest I needed. The fatigue of working long tech hours, then going home and feeding through the night was one of the biggest challenges. I've had jobs where my ability to problem-solve and be creative on tap was hampered and I've been more likely to feel overwhelmed and emotional.

If you can make the childcare work in those early years, it does open up the possibility of working again, but we have to acknowledge here that it relies on you being either paid enough of a fee to afford quite intensive childcare, or a family member who is willing and able to come with you. It really won't work for everyone.

In the survey, I asked what types of child-

care people had relied upon. Almost every option had at least one response - and most people selected several, which shows us what a patchwork of childcare we all have to put around us.

A couple of responses stood out: "My wife stopped work to care for our child" - "My partner took time out from work initially until child was school age" - It made me reflect that surely, for a long time, male lighting designers have relied on their partners to take the lions' share of childcare to allow them to continue their careers. In PiPA's Balancing Act survey: 79% of female parents classed themselves as the primary caregivers, with only 16% of male respondents saying the same. Despite ongoing changes to modern parenting, women's potential to earn and work are still being shaped by traditional gender roles.

A very definitive piece of my survey comes at question 7 when I asked "How difficult have you found it to get suitable childcare to fit with your work?" I found it interesting to look at the gender divide between the answers. A quarter of fathers said it was neither easy nor difficult, which means the need to find childcare had little impact on their ability to continue their work. 56% said it was somewhat difficult with only 1 father saying it was very diffi-

cult. Compare that to the mothers who responded - all of them stated some level of difficulty in finding suitable childcare and none said it was neither easy nor difficult.

MAKING THEATRE AS A PARENT

One of the most interesting questions from the survey was "Which elements of your working life have been the most difficult to fit with family life?"

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Tech Week, Working away from home and the long and late working hours, were the top three answers. 'Lack of control over schedules' and 'Last minute schedule changes' are also something that worries parents, and its clear why, when we so often have to begin a contract without clear outlines of dates, and schedules that change overnight.

The element of the job freelancers identified most positively: being able to choose your own flexible hours to work in

design and rehearsal time. There may be a few design meetings to attend, there may be quite a lot of design work to start - but on the whole we are able to plan and fit this within our family life. It's the smooth that balances the rough - the upcoming Tech Week!

Tech is possibly one of the hardest areas to truly see a way of changing or massively



improving our experience as parents. The bottom line is, the current UK model is based on long days but as few of them as

possible. Sometimes days with the cast are limited to 2 sessions - the problem comes when the technical team are still expected to make up time in the evening sessions. Again, this is an industry-wide problem and not just for parents - but it does add to the pressure of finding night time childcare for the full period.

The options that would cover the evenings include a nanny or au-pair. Some of the respondents had opted for this. In my experience it was too expensive to consider, and the inconsistency of needing that service is a factor.

On almost every job I do that relies on a patchwork of childcare, I live with a general unease that at any moment the carefully planned but often quite precarious arrangements, can come crashing down.

The worst incident for me was when Daisy had a febrile seizure at her nursery, and I was all the way up in Sheffield in the middle of tech. Luckily her dad was at home and was able to be with her, but for me it was such a horrible shock and feeling of powerlessness. By good fortune, it was one show where I had an Associate, so I was actually able to leave tech to rush home for a day, in time to see Daisy come out of hospital and bounce back.

I might not get an associate on every

show, but really try to push for a programmer (not a given on the theatre scale I often do). It really helps with fatigue and state of mind during tech, if you are also parenting. The mental load that a programmer can take from me is so beneficial to my ability to be creative.

WHAT HELPS?

In my survey I asked "What has made the most positive impact on your ability to balance work and family life?" Two of the most popular responses were 'Advance notice of schedules', 'Clear outline of dates and requirement of attendance at contract stage' This should send a clear message to producers, directors, production managers and companies that this really makes such a difference to parent freelancers, and can surely only be a good thing for all members of the team. 'Remote access to meetings/rehearsals' came out as a popular choice, and I think the experience of COVID has actually created a positive change in this respect.

I highly recommend reading both the Backstage Workforce Report and the Balancing Act Survey from PiPA as they give such great insight into these issues and are the closest thing I could find to data regarding our specific corner of the industry.

PiPA have established a Charter Pro-

gramme which aims to provide arts organisations with tools, resources to help them implement family-friendly policies. A number of organisations I have worked for have signed up to this charter which is very encouraging. However, only the member organisations can access the resources so I am not able to see exactly what is suggested, so it's hard for us as parents to know what it means to us.

I would love to see more extensive research into the working lives of Freelance Lighting Design parents and for the companies who employ us to have more guidance on what can be done to include and encourage parents in these roles. It is often said that being a mother is the best job you can have and I think that's true most of the time. But as mothers, we should also be able to have a career in the job that we love, that we have trained and worked for, that we have often dreamed of doing in some respect since we were children ourselves.

Since I did my talk, PiPA have just released the second Balancing Act survey which sadly suggests that Parents are struggling more now than in 2019. One of the headlines is "Women and freelancers face the brunt of unpredictable, precarious and unsustainable working conditions" There is still clearly so much to be done. #

Photos: Katy Morison and Daisy



Zoe Spurr: Returning to work with a baby in tow has been quite the gear shift! Technical rehearsals are tiring, but are nothing compared to the tiredness you feel when raising a baby (we didn't get a sleeper!).

So the prospect of adding the two together seemed like absolute insanity. However nothing is impossible- I'd seen and heard positive examples of managing work as a new parent, but had also heard about negative ones, so I was keen to put family first with every decision to try and make the transition back to work as positive as possible.

Starting back at the National Theatre with 'Underdog - the Other Other Brontë' felt like such a luxury. Working with creatives I'd spent years making shows with, and having the wonderful Katie Lands lead the team at the NT, I felt I had friends around who I could include in my decision making, and use as a support when I needed help after

the sleepless night, or the guilt of being away for long days. The team were mindful and respectful of my maternity leave, and with the help of my associate Charlotte Burton I was able to catch up on notes/



Photo: Zoe Spurr and Rafe by Mark Senior

design process when worked for me and the family. Similarly, setting up *The Artist* at Plymouth Theatre Royal was also one of those jobs you dream of- the challenge of black and white lighting along with an in-

credible 1920's jazz and classical score. Months in advance, I worked closely with producers and my agent to ensure I had the team I needed to deliver the job with confidence and detail, mindful of the ever changing life of a baby and their needs. Having nearly finished the production, I've been so grateful of the team around me- Stu Meech and Adam Killey, alongside Steve, Hugh Borthwick and the team at Plymouth, also David Stone (programmer) and Nicola Crawford (Associate LD). They've all helped to support and build ideas, and very importantly kept the coffees running throughout- once again, feeling like you're with colleagues who are also friends makes the days jollier and makes it slightly easier to be away from Rafe.

It's easy to lose confidence in yourself as a working professional when you're knee deep in nappies, doctors appointments, weaning and night feeds- I accidentally once called it 'lockdown', but that's how it felt! We all remember having no work on the horizon, frantically starting jobs in supermarkets and delivery companies, forgetting how to turn a channel on, or where that tool is on Vectorworks. Com-

bine that with the brain fog of tiredness, the return to work felt daunting. However, unlike lockdown, dates were on the horizon so I carved out small chunks of time, arranging for family to be with Rafe while I powered through emails and lighting plans. Clicking back into the headspace of a theatre creative felt wonderful, and I often had flashes of inspiration at 4am on a night feed, which made me excited to be back, and look forward to the return to work rather than dreading it. Working as a freelancer in theatre is often a large part of our identity, our lives are taken over by long hours, socials, volunteer work and meetings- I'm attempting to update this

identity within myself, and have very quickly realised it'll never be the same for me again, but this is what keeps our industry thriving and interesting. The new graduates, the new parents, the experienced worker 30 years in the

business, those touring away from home enjoying the adventure- there's space for everyone, and likely we will all see these various stages throughout our career, so I'm welcoming this new phase and challenge, knowing it'll offer new perspectives on life and work. #

BACK TO WORK

By Zoe Spurr



This month, Focus is talking with Robbie Butler, about his lighting design for *Punch* at the Nottingham Playhouse. The new play by Dear England playwright James Graham, directed by Adam Penford, centres on a tragic, local incident, asking for emotional involvement usually not required from the creatives working on a play.

Focus: Robbie, together with the writing, direction and cast, it's striking that especially the visualisation of this play has found strong critical acclaim. Could you please start with explaining the background and process?

Robbie: The play is the dramatisation of the book *Right From Wrong* by Jacob Dunne who, as a teenager on a night out in Nottingham, killed a stranger with one punch. The single punch not only ended the life of the victim, 28 year old trainee paramedic James Hodgkinson, but also completely changed his own life as well as the victim's parents'. As Jacob entered a guilty plea, James' parents were left without any answers as to why what had happened, happened, and so they engaged in a process called Restorative Justice. RJ establishes contact via

mediators between the offender and victims and enables healthy and meaningful conversation to take place between the two. *Punch* is a phenomenal story of redemption about somebody who didn't have the best of starts in life, made a wrong decision which resulted in the death of a young man, and then subsequently turned his life around as a

PUNCH

Robbie Butler lights the dramatisation of a real-life tragic incident

result of the goodwill and help of the victim's parents, David and Joan. The message is incredibly powerful, it shows what good can be done when you

invest in the interests and care of others in society. Joan and David maintain a relationship with Jacob to this day and work together to raise awareness of the dangers of such casual violence. It's had an extraordinary impact, even a judge in Derby has just referenced the play!

Focus: How did you approach this story?

Robbie: When we initially started working on it, we didn't have a script. We had 10 pages, the memoirs and a podcast, which I would recommend to anyone, it's called *The Punch* on BBC Sounds in which Jacob, interviews David and Joan. So

naturally, there were first a lot of conversations about the incident, and the people involved. About violence almost as a recreational pursuit, of toxic masculinity, when a 'good night out' involves a fight by default, and also the social problems built into the architecture of the area in which Jacob grew up. Anna Fleischle, the set and costume designer, came up with the first drawings and a theme of circles emerged in the design as well as the script: There's the talking circles of the Restorative Justice sessions, but also circles of violence. A visual concept followed, where everything curves from the centre outwards. I responded with a horseshoe shaped rig ...

Focus: ... which seems to be filled to saturation with spots and svoboda ramps...

Robbie: ... because we had mentioned 'gig-theatre' from the beginning, and because of the music Jacob listened to, we wanted something to deliver a big statement. Lighting rig and set design were created together. We did renderings and everybody liked how the lighting was exposed and could have that strong visual impact. We found a language where this connects to Anna's circles, a hard edged spot providing gobos of rings, ovals, cones. Not masking the fixtures became naturally part of the set's aesthetic.

Focus: You hadn't worked with anyone of the team before?

Robbie: No. It was great to be able to put the idea of a big, bulky rig into the conversation straight from the beginning, perhaps led by that 'gig-theatre' idea which in the end wasn't at all as dominant as expected. There were also concerns of weight and power consumption to overcome. It's still a big rig for this venue. The 'gig' concept evolved into more of a fast-paced play with mini scenes stacked on top of one another. This gave us the licence to be more dynamic and animated, there is a lot of active shuttering, and we live-fly in and out ETC Halcyons and Martin Mac Ones. We respond to a set of varying heights, nooks and crannies and where movement and





parkour sequences drive us through the action. Especially Act 1 looks at him growing up in this concrete and red brick estate. But adrenaline-filled, high speed scenes are contrasted with sudden stillness, and the lighting follows. There was tight collaboration with sound designer Alexandra Faye Braithwaite on this.

Focus: Many of the reviews comment on the concrete set, the stark colours and contrasts, the harshness of it all.

Robbie: I lean very heavily on warms and colds and the contrast you can work with. I really love the bright whites LEDs can create, we tweaked it slightly and than everything else was shaped around this. You get a huge impact if then for example you switch to more saturated colours for the moments of heightened activity and erraticism. Present day scenes like the police station or courthouse are as stark as I could get it, while there are also scenes of nostalgia, which are rendered, perhaps, more pleasant, and scenes where we suddenly cut

from place to place and obviously the animation of the intensities and colours help to create those spaces.

Focus: The most remarkable thing about this story is that its true. How did it feel working with these people who weren't just characters in a play? How seriously did you take the responsibility of recreating their lives on stage?

Robbie: It is Jacob's story, told through his eyes, but the catalyst is Joan, the



victim's mother (played by Julie Hesmondhalgh). I had the great honour to meet both Joan and David. You can't deal with a more personal, private and tragic story than the loss of someone's child. A huge amount of

care was taken by the team, aware that we were treading the line between creating an entertaining piece of theatre, and being truthful to the story and considerate of the people involved. We didn't want to celebrate the old Jacob, but the ambition of the new Jacob. I think we've found a careful balance. #

CREDITS

Punch by James Graham
Produced by Nottingham Playhouse, Director: Adam Penford. Set + Costume Design: Anna Fleischle. Lighting Programmer: Stanley Olden. Production Electrician: Corwin Cook for Production Lighting Ltd Show Photos: Marc Brenner. LD Robbie Butler is an ALPD Life Member, in recognition of his work for the Save Stage Lighting Campaign. He has previously sat as the chair of Equity's Directors and Designers Committee. Robbie would like to thank Charlie and Dom from Production Lighting Ltd, Rich, Laura, Dylan, Ben, Jamie, Andrew, and the whole team at Nottingham Playhouse.



Anthony McCall

Solid Light at Tate Modern
27 Jun 2024 - 27 Apr 2025



As a lighting designer, the medium feels instantly familiar: Shafts of light, made visible in haze.

Yet the motivation comes from a different angle than the theatre world.

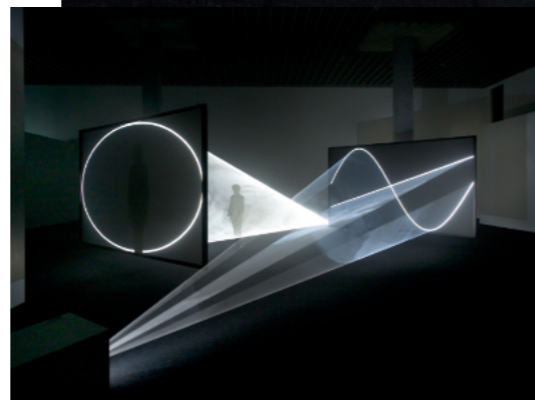
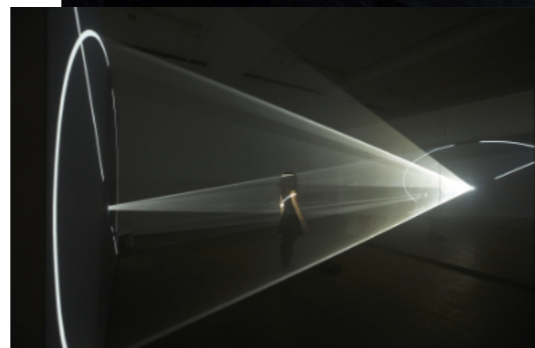
Your movements and interactions bring artworks to life inside Solid Light, a focused exhibition dedicated to the immersive works of Anthony McCall.

Beams of light projected through a thin mist create large three-dimensional forms in space, which slowly shift and change. As you move through these translucent sculptures of light, you'll create new shapes and discover your own mesmerising perspectives.

Occupying a space between sculpture, cinema, drawing, and performance, McCall is known for his innovative installations of light. In 1973, his seminal work Line Describing a Cone redefined the possibilities of sculpture.

Curated by Gregor Muir, Director of Collection, International Art, Tate Modern and Andrew de Brún, Assistant Curator, International Art, Tate Modern.

Photos: Tate Modern 



In our series *It's Light, Jim, but not as we know it*, we are looking at ideas and exploration of colour, texture, luminance - 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

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
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Bectu: Alex Fernandes bectu@thealpd.org.uk

Diversity: Simisola Majekodunmi diversity@thealpd.org.uk


Co-opted committee members

Jason Addison, Peter Small

Focus Magazine ISSN: 1364-9299

Editor & graphic layout: Arnim Friess editor@thealpd.org.uk

Assisted by Amanda Laidler, Sam Waddington, Amélie Friess.

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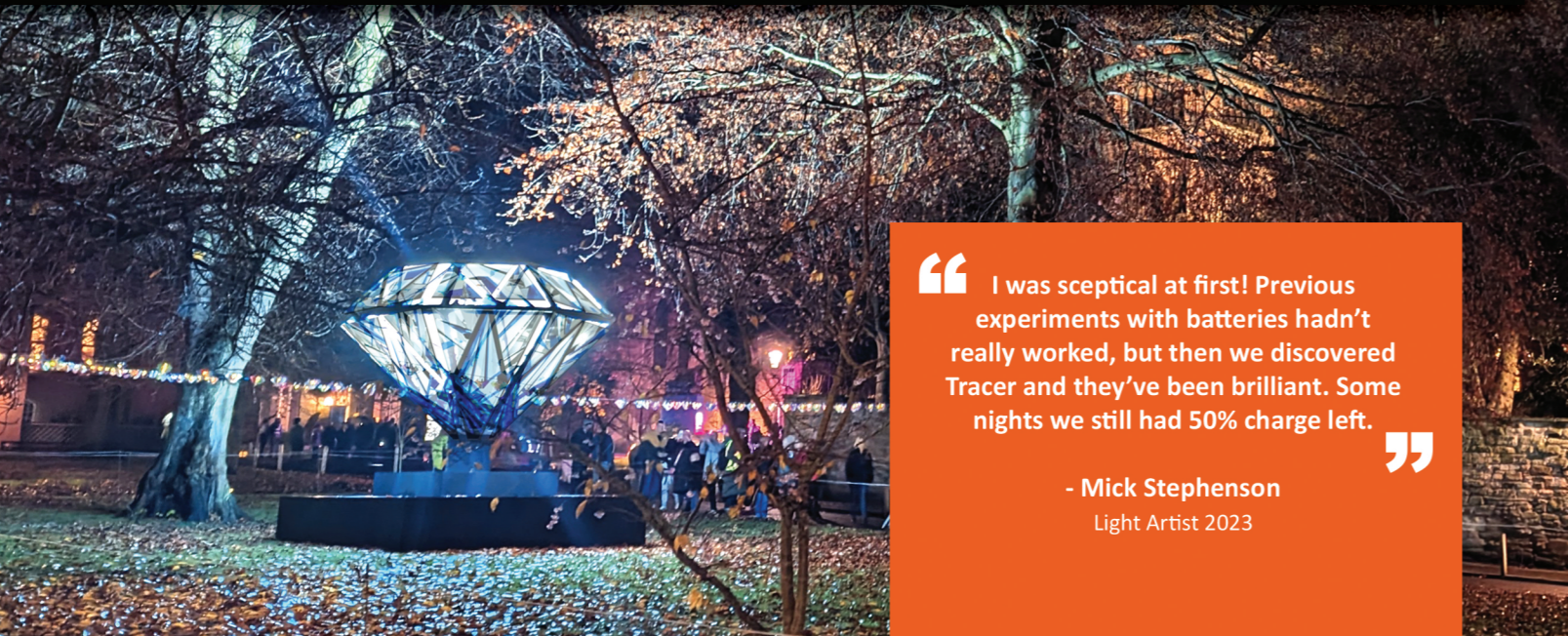
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LUMIERE

Durham Lumiere has solidified its position as one of the premier global light festivals. During the biannual event, light artists transform the streets, parks, and buildings of the city centre into mesmerizing works of art.

For 2023, event organizers Artichoke reached out in the 11th hour to inquire if Tracer could assist in powering Mick Stephenson's Diamond Garden Installation. Nestled in the shadow of the historical Durham Cathedral, the art piece featured a 240 Watt LED array that required stand alone power for 7 hours each night.



“ I was sceptical at first! Previous experiments with batteries hadn't really worked, but then we discovered Tracer and they've been brilliant. Some nights we still had 50% charge left. ”

- Mick Stephenson
Light Artist 2023

The Challenge: Illuminate the Diamond throughout Lumiere 2023

To power a 240W LED light array in the Diamond Garden for 5 sessions of 7 hours each during Lumiere, a unique challenge arose. Located on the College Green with no available power source, artist Mick Stephenson proposed a solar-charged battery solution housed within the sealed diamond structure to combat the harsh British winter conditions.

The Solution: Tracer BP2910 12V 100Ah Li-ion Carry Case Kit

Following an initial feasibility test, it was decided to dismiss solar charging due to the UK's shortened daylight hours. Instead, the proposal emerged to recharge the batteries using hydro power from a nearby building between sessions.

After implementing these design tweaks, Stephenson chose two Tracer 12V 100Ah BP2910 batteries to power his installation. Each battery would support a 120Watt array of lights, providing an estimated 10 hours of power if needed. This choice significantly reduced the required recharge time, as the batteries did not necessitate a full charge cycle to achieve the 7 hours of required runtime.

Post Lumiere Reaction

The adoption of Tracer Batteries as a reliable power source has inspired Stephenson, offering boundless possibilities and the freedom to showcase his installations in the remotest of locations.

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