

SHOWS

ALPD#

The People in
Performance Lighting

The Association for Lighting
Production and Design
www.thealpd.org.uk
Summer 2025
£5.00 / FREE to Members

**SHOWLIGHT
SPECIAL**

Speakers, Papers and
Socialising at the
Quadrennial's revival

**OBSERVATIONS
& PLACEMENTS**

Opportunities for emerging
lighting designers with
ALPD members

**AWARDS!
AWARDS!**

Success for British lighting
designers stateside and at
home

3 WELCOME	Johanna Town, ALPD Chair
4 UPDATE	ALPD office news and information
6 PEOPLE & EVENTS	ALPD Awards open, NY Awards season, Talks, Backup Tech
10 OBSERVATIONS	ALPD members offer placements
13 ROSE BRUFORD	Annual showcase at the college
14 RBO PLACEMENT	The Jette Parker Lighting Designer Observership
16 PROFILE AWARDS	Honouring established and emerging talent in Lighting
18 DESIGN TALK	Stevie Mackie: Lighting English National Ballet's Swan Lake
22 DESIGN TALK	Joe Price: Lighting new work at Birmingham Conservatoire
25 TAX CHANGES	Rob Halliday reports on the planned changes for freelancers
26 CORPORATE MEMBERS	Thank you for your support, Advertorial CAST Group
30 SHOWLIGHT	Triumphant return of the quadrennial lighting conference
50 CONTACTS	Who's who at the ALPD, "It's light, but ..."
52 COMMERCIAL MEMBERS	Thank you for your support



Title page: Swanlake, ENB, LD Stevie Mackie, Photo by Amber Hunt @ASH

Welcome to our Summer FOCUS: with the new format and time scales we have a new seasonal name for each edition.

It does not feel like summer as I write from a very wet June opening night at the Grange Festival Opera. The dress rehearsal night had been a little kinder and I was able to sit out and share a picnic with my lighting team in the sunshine, thanks to George, David, Paddy and Mel and all the visiting Prod LX who popped in and out to install outside lighting and finish off all the set electrics.

The Grange is the end of a very busy winter and spring run for me and I am sorry that this has meant I have missed so many great events this Spring lighting calendar. This time of year is always crazy busy for the association, first with Plasa Leeds - such an informal event that it is always a great opportunity for us to mix with other lighting people, have more chats and have time to be social. A big thank you to White Light for letting us share their stand again and also a big thanks to Encore for supporting an ALPD social.

Hot on the heels of Leeds this year was Dijon with the revival of the amazing Showlight. The second half of this issue of FOCUS has been handed over to reports on the three-day event and its amazing speakers. The ALPD were well represented by our writing team as well as Lucy Carter, Mig Burgess, Elanor Higgins, Bryan Raven, Simon Corder, Nick Schlieper and Phil Supple giving talks at the conference, congratulations to you all.

Next up the ALPD were dashing over to the ABTT

show in London; again another friendly event with many exhibitors ready to chat and show their wares. Congratulations to all the nominees and winners of the Profile Awards which took place at Alexandra Palace during the ABTT show week, I hear it was another great evening. Thank you to Rick Fisher for again being our critics co-ordinator and to Jennie and Durham Marengi for hosting these awards.

Also in this issue we have a must read from Rob Halliday about the new tax changes which will affect us all from 2026, so beware and do read. We have articles from Joe Price and Stevie Mackie, talking us through the design ideas behind their latest projects.

In closing I did find time to follow David Howe's new scheme on having a placement with me this Spring and posting about the experience. Sammy Kissin joined me at the Noël Coward for a week and it was fantastic having a second eye on the show and helping with paperwork. We had a lot of laughs at the Noël Coward. I had two shows going into the venue nearly back-to-back and I really appreciate working with such an excellent team who know and love their venue. It reminded me that it takes a full team of people to put on a show and how important it is they all work together, from the lighting hire warehouse staff to the assistant LX receiving it in the theatre, to the production staff we take in with us: everyone is important, has a role to play and is essential to the work we do.

Jo #



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

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW ALPD MEMBERS

Professional

Louis C Choisy, London
Craig Bennett, Hemel Hempstead
Thomas M Warren, Geelong, (Aus)
Si Cole, County Durham
Darren Jones, Ellesmere Port
Ashley Cashfield, Dereham
Jamie Andrew Harley, Stafford
Stu Meech, Stratford-upon-Avon

Associate

Richard Noble, Bristol

Affiliate

Jodi Rabinowitz, London
Diana Krasovska, Northampton
Cian K Feasey, London
Lucy Adams, London
Alina Longmore, Leeds

Student

Elliott Stradling, London
Mehmet Bayram Yeni, Tostedt, (D)
Mia Swann, London
Caitlin MacGregor, Barnet
Georgia King, Swadlincote
Sarah Taylor, Bury
Millie Walker-Mousley, Guildford

SHOWS

It has been great to meet up with so many of you either at PLASA in Leeds or at ABTT. It's always helpful to put names to faces, to answer questions and to hear your views on what we do and what you would like the Association to do. Its always good to meet up with colleagues in other associations, and we spend time sharing ideas. At ABTT I visited the education stands and encouraged those who are not members to join us, and to make their students aware of the ALPD. We will be at PLASA from 7 – 9 September.

PLASA CALL FOR SPEAKERS

PLASA would like you to share your insight with the industry, and applications are now open to speak at the seminar programme at Olympia London: <https://tinyurl.com/Plasaapply>

WEBSITE UPDATE

The contract for the redevelopment of our website has been awarded to Qdos Digital once again. Work has started and we aim to have the new website in place by late autumn 2025. There is a lot of work to be done improving the membership database which is at the heart of the web-

site. We will keep you up to date with news.

ALPD LOGO

As part of the design process we are looking at redesigning our logo: we have had the same logo for many years and it feels like the right time to modernise a bit and devise a logo which in a single icon makes it clearer what we do. These days, the hashtag attached to our letters doesn't have quite the same impact as it did in the 20th century. The Executive is debating design ideas at the moment and we hope to come to a conclusion soon.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

After months of poor service from our email providers (who were entirely separate from our website providers) we have now moved this over to Qdos. This has meant some changes to our email addresses:

- Jo Town can now be contacted at: chair@thealpd.org.uk
- Focus magazine: editor@thealpd.org.uk is now working again, after months of problems.
- The office remains as office@thealpd.org.uk

- And our membership secretary is still at membership@thealpd.org.uk.

Our membership secretary, Peter Vincent, is a volunteer, and does a sterling job in looking after all our new applicants and answering questions from old ones.

One big ask: Please go through your email address books and if you have any ald.org.uk addresses in there, please change them to thealpd.org.uk. We still have forwarding on the old addresses, but it slows things down.

We tend to think of email as being 'free', not costing postage and not using paper. But the servers that support email are big users of energy and water. Take a look at this link: <https://carbonliteracy.com/the-carbon-cost-of-an-email/> (AI and programmes like ChatGPT are similarly energy guzzlers). I'm hoping we can publish a longer article on this topic in the future. I try really hard to regularly have a big clear out of old emails that don't need to be kept. (Its quite cathartic, too!)



TALKS & SOCIALS

You may remember that in the Spring edition, we invited volunteers to lead

Zoom talks on a variety of topics. We have had very little response. But its not too late to put yourself forward! Do take a look at the article and see if you can help out with this.

VISITS

We do have some visits planned, and meanwhile there are two socials to mention. First of all, if you are in Edinburgh on 31st July, come along to the ALPD Social. Full details will be sent out in a Members' Bulletin and on Social Media.

Jason Larcombe has organised a Summer Lighting meet-up on Thursday 17 July, from 17:30 on the roof terrace of the Southbank Centre. All are welcome, but if you plan to go, please email:

jason.larcombe@brightbluelight.com in advance so he has an idea of numbers.

FEES

To all of you who have paid your 25-26 fees (or are paying monthly) - Thank You. If you haven't yet paid your fees, these are now overdue! If you don't know if you have, log into the website and visit 'My Membership' where you can see the details of your payments. Over the next few weeks I will be chasing overdue fees! #

News and information from the ALPD office by Amanda Laidler

DATES

- 10 July backuptech.uk Village Fete, Sandown Park
- 17 July Summer Lighting Meet-up, Southbank Centre
- 31 July Edinburgh Lighting Social
- 7 - 9 September PLASA London
- 3 November Theatrecraft, ROH and other West End Venues

Contact Amanda directly at office@thealpd.org.uk



ALPD AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE 2025

The ALPD Awards for 2025 are now open for entries. The ALPD awards are in three categories; Lighting Design, Production Electrics and Programming. The Lighting Design Award is by application; and for emerging LD's, the candidates for the Fred Foster Production Electrician Award and the Anne Valentino Award for Excellence in Programming are by nomination and are intended for career professionals. 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. Full details on the website and its quick and easy to do. www.thealpd.org.uk/the-alpd-awards-for-excellence-2025. The ALPD Awards close on 31st October 2025 and presentations will be made at the New Technology Showcase in early 2026. The Awards are sponsored by Go Live Theatre Projects, Vectorworks and ETC. All submissions MUST be received by midnight on the closing date – Thursday 31st October.

Enquiries to: office@thealpd.org.uk 



LIGHTMONGERS AWARD FOR JOSIE IRELAND

We'd like to congratulate ALPD member Josie Ireland on winning the Worshipful Company of Lightmongers Award, which recognises talent in entertainment lighting.

Pictured are Josie, receiving her Award from Tony Ginman, the present Master of the Company. Photo by Rob Chadwick.


The Worshipful Company of Lightmongers charity were pleased to receive a legacy from the estate of former



member Peter Parker. Peter worked in the lighting department of GEC and was involved in several projects for the Festival of Britain including the lighting of fountains.

The legacy funds:

Extant. Providing theatre training and performance opportunities for those who are blind or visually impaired – both actors and audiences.

Deafinitely Theatre. Providing theatre training and performance opportunities for those who are deaf or have hearing loss – both actors and audiences. 

NEW YORK CITY AWARDS SEASON - SUCCESS FOR BRITISH DESIGNERS


The stateside awards season this year was a great success for British Theatre Design. Amongst nominations for set, costume and sound, we would like to congratulate ALPD members who were recognised as the best in their fields:

Jon Clark (pictured top) won his second Tony Award, for *Stranger Things - The First Shadow*. He also received for this show the Drama Desk Awards, and he won an Outer Critics Circle Award.

Nick Schlieper: Tony Nomination for the *Picture of Dorian Gray*


Natasha Chivers Tony Nomination for *The Hills of California*

In Washington DC, **Jai Morjaria** has been nominated for a Helen Hayes Award for *Macbeth*.

Congratulations also to Jack Knowles: Tony and Drama Desk Award for *Sunset Boulevard*. 

OLIVIER AWARDS

Back here in the UK **Paule Constable** and **Ben Jacobs** won the Olivier Award for best Lighting Design for *Oliver!*

A special congratulations to **Bryan Raven**, who has been named as one of three winners of this year's Olivier Industry Recognition Awards. Bryan is being honoured for his lifelong dedication to the theatre sector - leading White Light for over 25 years. Throughout his career, Bryan has been instrumental in driving industry-wide initiatives. He played a key role in White Light's long-standing sponsorship of TheatreCraft, ensuring that aspiring off-stage theatre professionals have access to valuable career support. For over 15 years, Bryan has championed sustainability in the performing arts, collaborating in 2008 with Julie's Bicycle on the Greening London's Theatres guide. 



ABTT THEATRE SHOW

This year's ABTT Theatre Show celebrated how achievable excellence is. NFC technology across many fixtures promises breezy readdressing and the brightness of singles fixtures was clear from a glance at the ceiling. ETC casually showed off motorised zoom in their already impressive ColorSource V Fresnel range, and fanless moving heads such as Chauvet's Maverick Silens 2X show the potential for silver bullet fixtures in studio spaces. Elation's Paragon range, including the multi-award winning Paragon S, pack great colours and a whole heap of beam control options into a tiny package. Martin's additions of the



XIP to their workhorse Aura range will be eye candy that we're sure to see growing in popularity thanks to the smart XB emulation mode. The punch and spread of their Era 150 was notable too. An exciting time to be in the entertainment lighting field!

The ALPD stand had a very lush position under palm trees and was busy throughout (photo bottom left).

By / Photo: Will Monks, Amanda Laidler

PLASA FOCUS LEEDS

Great visit to the north for a very busy PLASA Leeds. It was good to meet up with so many northern based lighting people.

Our thanks to #plasaleeds, to White Light for hosting us on their stand and to Encore - EMEA for sponsorship of the ALPD social. And after the hustle and bustle of the show, a peaceful walk home along the canal in the sunshine.

TALK AT GLYNDEBOURNE

The ALPD's 2023 Design Lumière **Danny Vavrečka** is back at Glyndebourne as Lighting Designer for their current production of *Uprising: a new opera*. A number of ALPD members attended a talk by Danny about his career path to this point, and what the ALPD Lumière Scheme has meant to him. They were then able to



attend the Dress Rehearsal of *Uprising*. The opera opens this Friday, 28th February, with further performances on Saturday and Sunday.

Uprising features a cast of professionals and the Glyndebourne Sinfonia alongside Glyndebourne Youth Opera, a community chorus and young instrumentalists from Brighton & East Sussex Youth Orchestra and Brighton & Hove Percussion Ensemble. (Photo right)



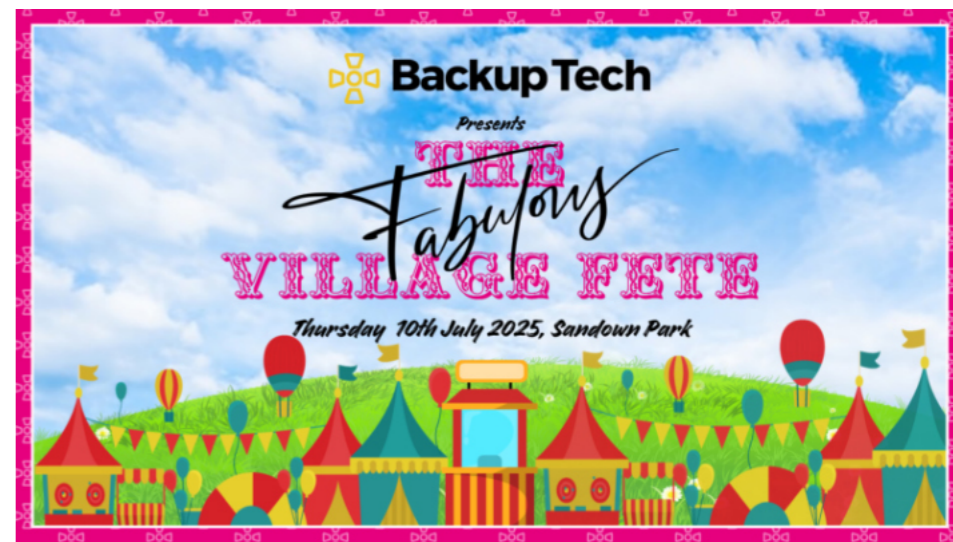
PANTOMIME AWARD

Congratulations to ALPD Member **Andy Webb**, who won the 2025 Pantomime Award for best lighting: *Sleeping Beauty*, Festival Theatre, Malvern (UK Productions)

BACKUP TECH

Affectionately known as "the industry's best day out," this highly anticipated day will take place on Thursday, July 10th, 2025, from 9am to 7pm BST at Daytona Sandown Park in Esher, Surrey. Renamed "The Backup Fabulous Village Fete" in memory of Adam Taylor (AKA Adam Fabulous) and the DJ's involvement in setting up this popular event.

www.backuptech.uk 🍁



Only a couple of months old, our new initiative ALPD Observations has already been proven very popular, with two keen emerging lighting designers able to follow established designers for a day.

Lighting Designer Paul Pyant offered the opportunity to host a student designer for part of the production process. A great opportunity to see how Paul, his programmer and production electricians adapt the show. *The Deep Blue Sea* by Terence Rattigan previously opened at The Ustinov Studio (Bath) in mid 2024 and has transferred into the West End, Haymarket Theatre with a stellar cast and creative team.

Elliot Stradling (Guildhall School of Music and Drama) took the chance to apply. We asked him about his experience:

Q. What aspects of production were different to what you have seen / experienced before?

A. The scale and the attention to detail of the production were particularly different to what I had seen and experienced before. The Haymarket is such a grand space, and it was fascinating to see how Paul adapted his lighting to

meet the scale of the space, whilst maintaining the intimate atmosphere the play called for. The level of attention to detail was also new for me. Whether it was the stage management and production carpenters fine tuning the mechanics of a door, or Paul carefully crafting the final image the audience sees at the end of each fade, the commitment to excellence was extraordinary and a privilege to see and learn from.

ALPD OBSERVATIONS

New Programme to follow a lighting designer for a day

Q. How have you experienced the working relationship with Paul and his Team (Will, House Electricians)?

A. The working relationships were very interesting to me. From my understanding, they were built on trust and a real respect for the show and every detail involved with making it the best it could be. Will, and the house electricians, were so attentive to any notes Paul had. What was especially interesting though was when Will made

suggestions back in response to the notes. There was a real dialogue there between designer and programmer and it was an honour to see the team working through notes together.

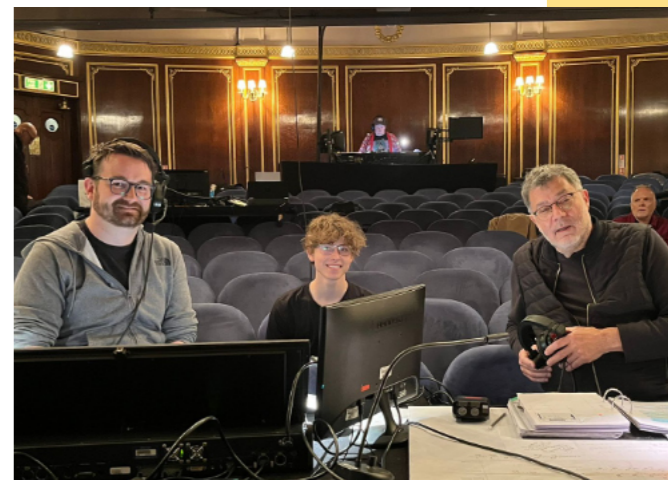
Sammy Kissin on shadowing Johanna Town at Comedy about Spies

I should preface this by warning you that if Johanna Town ever tries to insist, as she has done to me, that she isn't a good teacher of lighting design and doesn't know how to do it, don't be fooled. Jo is one of the very best lighting teachers that I have ever had, both within a university setting and out in the field (if that is the right word in theatre). Jo is not only a brilliant tutor, but a generous one: whilst at Showlight '25 this year, I bumped into a handful of ex-alumni of the "Unofficial Jo Town Observership and Ex-Student Club" who've benefitted from Jo's expertise. I've been lucky enough to shadow Jo on two occasions, the first last year at the Hamstead Theatre for *The Lightest Element* charting the professional life of the astronomer Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin, who discovered the composition of stars and then again this spring on Mischief Theatre's whip smart *Comedy about Spies* at The Noël Coward Theatre.

What I realised quite early on when observing Jo, was how she leads with decency and common sense and how the teams she works with respond in kind. The respect that she elicits comes, I think from a lifetime working in theatre lighting, an infectious passion and dedication to making well-crafted, elegant work efficiently. She's also a prodigious problem solver, often pre-empting situations before they become apparent to the production team at large, which make her even more of an asset in the space.

I learnt so much watching and listening to how Jo builds the light in her scenes layer by layer, establishing the base cover and then working and reworking the balance onstage. Whilst observing Jo at work on *The Lightest Element*, a historical drama, I saw her work with a toned down pallet *The Lightest Element*, reflecting the requirement of the historical storytelling. Although Jo isn't shy about using really saturated colours when needed - I think I'm not alone in being able to spot a "Jo Town blue" from a mile away. In *Comedy about Spies*, Jo really got to dig into the paint box and pull out some really vibrant colours, such as for the Battenburg sequence.

Here, with Agent Bubbles, aka programmer- extraordinaire, Sarah Brown



Top from left to right: Programmer & Chief Electrician of Bath Theatre Royal Will Burgher, Elliot Stradling, Paul Pyant

Bottom left to right Johanna Town and Sammy Kissin. Photo next page: The Comedy about Spies unique set. Photo: Matt Crockett

(the backstage crew were all assigned spy names, naturally), Jo used Lustres to saturate the four hotel rooms: green and yellow on top, orange and blue below in the boldest colour. Front, perch and high side positions then delivered light to back into the four ceilinged spaces, supplemented by LED ceiling strips. Each

room was either incandescent, if in use or wan when vacant or dormant. The eye was directed, up, around and across all these spaces, depending on the where the action was taking place, and sometimes all at once. Nothing about this was formulaic, Jo worked cue by cue to pinpoint what was needed in each moment, no matter

how snappy these moments were. It wasn't just simply a question of flipping on and off either. Looks were visited and revisited, it was like watching artisan whittling away, the light intensity, focus moving up a couple of notches here, colour tweaked there in each of the four spaces according to the balance and onstage action and look.

Contrast this with the musical-esque chase sequences that open the show and then punctuate the show and you've got a nice variety of scenes to learn from. Sitting on cans, observing Jo design her looks has been an invaluable lesson to me in so many ways. I feel really lucky to have been privy to the process of watching a show like this come together through tech and would recommend to any striving lighting designers to try to do the same. It teaches you not only how Lighting Directors communicate their vision and ideas to their teams and the symbiosis that is needed to make a lighting design come to life, but also how a technical rehearsal at this scale works and how all the moving parts fit together. #



OBSERVATIONS: Check-out our Guide for all details: XXX If you wish to be considered, please email observations@thealpd.org.uk We are keen to encourage more Observation and Placement opportunities from our industry. If you are a Professional Designer / Programmer / Production Electrician and think you might be able to offer an opportunity in the future please do contact the ALPD office. #

Face to Face is Rose Bruford College's annual showcase celebrating the talents of students graduating from its undergraduate Design and Production courses.

This year, work from six disciplines was featured: Audio Production, Costume Production, Creative Lighting Control, Lighting Design, Scenic Arts and Stage Management.

The showcase offers industry professionals a unique opportunity to meet emerging talent, explore their work through installations across the campus and discover the next generation of creatives in theatre, film and live entertainment.

2025 also marks the 75th anniversary of Rose Bruford College -

established with a bold ambition: to redefine the boundaries of arts education. Today, that pioneering spirit remains central to its identity - with a new strategy focused on artistic innovation, inclusivity and social impact.

FACE TO FACE AT ROSE BRUFORD

College's annual showcase features work from six disciplines

Stuart Page, Dean of Rose Bruford College, said: "Our graduates are entering a dynamic and fast-evolving creative sector, equipped not only with the technical expertise but with the imagination, adaptability and collaborative spirit that defines the future of the industry."

Download this year's brochure to meet the graduating students via <https://bit.ly/RBCFtoF2025> #



As a recent graduate from Rose Bruford's MA course "Light in Performance," and someone fascinated by how different theatres operate, I was excited to learn through the ALPD newsletter about an Observership at The Royal Opera House. The Jette Parker Lighting Designer Observership promised insight into the full lighting design journey—from initial meetings to rehearsals and technical sessions—so I eagerly applied.

I chose *Festen*, a new opera with lighting by Lucy Carter, written by Mark-Anthony Turnage and Lee Hall, and directed by Richard Jones. Knowing Lucy's bold dance lighting and her long-standing relationship with the Opera House, I was keen to observe her process. *Festen*, a darkly comic story of family trauma set during a patriarch's 60th birthday in Denmark, struck me as unusual opera material and piqued my curiosity.

After my acceptance, I prepped by watching Vinterberg's original film and revisiting David Eldridge's adaptation. I also researched Lucy's past work to better understand her approach. On the day, I met Edward Armitage, Head of Lighting, who led me through the backstage maze, including the set carousel and underground storage. He explained how the repertory system demands rapid set turnarounds,

supported by extensive infrastructure and a skilled technical team.

Edward described the 1997 reconstruction, which added large backstage spaces and automated systems to manage massive set pieces. The rig supports multiple productions simultaneously, and

BOLD LIGHTING - HIDDEN MOVERS

Sammy Kissin on The Jette Parker Lighting Designer Observership at the RBO

they're phasing in sustainable LED fixtures while rehoming older ones to community theatres.

On the main stage, I joined Lucy Carter in the Grand Tier during a piano rehearsal. Though she couldn't stop the session, she

adjusted cues and reviewed lighting with Toby, the programmer, and Theo, the Lighting Manager. Most changes were subtle—fine-tuning cue timings and light intensities, particularly during ensemble scenes.

The show opened with a projected floral

wallpaper on the safety curtain, transitioning to a wood-paneled hotel lobby. Lucy creatively used practical lights and discreetly rigged movers to overcome the "flat" front lighting typical of box sets. She layered lighting to define different spaces—such as a corridor within the

lobby—by using sharply shuttered beams and distinct colour/intensity shifts.

Afterward, Lucy generously discussed her process, starting always with the story before incorporating outside influences like the *Festen* film. She and Edward noted how modern productions are getting brighter, driven by technology and audience expectations.

Over lunch, Edward shared his journey from technician to his current role via White Light. His energy and love for the job were inspiring. In the afternoon, we toured the fly towers, climbed to the top of the dome, and visited the dimmer room and lighting stores, run meticulously by Nick Woolley. Their system tracks every fixture and cable with precision.

We ended in the Visualisation Suite, where a virtual Opera House is used to trial lighting ideas in advance—saving time and cost in tech. It's a vital part of maintaining the ROH's rapid production pace.

By day's end, I'd absorbed more than I could have imagined—not just about lighting systems, but about the people powering them. The professionalism and passion throughout the team were palpable. For anyone interested in lighting or theatrical production, this experience behind the red velvet curtain is truly invaluable. #



The Ensemble of *Festen*. Photo Mark Brenner

The Profile Awards' second iteration was held at the Alexandra Palace Theatre on the 5th of June 2025. Created and coordinated by Durham and Jennie Marengi in association with the ALPD, the ABTT and the STLD, the Awards recognise lighting design excellence in Theatre and Television in the UK.

Attended by 250 guest, including 150 lighting designers and members of their lighting teams, the headline sponsor was Ayrton with Ambersphere sponsoring the drinks reception. The TV awards were sponsored by Cameo, ChamSys, ELP Broadcast Lighting, HS-Hire, LCR, LED Creative, Light Initiative and Rosco. Entry sponsors included ER Productions, Encore, Limelite and Sunbelt Rental Film and TV who also supplied the goody bags.

The Theatre section of The Profile Awards 2025 was judged by eight of the UK's leading theatre, dance and opera critics chaired by David Benedict. The lighting for the event was kindly supplied by HS-Hire, the lasers by ER Productions and the lectern gifted by Encore.

David Benedict explained the judging process: "We see plays, musicals, dance and opera multiple nights a week and every single show – except revivals – is eligible. It's impossible to count the exact number we've seen, but it's in the hundreds. At the judging lunch we each present a list of three or four shows that have most excited us within our area of expertise, but also any other lighting we've loved in shows outside our individual field. In other words, it's a feast of enthusiasms – then whittled down into a list of manageable proportions.

Crucially, instead of finding nominees to fit fixed categories, we choose the most exciting work – and then create categories with which to reward it. This year we've honoured an amazing 23 lighting designers. And, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, we have eight awards to give, but this system means you're not in competition with one another for any particular category."

www.profileawards.com #



Clockwise from top left: Prize winners Paule Constable, Howard Hudson, Joshua Pharo, Theresa Baumgartner and sponsors.

p16 FOCUS - The ALPD Magazine

PROFILE AWARDS THEATRE '25

- Outstanding Achievement in Theatre Award sponsored by TSL – Sarah Readman for 'The Glass Menagerie', The Yard, Hackney Wick
- Outstanding Achievement in Dance sponsored by Elation – Joshie Harriette for 'Pigeons', Sadler's Wells East
- Outstanding Achievement in Theatre sponsored by Vari-Lite – James Mackenzie for 'A Little Inquest Into What We Are Doing Here', Zoo Southside, Edinburgh Fringe
- Outstanding Achievement in Opera sponsored by ETC – Luca Panetta for 'Maria de Rudenz', Battersea Arts Centre
- Outstanding Achievement in Theatre sponsored by Chauvet Professional – Jessica Hung Han Yun for 'Hamlet Hail To the Thief', Aviva Manchester
- Outstanding Achievement in Innovation sponsored by Fix8 Group – Theresa Baumgartner for 'Deepstaria', Sadler's Wells East
- Outstanding Year in Theatre sponsored by SLX – Joshua Pharo for 'Kenrex', Sheffield Playhouse; 'The House Party', Chichester & Leeds Playhouse; 'A Raisin in the Sun', Nottingham Playhouse & Lyric Hammersmith; 'The Hot Wing King', National Theatre
- Outstanding Year in Musical Theatre sponsored by GLP – Howard Hudson for 'Love Life', Opera North; 'Starlight Express', Troubadour Wembley Park; 'Natasha, Pierre And The Great Comet of 1812', Donmar Warehouse
- The Student Virtual Lighting Design Award sponsored by AC Entertainment Technologies – Shona M'gadzah
- The Brian Croft Behind the Scenes Award sponsored by PRG – Wayne Howell
- The Richard Pilbrow Lifetime Recognition Award sponsored by Theatre Projects – Paule Constable #

Summer 2025 - p17



Clockwise from top left: Prize winners Luca Panetta, Joshie Harriette, Wayne Howell, Shona M'gadzah and sponsors.

“This will be the third year I’ve done this Lake”, says LD Stevie Mackie, as well as working on countless other productions, ... this one however, is slightly different, ... it has a narrator, so finally we all know what’s going on.!

It’s called ‘My First Ballet’ and aimed at a 4+ age range, and I was super thrilled when Lowri, my granddaughter, came to see the show the other day.

Rosie (her mum) at her age, had been known to play hide and seek on the BRB Nutcracker set.... and found in the red room fireplace by stage management in the past, much to my telling off!

Sean (TSM), Lois (SM), Emma (Wardrobe Manager), and myself, make up the small core team for this not so small, but impressive production a marvel for any age. To hear the interaction between narrator and audience, the screams and boos as the evil Rothbart enters, the laughs with bright palates as the Hungarians try to woo Prince Siegfried, or marvel as the

swans appear one by one on the lake...it all makes for a very different ballet experience.

Lighting...

So Back in 2018, It was lit with par pipe ends and rainbow scrollers, 2k backlights, AC 1001’s some VL 3500’s and Avo touring dimmers Yes it was very tungsten, and a lot of blue colour burning out.

Now I have VL 2600s doing a lot of the ‘lake’ work gobos, and ChromaQ 72 and 48 LED battens lighting mostly cloths, whist trusty Mac Auras do pipe ends, and various other jobs around the rig.

White Light supplying the rig again, and as always great kit from Dom Yeats.

It’s a really quite a simple rig with mostly conventionals in L201/200/103/763 but honestly, a good boom focus and a simple FOH works well.

I always have a Prosc. positions to add top sides, and a centre LX1 position that adds me really good face light.

MY FIRST BALLET

Stevie Mackie lights ENB’s Swan Lake for a young audience at the Peacock



All in all, less is more rig wise, but I totally pay attention to the choreography, and the how the music, and pictures are happening on stage, ...its' all about a feeling sometimes, and a moment.

After some initial programming in EOS augmented, and a couple of tech days and total commitment from a fab Peacock crew, ... we opened, ... and crazily we do 24 performances in 2 weeks with a few different casts... are we mad? ...maybe, but as simple as this show is, It looks great, and actually, this thing called theatre, called me when I was 5 years old, so bring it on!"

Since its creation in 2012, over 350,000 people have enjoyed English National Ballet's My First Ballet series.

Stevie Mackie hails from Scotland and started his career at HMT in Aberdeen. After a spell touring a few shows in Europe, he went on a 12 month arena tour as a rookie VL tech on *La Luna* Sarah Brightman, in the US, (LD Patrick Woodroffe). He jumped off the tour bus to join Birmingham Royal Ballet as 'Deputy Head of Lighting, programming shows for many talented designers such as Mark Jonathan and Peter Mumford., before becoming an LD in his own right, working mostly in the dance world. #

Photographs by Amber Hunt @ASH



Creatives

Antonio Castilla / Lynne Charles: Choreography
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: Music
Gavin Sutherland: Music Arrangement
Peter Farmer: Original Set and Costume Design
Stevie Mackie: Lighting Design
Lou Cope: Dramaturg and Writer

Crew

Stage Manager: Lois Sime
Technical Stage Manager: Sean Kennedy
Wardrobe Manager: Emma Wright
English National Ballet Stage Technicians: Harry Lawrence, Harry Baxter
Peacock Theatre Technicians: Rob Oatley, Kiam Pursey-Kennedy, Lydia Ford, Elliot Surbey, Melissa Holmes, James Kazwini, Paul Burgess, Dragos Farcas, Roisin Little.



GLITCHES AND FLICKERS

Joe Price designs a lighting visualisation for new contemporary composition *Prism* at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

It feels like a relatively accepted fact that stage lighting, particularly within the theatrical world, should not seek to “take centre stage”, but should instead serve to support and enhance the principal attraction which is, of course, the performance itself.

Most lighting practitioners I know greatly appreciate this way of life, revelling in their unseen backstage wizardry status. I could not agree with them more either; on more than one occasion I have been asked (or rather politely forced) to join ensembles on stage for a bow at the end of a show, an experience which, despite its kind and inclusive intentions, makes my skin curl!

Having said all that, it is always lovely when a project seeks to put lighting front and centre alongside the rest of the performance and design aspects. This was exactly the brief for *Prism*, a new composition for solo piano and electronics aiming to create a musical conversation between nineteenth century female composer; Marie Jaëll and Chloe Knibbs; who was composing this piece as part of her PhD studies at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC). Chloe was eager to explore prismatic lighting, as well as themes of time-travel and engaging with lesser-heard musical voices. It all sounded

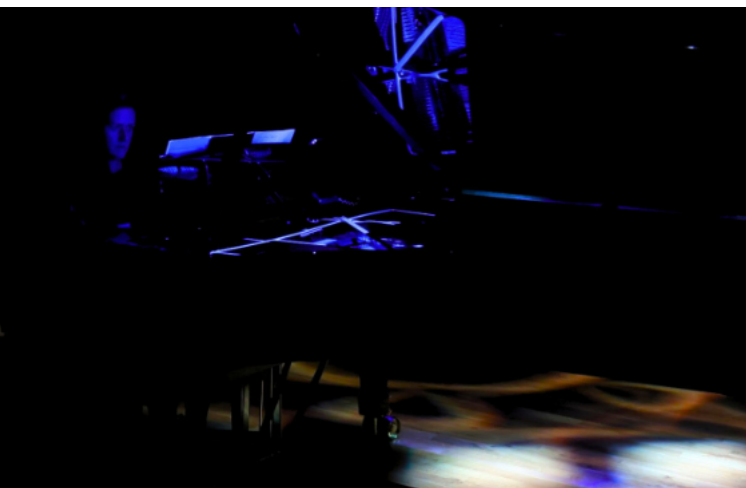
extremely intriguing and very different from a lot of my previous work, so I was delighted to come on board.

The piece featured electronic soundscapes, which often included static and glitch sound effects, as well as AI generated voices that added a sense of playfulness whilst commenting on Jaëll’s work and legacy. We were interested in finding ways to further lift all of these elements through lighting effects in order to create a cohesive multimedia experience. The performance was to take place in the Recital Hall at RBC which had a house rig featuring twelve ETC Lustr Profiles and twelve ETC Desire D40 Pars. These fixtures would provide the necessary washes and specials and give us a good range of colour, but it was evident some additional kit would be necessary to achieve our ambitions. The Recital Hall features a gorgeous pale wood floor and walls that are given further intrigue by intricate acoustic texturing, which I thought would benefit from some uplight options. Additionally I was keen to secure some moving profiles with prism and animation features. We turned to ALPD Corporate Members Christie Lites, with whom I had a working relationship from previous projects at the Belgrade Theatre, to provide the hire package. A modest



budget was available and we eventually settled on a pair of trusty Martin MAC Viper Profiles as well as three Acme Pixel Line IP RGBCW battens.

Tech time in the space was quite limited so, with complicated effects sequences



planned, it was necessary to preplot as much as possible, which I did via the increasingly useful ETC Augment3d plugin. It was also necessary to build a custom fixture profile for the Pixel Lines in order to make full use of their 336 0.5-Watt RGB LEDs and 112 6-Watt cool white LEDs,

divided across sixteen individually controllable sections. Randomised flicker effects across the pixels worked well in tandem with the static noises in the soundscape, whilst placing the battens on the floor to uplight the back wall allowed

the acoustic textures to enhance further giving an almost sine wave-like appearance. One particularly glitchy part of the piece led us to experiment with a randomised gobo wheel index effect using the MAC Vipers that popped different gobos in and out of view and focus in a quite dizzying manner that I would never normally even consider let alone suggest, and yet it was absolutely perfect in this context.

The AI voices were represented by the MAC Vipers creating tight, sharp spots of light on the floor that “walked” in and out of scenes and then “spoke” using carefully timed iris effects synchronised to the audio, to the great amusement of the audience. We were also intrigued by the

concept of the piano as a character with its own voice that could help to facilitate the conversation between these two composers operating more than a century apart from each other. As such I used a number of specials to light the piano from different angles without necessarily lighting the musician, as well as another to specifically light inside the open lid of the majestic Steinway grand. The crescendo of the piece featured a second musician taking to the stage on a smaller upright piano where additional specials and moving light presets allowed for shifts of focus as the conversation reached its conclusion.

This significant process culminated in a single public performance, after which the people fortunate enough to see it offered a great breadth of positive comments and feedback. One gentleman told me he had found it an almost hallucinatory experience, reminiscent of some of his more youthful musical escapades watching bands in the 1970s, which I was pretty chuffed with! This was a truly joyous collaborative project unlike many others I have been involved with and there have been optimistic whisperings about a future life, so fingers crossed more people will be able to indulge in this unique meeting of sound and light. 🌸

Maybe it's just me, but I've always quite enjoyed the January freelance tax return routine.

Not as you might think because of being disorganized and leaving it to the last minute, but because there are traditionally quiet moments in January where I can just sit down with all of the information to hand, concentrate and get it done in one go. I quite enjoy the flashbacks of the previous eighteen months or so you get along the way.

Whether you're the same or spread this work out across the year, be warned: we're all about to have to change our routine.

After a decade or so of procrastination and postponement, the UK Government is finally launching 'Making Tax Digital'. If you're a freelancer – a sole trader – this means that instead of having to report once a year (when you submit your tax return by the end of Jan after the April end of a given tax year), you'll now have to file reports quarterly. This will mean submitting income and expenses data at the start of August, November,



Making Tax Digital

by Rob Halliday

February and May, with each report covering the previous three months.

Also: you'll have to keep records and submit data electronically – no more paper returns, no more online HMRC tax return. The Government has abandoned plans for their own on-line system; you'll have to start using (and of course paying for) suitable commercial software.

As well as all of this, you'll still have to submit a tax return at the end of January, as now, and you'll still ultimately pay your tax as you do now.

But: since the stated aim of these changes is to close the 'tax gap', the amount of tax effectively owed but as yet uncollected, it

surely won't be long before payment also moves to a quarterly model, as is already the case for VAT.

When does this start? Soon! If your 'qualifying income' exceeds £50,000 this year (April 25-April 26), you'll be required to do this from 6 April 2026 on; if it's more than £30,000, a year after that. For £20k and up April 2028 is now confirmed as the start date

It is important to note that these figures are for all the money you receive from self-employment or property before expenses are deducted, in effect your turnover rather than the profit you ultimately pay tax on – this is also like the way the threshold for VAT registration is calculated. If you need time to get in to new habits, it might be worth signing up right now to be part of the test group working this way this year, with the benefit that some of the new penalties for late reporting that will go along with this won't be applied at first.

If you operate as a limited company or a partnership, nothing changes (for now). For those of you who live in the PAYE world, no change, move on, nothing to see here.

Maybe you're an organized freelancer who doesn't load everything in to January; the Government is arguably trying to encourage the rest of us towards the benefits you get – in particular a better idea of your financial position at any given moment. But for all of us, the requirement to do this – with fines if you miss a deadline – is quite a big change, and it is coming quite soon. I'd suggest settling down for a spot of light reading: www.gov.uk/guidance/use-making-tax-digital-for-income-tax/introduction. 🌸



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CAST recently sat down with Sarah Davies, Producer, David Tanqueray, Production Manager, and Jason Hackett, Production Electrician, to chat about their experience on *The Red Shoes* using BlackTrax.

The Red Shoes is a fresh adaptation of the classic Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale, which went on to inspire the renowned film and ballet. This new version written by Nancy Harris and directed by Kimberley Ramparsad, Associate Artistic Director at the Shaw Theatre in Canada, and set and costume designer Colin Richmond, brought together international talent at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC). The play served as the RSC's family Christmas production and was staged at the historic Swan Theatre, a 400-seat venue, in Stratford-upon-Avon.

While primarily a text-based theatrical production, *The Red Shoes* leaned heavily into dance, with ballet playing a significant role in the protagonist's journey. The production was praised for its innovative

staging, seamless storytelling, and integration of magical elements that enhanced the audience experience.

Collaborative Creative Approach

The development of *The Red Shoes* spanned approximately one year, including six weeks of rehearsals followed by a week of previews. The production featured a large cast, dynamic set pieces, and a range of innovative and magical effects, including contributions from renowned

British illusionist, Paul Kieve. His expertise was crucial for designing illusions that blended seamlessly with the story. This required

significant collaboration across departments. Here, the lighting, set, and special effects teams had to work closely together to create cohesive and immersive magic effects.

The Swan Theatre with its thrust stage required special production adjustments to accommodate modern staging and lighting technologies. The team had to work within these constraints to maximize the impact of the show's visual elements.

PRECISION MAGIC AT RSC

***The Red Shoes* uses BlackTrax tracking technology by CAST Group**

Integration of BlackTrax Technology

Meeting the specific requirements of the show was the top priority. Lighting designer Ryan Day needed to accurately track performers using multiple lights from any manufacturer, and different angles, creating a dynamic and immersive visual effect.

This eliminated the need for multiple follow-spot operators, which is often impractical and costly for productions. With BlackTrax, they could use any light in the rig to follow a performer across the stage, enhancing both backlighting and front lighting in ways a traditional follow-spot system simply couldn't.

The technology also brought a greater sense of spectacle and scale to the show, which was particularly important for the RSC's family Christmas production.

"This collaboration between CAST Group and the RSC pushed creative boundaries, delivering a production that reached new artistic heights. We're thrilled with what we accomplished together."

Showcase Moments & Special Effects

The production utilized all three BlackTrax beacon options - Mini Beacons, Mini Beacon Waves and Beacons - each serving a distinct role.

Mini Beacons were attached to moving scenery, enabling seamless tracking.

The same technology was used for a magical sequence featuring "dancing red shoes." Beacon Waves embedded in each puppet shoe ensured a consistent spotlight, making them appear self-moving. The intimate theatre setting amplified the illusion.

Another highlight was a chaotic dinner party scene in which the lead character, Karen, became overtaken by the red shoes, dancing wildly and causing mayhem. The sequence incorporated slow-motion choreography with bursts of strobe lighting, requiring precise tracking. The system's ability to snap between tight-focus lights emphasized key moments - such as a knife landing or a fork striking - while adapting to actor movements, ensuring accuracy.

This adaptability allowed the actors to move naturally, something a human operator could not replicate consistently. The result was seamless storytelling, with technology enhancing both the magic and chaos in ways that felt effortless and organic.

Final Thoughts & Future Innovations

The integration of BlackTrax technology in *The Red Shoes* represented a significant

leap in theatrical lighting and staging capabilities at the RSC.

Looking ahead, CAST Group's recent advancements in tracking with the new Beacon 2.0 addresses some of the challenges experienced in *The Red Shoes*, further enhancing the potential for automated tracking in live theatre.

The success of *The Red Shoes* demonstrated the power of collaboration, innovation, and technology in redefining classic storytelling for modern audiences. #

Photos: Manuel Harlan

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After eight years, interrupted by the pandemic, the quadrennial lighting conference had a spectacular 'in person' return in Dijon. For the FOCUS readers, Nick Moran, and, equipped with an ALPD bursary, Will Monks and Sammy Kissin joined paper presentations and workshops, and Rick Fisher, ALPD President and Showlight Committee member, introduces us to this year's event:

"I have always said that Showlight is the one industry event that I turn down design work to attend, and Dijon once again proved me right with an inspiring live celebration of lighting and the people who do it.

This four yearly conference is truly unlike any other fixture in the lighting calendar in that it focuses on the use of the light, and the users and not on the mechanics. Supported by most leading lighting manufacturers and suppliers this is a show that is about the people and creativity.

I have been proud to have been part of every Showlight since 1997 in Ghent. I also spoke at Edinburgh '01 and Munich '05 after which I was asked to join the organising committee (most probably in an attempt to stop me speaking!) to help curate and choose papers to be presented.

"An inspiring live celebration of lighting"

Showlight '25: Members report from the return of the quadrennial lighting conference

The pandemic nearly put a stop to this entirely volunteer run event that brings together people creating light everywhere from Fringe Theatre to the Olympics, lighting iconic skyscrapers, feature films, TV series to putting lights in abattoirs for puppet shows. But the spirited committee led by Jim Tetlow, could not let it slip away and Dijon was a joyful reminder of Showlight's unique place in our industry.

It takes levels of organising that are truly heroic and involves a large committee with the office support of PLASA to make sure it can all happen.

A long running student programme was supplemented by a new Emerging Professional scheme that enabled early career lighting people to attend Showlight '25, generously sponsored by Ayrton.

Despite our UK based roots, Showlight '25 was more international than ever before with people from all over the world in Dijon. All delegates enjoyed 3 days packed with interesting papers, opportunities for networking and interaction across the industry and memorable hospitality.

Please keep an eye out for Showlight '29, it is worth waiting for and the Committee can always use some new ideas and hands to help make the best event in the lighting calendar happen." www.showlight.org



Clockwise from top left: Le Parc des Expositions et Congrès de Dijon, The volunteer committee, reception at the Palais des Ducs, Jim Tetlow's opening address. Photos this page: Nick Moran (all other Showlight photos Jean Nguyen)

I have attended 3 of the last 4 Showlights, missing out on Showlight 2013 in Český Krumlov. Showlight 2025, hosted by Robert Juliat, left me optimistic in otherwise strange and frightening times.

Showlight Chair Jim Tetlow and the volunteer committee made the event the biggest yet. Maybe despite this, maybe because of this, my abiding memory will be of the openness and humility of “star” presenters, the public and private sharing

of triumphs and small tragedies, and the feeling of 500+ people who were all “on the same wavelength”. I’m not sure I have smiled quite so much since my wedding day, and a little like that day, I left feeling like I’d had warm hugs all week.

Your ALPD Team at Showlight 2025 was Will Monks, Sammi Kissin, and me – and we each have a different focus. I’ll be sharing my impressions of the remarkable

“An affirmation of a shared culture”

Showlight '25: Nick Moran finds support and allyship amongst artistic and technical achievement

presentation of Anne Militello (a fellow practitioner turned academic), fashion designer / artist Clara Daguin, and some thoughts triggered by Phil Supple’s dive into the physics of The Blue Hour.

In the next issue of FOCUS I hope to include a detailed look at the things LD and teacher Clifton Taylor helped us discover in his workshop Color and Light (book of the same name) and the multi-faceted work being done in French science, art, and manufacturing to quantify

the quality of LED light!

The power of light – myth and manipulation

Anne Militello took us on a whistle stop tour of the history of how human societies think and talk about the power of

light. From ancient times, human societies have venerated sources of light. Anne introduced us to Sun Gods well known in the West and to some less well known but deemed no less powerful by their believers. She reminded us that for over 1000 years, starting with Plato and Euclid,



Anne Militello



Clara Daguin

western thought understood the eye to emit light rather than receive it. The ancient, pre-Hindu Vedics, believed that all living things emit light - an aura. Very recent science has confirmed that there is a foundation in this belief – living bodies emit radiation.

Anne had slides of the celebrated bringers of light to the city night in Paris and London – the gas lighters, whose work

perhaps laid the foundations for a safer urban night time, and of the strange (to me) American nineteenth century practice of building Moonlight Towers in downtown areas to “promote an improvement in morality”. [more here: <https://solar.lowtechmagazine.com/2009/01/moonlight-towers-light-pollution-in-the-1800s/>]

exhibition at the NEC or Olympia with no electric light)

Every theatre lighting designer should know about Loie Fuller’s obsession with light. Fortunately, there are some beautiful documentary clips on YouTube – I know because that evening I watched some.

One of Anne’s slides showed examples of devices used to hypnotize subjects with flashing lights, including these perforated

We heard a little about the impact of the Paris Exhibition of 1889, and how Swan and Edison bulbs meant that for the first time the exhibition could stay open into the evening. (Ever wondered why London’s 1851 Great Exhibition needed the Crystal Palace? Imagine an

cylinders designed to sit on a gramophone turntable and spin at 78 rpm.

There was more contemporary science linking light intensity and colour to human behaviour. The relatively recent identification of a third type of photo sensor in our eyes has helped to provide explanations for how all animals use light to help regulate their behaviour, and how human interventions in the intensity and colour of light - artificial light - can mess with these natural rhythms, or be used to therapeutic effect.

We saw shots of the Lichtdom, the cathedral of light that framed rallies of Hitler’s Nazi party in the 1930s, documented in the film Festliches Nürnberg. Over 100 searchlights pointing straight up, an impressive statement of power – visible inside and outside the stadium. When that regime was defeated, at the end of WW2, cities across Europe and North America that had endured blackouts in an attempt to make them less vulnerable to bombing raids, once again turned their lights on, and in Hollywood, the search light became a symbol of celebration.

The power of light to make spectacle was a theme several later presentations. On a large scale, at Disneyland Paris, as the centre piece for New Year’s Eve

celebrations in downtown Dubai, or in retelling the ancient legends of The Maiden's Tower in straits off Istanbul, and on stages large and small too.

Her whistle stop tour looked forward as well as backward. In the Q&A that followed the first panel session, Anne suggested that "We may be looking back in 100 years, realising how little we knew now about perception, reaching out into space and into our brains to understand more about our perception." It was the perfect frame for the later stories told by Showlight's fabulous range of presenters, and it left me at least with a renewed sense of awe and respect for the *stuff* of our work - that maybe we take for granted – The Power of *Light*.

Lighting inside Haute Couture, with Clara Daguin

At the Paris 2024 Olympic opening ceremony, singer Juliette Armanet and pianist Sofiane Pamart performed a rendition of John Lennon's "Imagine" on a floating stage on the Seine. While the flaming piano caused a bit of a stir, it was Clara's beautiful atelier-made dress for singer Armanet, pulsing with light, that was the real visual highlight.

Clara Daguin was born in France but grew up in silicon valley, and her practice

weaves – sometimes literally – lighting technology with high fashion and high profile advertising campaigns. The dress for Armanet had multiple strings of individual LEDs hand sewn into its figure hugging contours, all controlled by custom electronics, also hidden somehow in the dress.

She also showed us (copyright restricted) images of fabulous costumes and props, from campaigns by Google, Nike, embedded with LEDs, some of which were programmed to respond to the wearer's heart-beat or body temperature. She also built the "Christmas Jumper" from the Netflix show, *Emily in Paris*. (There are TikTok clips of the jumper being made, and several other projects too if you are interested @claradaguinofficial.)

Phil Supple embraces The Blue Hour and tells us a bit about how it works

The final session of Showlight Dijon day 1 included some of the most important graphs and diagrams anyone wanting to make outdoor lighting work could see, and some images of just how Phil Supple puts theory into practice.

Like many other presenters at Showlight this year, Phil's down to earth and almost self-effacing manner belie his international reputation for creating large scale public



Phil Supple

light-art works, such as this stunning illumination of a lake-side forest.

Back in the last century I spent some time pretending to be a physicist, so I was vaguely familiar with Rayleigh Scattering, the process that leads us to see a cloudless sky as blue. What had not occurred to me at least was that the reason the sky gets bluer towards the horizon is because the light scatters through more atmosphere, so more other wavelengths get filtered out. But there's more going on than that! (Phil has a Master's degree in this stuff.) He introduced us to the Chappuis Band.

Then we hit the real cruncher. When is sunset? Many of you probably know that there's more than one sunset, the first is when the sun slips below the horizon, sure. But sunlight is still hitting the various layers of our atmosphere and reflecting back to us so we then get Nautical Twilight – when the sun is between 6 and 12 degrees below the horizon, followed by Astronomical Twilight, when the sun is between 12 and 18 degrees below the horizon. During this time, the earth casts a shadow in the sky!

So, the Chappuis effect and the earth shadow effect both contribute to there being more blue light around at dusk. In addition, our eyes start to adapt as the

intensity reduces, and we begin to perceive the world primarily through receptors that are much more sensitive to blue light than to red – this is often referred to as "night vision". In the eastern sky, opposite the orange of the setting sun, we perceive the "natural" light as blue – hence "the blue hour".

This is – naturally – a massively slimmed down version of what Phil shared, and he did go on to say that weather effects can really mess things up colour-wise, as well as electrically of course.

Outside the Conference Hall

There is so much more to Showlight than the presentations though. Before and between conference sessions there are the Exhibitors – including ourselves. Will, Sammy, Rick, and I had some very interesting chats with visitors on our stand, and at the buffet lunches, teas and coffees, wine and cakes!

Then there was the city of Dijon, our host, and beautiful location for many an informal get together, and lighting experiments. The event – it is so much more than a conference – is a chance to breath among friends old and new, and to celebrate what can be achieved in the lovely, many faceted, and fantastical practice of show lighting! #

This was my first Showlight and I am sure it will not be my last. I'm always slightly wary of networking events, especially when practitioners I greatly admire are in the mix. Showlight was different though.

It was brimming with a love for lighting that democratised everybody there. Never before have I felt so connected with the lighting community, or felt myself so seen and represented as by the speakers. It was wildly informative with a huge breadth of access points into the craft of lighting design, but also incredibly affirming to see the power that is generated by crafting images with light to tell stories, and the validity of marrying technology and art in so many exciting ways.

The range of practices was dazzling, and I'll go a little deeper into three sections: Dr. Yaron Abulafia's talk on using light as a gesture of a space for the audience to complete in their mind, the papers from the cross-genre practitioners mashing

filmic and theatrical techniques together, and David Duffy's adventures in an isolated Icelandic fishing village's puppetry festival.

There is often an underlying assumption in the public discourse that there is a fundamental gradient in the world with art and creativity at one end and science and technicality on the other. The practice of lighting design is proof that this is wholly

untrue, and **Dr Yaron Abulafia** embodies this perfectly.

His approach resembles the scientific method. He begins with "Design Objectives/Poetic Goals" and later in the

paper reflects on whether he reached those goals, in the form of reviews, interviews and feedback.

We are presented with two case studies: *The Place Of Choice* from Stuttgart Ballet, based on *Divine Comedy*, and *Full Frontal* from the Dutch National Ballet. The talk takes us through the use of scientific studies and the findings of neuroscience

to inform his interrogations and choices when collaborating on these pieces.

The scenography for both of these ballets were based around light, with the medium bearing thematic and symbolic importance. We see images central to each of *The Place Of Choice's* phases. First a titanic soft circle hung above the dancers. Durational changes form the background as it dominates the stage image and allows movement to take focus. Next, Yaron shares video showing bodies

moving through light curtains, an ethereal boundary being crossed by anonymous figures. The images themselves are striking and moving, but it is clear that the "Poetic Goals" set out at the beginning provide the rigour with which the design as a whole is assured and fiercely relevant.

This precision focus on the "why" and not the "how" that Yaron champions with his paper is one of the most powerful aspects of the whole conference. The specifics of techniques took a background

– this isn't a "how-to" but a "what happened". The second paper of the week finishes and it's clear that there is a huge wealth of knowledge that will be shared by the end of the event.

Christina Thanasoula, Nick Schlieper and Elanor Higgins are billed together halfway through the first day. While there are talks from cinematographers, DoPs and filmmakers throughout the week, these three are put together for the way their featured work mashes up genres using

cameras within a live performance setting.

Christina Thanasoula first presents her insights into the use of live feed. She draws a parallel between the job of stage lighting and the job of a camera: both guiding focus and framing the action presented. "I am the camera", a quote from LD

Jennifer Tipton, is writ large on the presentation screen.

But what happens when these two forms are used together? Christina acknowledges what all stage lighting designers realise when they first move to lighting for camera, that the drama and boldness of stage lighting comes out as overdone and uncomfortably unnatural when viewed as video. There are conceptual challenges too. "You end up in a maze of points of view" she posits.

Her case study of her 2021 Greek production *Paradise* looks at how she rises to these challenges. She "treats the camera like a VIP audience member". Imagery is created for the camera, and its point of view is projected for the rest of the audience. It's a neat solution that we see echoed in the later talks.

Christina's musings on scales and points of view lead neatly into the next paper. **Nick Schlieper** presents his work in a medium that he terms "cine-theatre". He focusses on *The Picture Of Dorian Gray*, but gives an insight into productions of *Dracula* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, with similar design sensibilities. *Dorian* was nominated for six Tony Awards, including Nick's lighting design.

"Brimming with a love for lighting"

Showlight '25: Will Monks reports on the dazzling range of practices



Dr Yaron Abulafia



Christina Thanasoula

These shows have huge projection surfaces that show the audience live camera feeds and recorded sequences blended together, which forms the backbone of the design. He's clear to establish what the productions are or aren't though. What they are not doing is using projection as an addition to (or substitution for) the scenery, nor are they creating a piece of cinema where the "making of" is live in front of you. He's describing an attempt to marry the two forms to create something greater than the sum of its parts, rather than the lowest common denominator.

The shows are a hit with audiences and critics alike. Nick describes *Dorian* as "an



Nick Schlieper

applause machine". It's dizzying to see behind the scenes. Camera operators choreographed as precisely as the actor and pre-filmed content is planned out to a tee so that it is indistinguishable from the live feed footage.

Nick repeats Christina's earlier point of how drastically different it is to light for stage as for film. He talks about when he compromised between what was good for one medium, and when he chose to lean into the differences. He brings up a photo from *Dorian Gray* where the performer is blasted with light and the camera's aperture is dialled fully open. The resultant projected image is over-exposed and blowing out. Although it might look as though it would be terrible on a histogram, it serves the moment in the story perfectly.

Filming the prerecorded content for *Dorian* locked the looks in for the stage images, as they needed to blend in perfectly with the live feed. All lighting needed to be as identical as possible. The lighting bars in the pre-production studio were several metres lower than they would be for the final piece though, so angles and positions for lighting fixtures had to be calculated to emulate the same effect. He pulls up the rig plan for this filming setup. It seems digestible. But two

versions of each filmed asset needed creating. One for the raked stage in the confirmed performance, and another on a flat in case a transfer comes to fruition. So it's two filming stages at 90° from each other using the same rig, which are approximations for two rigs in venues which are then 50% higher, all while accounting for camera moves that translate the filming area to different stage areas, with lights for the green screen to boot. My brain is in knots. Nick pulls up the final rig plan. It's wild. Beam angles and focus notes for each fixture in each shot of each stage for each venue are piled on top of each other in a porridge of attempted clarifications.

All this precision with the setup was in aid of a live event though. The control that Nick wrought was to bring audiences a crafted experience, which dovetailed nicely with the final paper of the session, where **Elanor Higgins** describes stepping out of her comfort zone and off the Welsh coast for a site-specific livestreamed one-off performance called *Galwad*.

This production by National Theatre Wales and Collective Cymru is the other side of the coin from Christina and Nick's. Elanor's paper is aptly titled *Stepping Out Of The Comfort Zone*, it is about embracing the chaos that came from the

various elements of outdoor productions, underwater filming, live audiences spread across a huge footprint, livestreaming, and environmentally dependant light art.

She takes us through the iterations in the R&D phase for underwater lights used both in a prerecorded segment and the live sections. Elanor and her associate PJ talked to Bryn Williams at Light Initiative and they came up with a bespoke solution involving Perspex, which they used in conjunction with MBSE Aquabats to create the magical effects needed for the piece that would eventually be spliced into the final livestream. It's a story of success through collaboration.

Also a part of the performance is an installation from light artist Ronan Devlin. Clear skies blessed the night (although not the whole production period – the followspots perched on the Welsh hillsides didn't all survive) which allowed the water pumps to spray a film of water to perfectly catch the lights in an aurora of colour.

Christina Thanasoula, Nick Schlieper and Elanor Higgins are three practitioners with both a commonality to their tools and a uniqueness with their approaches. An hour and a half of insights from them and I'm buzzing with anticipation for the next time I'm mixing media.



Elanor Higgins

It's the morning of the final day. Good wine and good food and good conversations have filled the evening before. The Showlight committee know what they're doing – they've teed up

David Duffy's charismatic charm as the perfect morning-after treat.

Throughout the week it was abundantly clear that the conference was full of



David Duffy

people who utterly love what they do. The session that came up time and again in conversations was when the youngest presenter, Sophya Acosta, took to the stage to present a paper that was

essentially a love letter to small venues. The emotion she brought rang true for so many people I spoke to after. This connection to what we do and the fulfilment that that brings was the centre of

David Duffy's story of his adventures in Iceland.

Set in a remote Icelandic fishing village, playing host to a puppetry festival, featuring an adapted version of a Little Angel/Kneehigh/Silent Tide piece. There are no theatrical resources, but he is determined to bring the production values to what this show deserves. His guiding principle of "it's not what you could do but what you can do" leads him to jury rigging a meat processing plant into an ad-hoc stage and rig.

First, we are introduced to the village and its way of life. David gives details of its communal leanings and propensity for a barter economy.

He shares a picture that looks like Rube Goldberg's answer to a lighting boom. He has already asserted that "after quarter of a century of life on the road, I'm of the opinion that there's no problem in theatre that can't be resolved by good old rummage". Two palettes turned sideways, a bit of one-by-two secured across their span, using cannibalised pieces of industrial fishing equipment. A fixture from the Strand archives is screwed into the middle, providing sidelight. He waxes lyrical about the palettes. As secure as they probably are, it certainly doesn't look that way. There is collective clenching of

buttocks thinking about the damage that a gentle shove or hearty gust of wind might cause. David grins cheekily: "if the Vegas Sphere team are still here, I am available for consultation".

News of his success has spread across the village and other companies make requests for similar scavenged-material booms for their shows. He shows us a photo of himself next to a pile of palettes twice his height. From both the photo and the stage he's beaming ear to ear. The joy is infectious.

The scene is set. The palettes are screwed together. The sun is as close to setting as it gets at midnight on the solstice in the Arctic Circle. A puppet show plays out at the end of an adventure marked by passion and innovation.

In our day to day lives as lighting designers, we're often hyper focussed on what's in front of us, working with our immediate teams to create work that needs to be ready for the looming press night. Showlight, full of likeminded people sharing their love for the industry and craft that they're immersed in, generates a feeling of connectedness that's hard to describe. It reaffirmed how exciting and fulfilling it is to do what we do, and made me understand how we all exist in the lighting design landscape. #

Women in Lighting at Showlight

Lucy Carter comments: "Sophia yesterday talked about role models and how important they are. And about the need to make our trade, our talent, our contributions seen and recognised and known. It spoke to me. As a woman who started over 30 years ago I didn't have so many role models. That was hard but I survived and met many people along the way who have been very encouraging and supportive in this still quite male saturated industry. It's

hard for me to put myself forward and shout. I know the people who know me would possibly think different but even they don't know the energy I have to use in advance just to put myself forward and swallow my nerves. Every woman who has spoken here this week I can guarantee they experience the same anxiety and imposter syndrome.

So thank you to all the speakers and especially to all the women speakers and workshop leaders from me, and as a small celebration, we took a photo at Showlight '25, to push the role models we all need into visibility for the next generations." #



On Willie Williams and Marco Miglioli: Over the course of the Showlight papers series, parallels began to draw themselves between seemingly unrelated subjects.

One perfect example of one of these tangential connections, came to me as I was listening to talks by architect and lighting designer Marco Miglioli on his design for the Milanese Cathedral and industry “disruptor” Willie Williams’, who discussed his experiences designing the inaugural U2 concert for The Sphere in Las Vegas.

Marco Miglioli, founder of Archilite Studios, is an architectural and theatrical lighting designer with fifteen years under his belt whilst Willie Williams has been a creative director and lighting designer for large scale spectacles for over forty years. Employing a design principle which Willie has labelled “maximum minimalism”, which basically entails being as restrained as possible when designing for legendary bands, gargantuan spaces, and huge audiences, Willie has created iconic designs such as a rig built out of German cars, an LED screen which slid off the stage for George Michael and the first ever live feed (albeit very low res) LED curtain before such things even had a name.

On the face of it, these designers and two vastly different architectural lighting projects have little in common. One involved the latest pearl in Las Vegas’ crown, The Sphere, an LED dome so big it could swallow the Statue of Liberty whole, and the other, a bastion of history and religious faith, Milan’s Medieval Cathedral, built seven centuries earlier. Throughout their respective talks, however, Willie and Marco showed that despite their wildly different appearances and purposes, the work and imagination required to design the light for these spaces was remarkably similar. As Marco aptly said “churches have always been theatre”, so it is no wonder, really, that both designers focused on theatrical, as well as architectural design principles to sculpt their spaces.

Marco’s recent relighting of the Milan Cathedral is a lesson in sensitive application of theatricality to sacred architectural lighting. Where previously, high consumption brutal discharge lamps glared off the marble floor and left the

soaring vertical columns and sacred sculptures hidden in darkness, his new design emphasised the humbling verticality, texture of the stone and the cathedral’s ethereal grandeur whilst enhancing energy efficiency. Marco, used over 800 individually controlled LED fixtures at a warm 4000K, and using these new systems he was able to cut energy consumption and increase light output by approximately two thirds. Operated by

Flying cars, Cathedrals, Dance and Loopholes

Showlight 2025: Sammy Kissin reports on presentations by Willie Williams & Marco Miglioli, Lucy Carter and Sherry Coenen

WIFI, the new flexible system allowed light to move like a narrative thread, guiding the eye, framing sacred rituals, and animating stone with spiritual vitality.

Contrast this with The Sphere, where marble canvas gives way entirely to digital



Willie Williams



Marco Miglioli

skin. Designed for an entirely immersive experience, its surface, both inside and out, is made of ultra-high-resolution LED panels that curve uninterrupted around the audience. The entire Sphere becomes an enveloping visual experience: the proscenium dissolving and the audience existing within the image. So, when **Willie Williams**, longtime U2 creative director,

was tasked with the creative direction of the first ever concert in the space, it took him a whole minute to find the right creative angle, mainly since there literally weren’t any. Eventually, it was precisely this absence of architectural reference points which allowed for his creative entry point: noticing the absence of architectural corners (and understanding how we

subconsciously use them to orient ourselves), Williams realised he could introduce virtual architecture to completely reframe how the audience experienced space and scale in this space.

Using this design approach, Willie and U2 can usher the audience, not into the dome of The Sphere that they expect, but into an angular concrete roofed arena with

realistic recessed lighting, complete with dodgy bulbs. He can also introduce easter eggs such as an escaped balloon clinging to the ceiling, a pigeon that can be triggered from a phone to flap across the space and finally the arrival of the band to the space via a virtual helicopter which flies across an “aperture” in roof. It’s classic world building, using trompe-l’œil techniques for the modern age. Later on he can transform the space into various vistas and finally make the walls fall away revealing the desert city skyline. The brilliance here wasn’t just in the tech — though his use of creating virtual spaces, false ceilings, and animated pigeons was masterful — but in understanding what the lack of real-world cues could allow: a total, shared, immersive experience shaped by story, music, and collective emotion.

What connects both projects is their deeply theatrical ethos. In Milan, lighting is part of a spiritual dramaturgy: a single candle begins the Easter Vigil spreading out like a wave of light until the entire nave is illuminated; a soft profile isolates the lector; a subtle shift transitions the focus to the altar. Each cue follows the flow of a sacred ritual. In Las Vegas, the narrative is sensory and becomes surreal, built on scale and illusion. But the emotional goal is shared—whether in

prayer or at a concert: to create drama, attention and shared belonging.

These two cathedrals—one hewn in stone, the other made from pixels—also reminds us of the evolving toolkit of the lighting designer. Stone offers permanence, history, weight and requires its own treatment. LED offers endless adaptability and immediacy and likewise needs to be approached differently. Arguably neither material has meaning without intention and each carries its own technical challenges. Whether you are adjusting a unit to graze a 15th-century column thirty-three meters high on a gangway as Marco did or designing a show virtually for an as yet un-finished structure, working with quarter scale model, the true medium remains the same: the human imagination, perception of space, time, and presence through light.

Lucy Carter: Rhythm is a Dancer - and so is Light

Lucy is one of the UK’s most respected lighting designers with over thirty years’ experience across opera, theatre, installation and of course, as the title of the talk, “Rhythm is a Dancer and so is Light” references, dance. Lucy began by explaining how her early days as a student

of dance and choreography led her to a career in dance lighting and how this grounding has influenced all areas of her practice. Lighting design, she says is a means of “expressing [her] creative thoughts and ideas” rather than something functional. Lucy explained that she sees light as a “co-performer”, equal among the dancers on the stages she lights, which means that her role, by extension, is that of a choreographer of light. The way she experiences light as a “feeling in her body and mind - a kinetic breath” is comparable to the way a choreographer experiences movement when conjuring the steps, timing and overall movement of a new dance.

In her presentation slides, Lucy referred to the “choreographic tools” she puts into service as she designs as “body, action, time, space and energy”. She also referred to certain provocations and considerations such as motif, rhythm, effort, planes and levels which she draws into her practice. As a new designer, I found Lucy’s methodology of physicalising the properties of light really helpful. By applying these tangible qualities to light, it becomes something more concrete to work with, giving form to what can often be a dizzyingly theoretical and amorphous medium.



Lucy’s tastes lean towards “abstraction and non-realism”, a style well suited to the world of dance where set is often scarce, and light is called upon to “sculpt the space [and] direct the eye”, as well as to enforce or create rhythm and provide semiotic cues for the audience. With such freedom it is crucial that the designs do their job clearly and purposefully to make sure that the ideas are clearly conveyed, which is where Lucy’s rigorous research process comes into play.

Lucy was very clear that her designs are always drawn up after a thorough research period. Together she and her creative collaborators interrogate the primary sources, explore the themes, context, motifs and impetus’ driving the story. Lucy’s process is “ideas and sensation driven”, every idea needs to justify its presence.

Wolf Works by Sir Wayne McGregor, which Lucy designed for its Opera House debut in 2015 is a prime example of how she and the creative team led with idea and sensation. McGregor’s three act ballet based on Virginia Woolf’s novels and letters, essays and diaries sees Lucy’s design setting mood, meaning and psycho-spatial and temporal movement. In the opening act time and place become plastic, shadows pass through space, as

Mrs Dalloway moves through London. The changing emotional landscapes take centre stage, such as when she imagines Septimus, a traumatised victim of the First World War as he emerges, lit in the “shocking white” of HMI revealing his interior desolation and then, as we follow him, this dissolves into the “emotional toxicity” of the sodium bathed aftermath of the cinders of the battlefield.

Act Two, *Becomings*, was inspired by Orlando, Woolf’s eponymous, gender swapping hero, who travels through time and place to the tune of 300 years. Lucy showed us a clip from the opening sequence where a single beam of light “searches out” the dancers, who, dressed in abstract period costume, are revealed to the audience, then lost in their mad “dash through time”. Later in the piece, she used laser thin lights to “construct worlds from the ether”, defining and redefining spaces on stage. As well as serving an architectural purpose, these lines of light drawn through the space act as manifestations of “the threads of history” and time which stretch out from each of the characters. These symbolic threads of light even break the fourth wall, reaching out towards the audience, pulling all our histories into a shared present.

Lucy also showed us some images of her installation, *Hidden*, made for Sadler’s Wells where the body is absent altogether leaving light as the sole performer. It was set in the theatre’s lighting store and was a sort of love letter to the backstage teams she’s worked with and the analogue lanterns that were the first tools of her trade. She imagines them, in the quiet after-hours of the theatre, humming to life under the stage. They buzz, blink, play and chase before the most senior, largest and loudest among them soothes the smaller ones into silence and calm. It’s a particularly nostalgic piece given the gradual phasing out of these tungsten lights, the old workhorses of theatre lighting. Here she allowed the lanterns to take centre stage, the technical aspects intentionally invisible, allowing the lights to dance unencumbered.

A process of forensic research and conceptual investigation underpins all Lucy’s work. This means that she can feel secure in knowing that she’s never “grabbing at lighting looks that purely stimulate the eye or create visual impact for its own sake” but rather that each cue is “responding to the core ideas and intention of the work”. As an emerging professional, this sort of methodology is incredibly empowering. It’s reassuring to

know that if I ever get lost in the weeds when designing a show, if I feel myself becoming distracted by tech or if I’m being asked to compromise beyond what is comfortable, I can feel confident that

I’ve done the work and I’ll have a solid base, a foundational map drawn up during that initial period of research that I can use to find my way back.



Sherry Coenen

Similarly to after a workshop given by fellow ALPD member Sherry Coenen, I was left with a feeling of having been gifted some really usable tools by Lucy’s presentation. It was a great privilege to be given this insight into Lucy’s practice and how she goes about crafting her work.

Sherry Coenen’s “Lighting Loopholes”

Throughout the ShowLight paper series we heard from designers who showed staggering resourcefulness in the face of tremendous technical challenges. David Gray talked about being tasked by DreamWorks to create a Theme Park lighting design for among others, the world of KungFu Panda and Shrek, both set in medieval, pre-electrical times. This resulted in David having to invent cunning lighting solutions including lanterns that reflected light downwards to simulate candlelight. David’s talk also took us to the Middle East where he was charged with the re-designing of the exterior lighting systems of Dubai’s Burj Al Khalifa, the world’s tallest building. At 828 meters in height, this came with myriad technical issues, whilst David contended with battling his own “savage vertigo”. Meanwhile Anne Serieges, who headed up technical support for lighting installation at various Olympic venues, outlined how she

and her collaborators installed a layer of translucent white plastic over the entire glass ceiling of Le Grande Palais, to make the light suitable for the Fencing Championships in 2024. The above examples are just a few of how some large scale projects with large scale budgets dealt with large scale problems, but what do you do when the productions and budgets you are dealing with are of an altogether more scaled down nature?

This is where **Sherry Coenen’s** workshop “Lighting Loopholes” came into its own. As soon as I saw Sherry’s workshop on the line-up, I was excited to hear her talk. Sherry is an award-winning Lighting Designer with vast experience working both in the UK and the United States. She won a Knight of Illumination nomination for her design for the wildly successful *Operation Mincemeat*, whilst her long association with the Little Angel and Polka Theatres is testament that she, like fellow speaker, David Duffy, is a lynchpin of the UK’s young people’s theatre world. Over the years I have seen over a dozen of Sherry’s shows and am always impressed with the playfulness, precision and enchantment that she engenders in all her designs. The scope of her ideas and designs invariably dwarf the stages (and budgets) that she often works with.

As a designer right at the beginning of my lighting career, I regularly find myself dealing with very limited technical resources and tiny budgets, so I found Sherry's outside the box thinking and maverick approach to problem solving super inspiring. Her advice to think laterally about selecting your light sources, to consider how inexpensive practicals can be re-purposed and do the job of more expensive lighting fixtures if called upon to do so was both strikingly creative and financially prudent. She encouraged us to think about how "anything with a plug has potential" citing an incident where "a Russian company used an electric cooker as a ...dimmer".

Sherry's workshop was a mixture of practical wisdom and a chance to peek into the magician's bag. We got the chance to play with torches of all shapes and sizes - ones that could be held, clipped to a shirt or bounced up off a parabolic reflective umbrella to create a beautiful shroud of light downlight. They were battery operated, powered by kinetic-movement, some came in the shape of a curling stone or another a book. What they all offered were freedom from power cables and portability, which when you're working on outdoor or promenade shows or in under-resourced

venues can be, if not quite life-saving, then certainly option expanding.

Sherry has been experimenting over the years with "having actors self-light". She has achieved this in different shows through different means - in *Operation Mince meat* a submarine moment was achieved by simply pointing a torch forward and voila an actor operated follow-spot, no need for outside operators or pricey wireless control. In a promenade performance, Sherry took a welder's helmet and retro fitted LED strip to the inside of the mask to create a mobile moving source of face light. The effect was both simple and magical, and even in the relatively well lit trade-show foyer it was easy to see how enchanting this would be in a performance.

Sherry's workshop was all about finding elegant, clever, and appropriate lighting solutions. Her generosity, humour, good sense and ingenuity were as inspiring as her designs are beautiful and moving. At an event that David Duffy quipped was akin to "The Live Aid" of the Lighting Design, Sherry Coenen's workshop proved that Showlight was definitely a place that welcomed those of us still taking our first steps in this industry and that sometimes, a torch and a good idea can be the ideal solution to your problem. #



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. Please email to editor@thealpd.org.uk

"There's a Light..."

Captured by Dan Tomkinson

This reaches FOCUS via David Howe, LD on the Rocky Horror Show European Tour. Captured by Musical Director Dan Tomkinson, the protagonists are rewarded with a nightsky courtesy of the audience. And their phones. 📱



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Discount to members for recruiting newcomers: **£10 off next year's membership for Professional/Affiliate members and £5 for Associate. The new member applicant MUST cite them when applying.**

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FOCUS is your magazine from members for members of the ALPD. We really like to publish your show pictures, interview you, hear your thoughts on new tech or old niggles (production desks!). Please do get in touch! editor@thealpd.org.uk

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