

ALD #

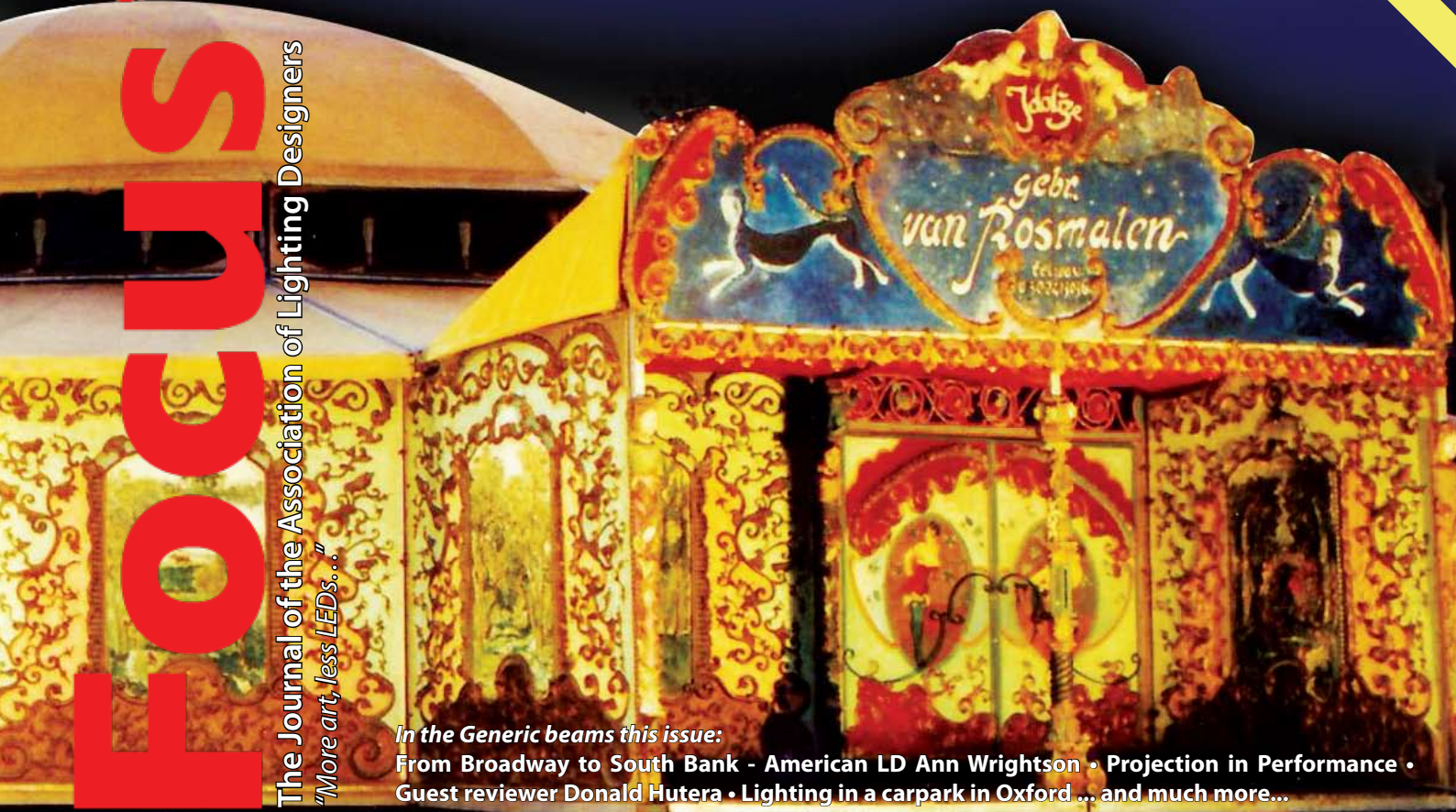
FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers

"More art, less LEDs..."

In the Generic beams this issue:

From Broadway to South Bank - American LD Ann Wrightson • Projection in Performance • Guest reviewer Donald Hutera • Lighting in a carpark in Oxford ... and much more...





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Rick's Recovery plan

As spring is finally coming and the economic news keeps getting grimmer I have been thinking of what sort of stimulus the lighting world needs to keep us going. We, as mostly freelance workers, might be feeling very vulnerable in the entertainment industry which is necessary but hardly as essential as bailing out failed bankers or insurance tycoons.

Everyone will be using the economy as a great excuse (along with all the funding going to the Olympics) about why budgets, fees, and indeed everything except ticket prices are at a standstill (I know we all noticed the price of theatre tickets going down 2½ % to reflect the lower VAT rate).

Information is even more essential at this time so please do contribute to the ALD fee database and then you will have access the best resource as to what people are being paid for lighting.

As I have said before there is probably no better back up plan than being a member of Equity. If things do go very wrong the services of the Union can really kick in. I know that there are a few vacancies on the Designers committee and if anyone wants to join to make sure that *lighting designers'* voices are heard in the Union please let the office know immediately. Our presence on this committee has made a real difference and we need to continue to keep our concerns heard at Equity.

But real stimulus is available to all ALD members at *Showlight* which is going to be held in Glasgow, where the whole range of lighting will be illuminated from candle light to the Beijing Olympics, lighting the Bond and *Mamma Mia* films to what being green means for our industry. The dates are 16-19 May and if there is anyway you can be there even for a day to share in the conference and the camaraderie I can guarantee you that you will be stimulated and refreshed.

Also I am pleased to report that plans for the third *Light Relief Day* April 24 are now fully underway with very substantial backing from most of the West End and touring shows, and many others joining in to support

with individual contributions here in the UK and in the USA. The sad fact is that the economic climate is going to make the support that *Light Relief* and its American counterpart *Behind the Scenes* can provide even more necessary in the future. Please do join in supporting our charity and make sure than anyone you know in this industry who is in need of its help knows that *Light Relief* is there.

I am on the road almost constantly for the next few months, but I do look forward to seeing you all at the AGM in June.

Regards, Rick#



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Visit the ALD at PLASA FOCUS...

Royal Armouries, Leeds April 28-29

Created by the organisers of the PLASA Show in London, PLASA Focus is an informal two-day event where you will find solutions, discover what's new for 2009 and meet up with other ALD members.

With representation from major worldwide industry players including many ALD Corporate members, this is your chance to meet the teams and see the products behind the world's most innovative shows, tours, installations and venues.

Be the first to sample the technology that is coming to market in 2009 and put your questions to a wide spectrum of experts, from the smallest and most innovative new companies to international market leaders.

Be you a designer, operator or student - if you have an

interest in entertainment technology then you can register now, completely free of charge

PLASA Focus takes place on 28th - 29th April 2009 in the Saviles and Royal Armouries Halls at The Royal Armouries in Leeds.

Education

Alongside networking opportunities on the show floors, PLASA Focus offers a free programme of educational seminars.

There are eight seminars: **Tuesday 28th:** *Salford Quays Media City; Tallescopes – Friend or Foe?; PPE for Working At Height; and The Theatres Trust Open Forum.*

Wednesday 29th: *Making BS8901 Work For You; Freelancing In The Industry; BS5839-8 Overview Voice Alarm Design; and Surrounded*

by Sound - Royal Exchange Theatre. All seminars are free to attend and cover a wide spectrum of international issues and regional initiatives. It is essential to pre-book space on each individual seminar session to avoid disappointment.

With the emphasis of networking and socialising opportunities and a continuation of the well-loved, informal AC Lighting North show format, PLASA Focus is a success story amid the economic climate. As well as drawing a phenomenal response from visitors and both regional and international exhibitors alike, it will showcase a wide range of lighting, audio, AV and other technologies.

As with the show's predecessor, admission is free, the seminars are free

(yes, there is such a thing as a free lunch), with a buffet provided for all visitors and exhibitors.

Trade organisations

Overwhelming support has been extended by key trade organizations to the show including the ALD, ABTT, ISCE and PSA.

Don't forget to visit the ALD stand for your ALD members' free swag!

The show is supported by the Theatres Trust and the opportunities the event presents to bring regional theatres together to discuss key business issues including sustainability.

The new PLASA Focus website is online at www.plasafocus.com/leeds and offers a free online registration facility for visitors.#

ALD Corporates:
Please drop in and thank them for their continued support of the ALD!

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What is the Place of Video on Stage?

Projection in Performance Seminar at The Barbican, 20th February 2009

by our man in the front row, Nick Moran

If you care about the quality of the answer you get to any question, you make sure you ask the right people. When Ben Sumner of Guildhall School of Music and Drama opened the proceedings at the recent seminar on *Projection in Performance* he was rightly pleased with the panel of experts assembled. Speakers included Simon McBurney (Complicité), Lloyd Newson (DV8 Physical Theatre), Thomas Grey (The Grey Circle) Finn Ross and Dick Straker (Mesmer) and Bill Dudley (leading international stage designer).

Ben wanted to know how training courses such as the stage management degree he is responsible for at Guildhall, should be adapting and evolving to accommodate the increasing use of video in performance. The London Centre for Arts and Cultural Exchange (LCACE) helped to

fund the event, so that rather than keep all the answers to themselves, Guildhall could make the day open to anyone interested.

So why use video?

Simon McBurney had, by his own admission, an unusual childhood. For a man often thought synonymous with use of the protected moving image on stage, he grew up in a house without a TV. In his delightful and thought-provoking keynote address, he focused on three questions: *"Why video in theatre? How do we use it? What is it doing / how is it 'working'?"*

McBurney's father was an archaeologist, and for him time was about vertical depth rather than horizontal progression. This is a way of looking at time that McBurney believes is useful for theatre too. He asked us to think about the curious

nature of the relationship between theatre and moving image.

For McBurney, the relationship between film and theatre is largely about time, or at least the perception of time. If photographs are about a captured moment in time, they are about the past. Cinema then is about the future; what will happen next? Theatre is about the present, "Right here with us now", about potentials, risk and presence.

Upstaging by the moving image

So what about moving images (time in waiting) on the 'here and now' stage? And what about live camera images projected on stage? What is happening in Katie Mitchell's *Waves*, where the actors film each other and the camera output is projected onto a large screen

above their heads? Why is the eye drawn so powerfully to the screen, even when the image is of something we can see live at the same time? This is question that troubles Mitchell herself, and came up again in many presentations. Finn Ross, Bill Dudley and Thomas Grey all acknowledged that it is all too easy for moving image to overwhelm all other aspects of performance.

Reclaiming human reaction

McBurney talked about theatre reclaiming from cinema some of the things early cinema had stolen from it – and about human reaction to new things, new technology, from stone-age man's first use of metal to our own appropriation of video technology in theatre. Like Lloyd Newson later in the day, he talked about the use of video to amplify the image of



Simon McBurney in full flow with an image of ancient cave art from his father's archaeological studies

What is the Place of Video on Stage? Nick Moran

a performer in a large space – and compared that to Greek mask, an ancient technology that allowed performers to affect spectators in huge amphitheatres.

After reminding us that mixing moving images and live action goes back to the earliest days of cinema (and possibly even before that), McBurney tellingly asked those who use video and film on stage to go beyond doing things just because it seems to be original or new. Beyond technology for effect, as practitioners, we need to ask *is there an affect?* Does using video “push the emotional content of what we do?” and again, like Newson later in the day, he asks us to reject anything that does not help convey meaning.

Mixed reviews in New York

McBurney has recently directed *All My Sons* on Broadway working with Finn Ross of Mesmer, to “mixed” reviews: the *New York Times* hated it, though *NY Time Out*

was much more positive. The negative reviewers seemed to be upset that video had been used at all on a “drama” stage, but why should this be the case?

Is this, as McBurney proposed, just another symptom of ignoring the visual in text-based drama in English, on both sides of the Atlantic? He reminded us that while the paying public in France are called *spectators* – a word with its origin in sight and the visual, in English we are the *audience* – a word with its origin in hearing. Whether this is the chicken or the egg, it does indicate where the focus of attention is, or at least has been, on the English speaking stage. Shakespeare’s audiences came to “hear the play”. But things are changing...

Why use this technology?

Lloyd Newson, while being very guarded about the “virtual projection” technology behind the visually stunning DV8 show

Just For Show, insists on always asking “why are we using this technology?” What is the metaphor? DV8 use moving image to frame, to affect, and to do “tricks” - seemingly endless repetitions of dance movements, doubling up of dancers, enabling a dancer to duet with themselves, appearance and disappearance – all to ask questions of the audience.

For Newson, as for McBurney, video is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Their take is that video is just the latest bit of technology appropriated by “magpie” theatre – a “bunch of charlatans and liars” who, being just that, know the truth when we see it.

Borrowing back from cinema

Bill Dudley too is involved in borrowing back from cinema – using the techniques of the CGI studios to create moving three-dimensional worlds beyond the physical

boundaries of the stage. His work includes *Hitchcock Blond*, *Coast of Utopia* and *Woman in White*, all pieces with a cinematic range of digitally-created locations projected onto essentially flat surfaces from angles steep enough to allow performers to almost interact with them.

In these productions he used software such as Cinema 4D and AfterEffects to create a moving 3D world that so captivates the attention of the audience that – as Bill said – they don’t notice numerous stage hands coming on and re-setting the stage.

The key to this, Bill believes, is parallax. That is the appearance of depth conjured up by our brains when we see foreground and background move at appropriately different rates. This is the stuff of games programmers taken onto 100 foot wide screens at the National Theatre and curved and rotating walls for *Woman in White*. Bill recommends

www.cgsociety.org where experts and novices discuss such subjects as “*How light is reflecting from crushed black velvet*”, so they can more accurately model it.

Lighting designers and projection

In the closing Q&A session, Bill Dudley reiterated his belief that he has been poorly served by some of the lighting designers he has worked with, which provoked two interesting comments from the audience, both from ALD professional members.

Simon Corder asked, perhaps somewhat tongue in cheek, if Bill thought that rather than create a separate discipline of Video Designer, we should return to the days of one overall vision – the stage designer or scenographer? Just as that debate was getting going, Dick Straker of Mesmer asked “*Isn’t that the director?*” ...editing and inspiring a team that includes many designers and technicians?



Finn Ross in conversation



Paul Davies (University of Kent), Hansjorg Schmidt (Rose Bruford), Cathy Sandys (LIPA)



Bill Dudley with a slide advertising the virtual Rose Theatre, another project for the ambitious digital scenographer





Scott Palmer and Sita Popat from University of Leeds presented the work from their Projecting Performance research project

What is the Place of Video on Stage? Nick Moran

Professional member Natasha Chivers argued, from experience of her award-winning work on *Sunday in the Park with George*, that the only way for video design and lighting design to work for both to be brought on board early in the process (as they are in the work of McBurny's *Complicité*). As Ms Chivers said: "It's a huge amount of extra work to do it well and we (and the producers) have to acknowledge that it takes more time."

Back to basics

One of the aims of the day was to find some answers to Ben Summers original question: *How should the Drama Schools and universities educate students to work on projection in live performance?* In the audience were lecturers in lighting from Guildhall, LIPA, Kent and CSSD. Presenting were Scott Palmer (from Leeds University), Hansjorg Smit and Rachel Nicholson (both from Rose Bruford).

However I'm not sure we got any closer to the answer. Dick Straker told us we were not doing it right yet, and Finn Ross said you can't learn it from books.

Scott Palmer and Sita Popat from University of Leeds presented the work from their *Projecting Performance* research project funded through the Arts & Humanities Research Council, where performer operators control projected light in the stage space in real time. They showed video clips of digital sprites and discussed how higher education can contribute to professional practice. Their collaborative research with KMA Creative Technology has made an impact not only on undergraduate teaching but also in public arenas through interactive light works and in contributing to performance work such as DV8 Physical Theatre's *To Be Straight With You*. Everyone seemed to agree that to do it well

required a rare combination of aesthetic sensitivity and technical knowledge. That might be two (or more) people, or it might be one near genius!

Personally, I think one key thing is providing professional tools for students to "play" with. At CSSD we recently staged *Jerry Springer the Opera*. The production used live cameras, blue screen, specially-shot footage and custom animation, presented through two projectors and an array of monitors to a delighted audience. The student media designers and production engineers had a great deal of very welcome support from key industry players (individuals and companies). The student team comprised two from Lighting Design, one from Production Lighting and one from Design for Stage courses. (all students at Central are specialists from day one).

So what does this mix of students tell us about the

skills required to successfully integrate media into live performance? It seems to be in line with Dick Straker's assertion that to realise successful media designs requires both technical and aesthetic training. He is an advocate of Art History as an aesthetic training, and both Dick and Jon Driscoll (another ALD professional member with a solid reputation in this field) have a fine art and film school background. That said, Dick's colleagues at Mesmer, Finn Ross, Sven Ortel and Sam Hunt all graduated from either Rose Bruford or CSSD – Sven and Sam from lighting courses, Finn from Central's Performance Art course.

Conclusions?

So the jury is out on training as on so many aspects of media use in live performance:

- Where and when it is appropriate – judging from the reaction to McBurney's recent Broadway experience, there is still a lot of resistance



to media in "straight" drama – but why should that be and for how much longer?

- How it is understood by audience and performer. The screen as magnifier of otherwise unseen aspects of the performer's art or distraction from the "live" event? And what is it like to perform in front of one of Bill Dudley's vast screens, when for example the door you enter through appears to become part of a huge open-air landscape? Do you feel exhilarated, dwarfed or trapped in a world that appears to no longer have an exit?

- What sorts of people it is best to bring on board (and when) to make media work in theatre, and on how to train these people?

If you have any answers, there are lots of people who want to hear from you!#

Office Oracle

Latest news from Ian's production desk

2009 AGM

The Executive is pleased to announce that this year's Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 13th June 2009.

The venue for the meeting has yet to be decided, but it will be in London. We are hoping to have some sort of meeting in the late morning with the AGM itself in the early afternoon. The lunch break will be for discussion and catching up.

More details to follow via the email bulletins and the next issue of *Focus*.

Awards Season

ALD members have been at the forefront of the nominations of the theatrical awards this season.

Congratulations to Paule Constable who has won the Best Lighting Design Award at the 2009 Olivier Awards for *The Chalk Garden* at the Donmar.

Paule was also nominated for *Ivanov* at the Donmar and Wyndham's Theatre and Neil Austin was also nominated twice for *No Man's Land* at the Duke of York's Theatre and *Piaf*, at the Donmar and Vaudeville Theatre.

In addition, ALD member Jon Driscoll was nominated for his work on the projections as part of the design team for *Brief Encounter* at The Cinema, Haymarket (designer Neil Murray, projections Gemma Carrington & Jon Driscoll).

Malcolm Rippeth won the inaugural Best Lighting Designer award at the recent Whatsonstage Theatregoers Choice Awards for his work on *Brief Encounter* at The Cinema, Haymarket and *Six Characters in Search of an Author* at the Gielgud.

This award is sponsored by ALD corporate member White Light, and our thanks goes to them in backing a new award that celebrates

the art of lighting design and the role of the LD in the creative process.

The other ALD members nominated for this award were Neil Austin, Paule Constable and Mark Henderson.

PLASA Focus 2009

PLASA Focus takes place on 28th - 29th April 2009 in the Saviles and Royal Armouries Halls at The Royal Armouries in Leeds. See also page 4.

The ALD will be in attendance at stand J3. Pop along to say hello and pick up the newly re-designed ALD lanyard.

The stand will also have some plan sticker ALD title blocks for all categories in case you have run out and not arranged for more to be sent directly from the office.

We will even accept payment for your 2009/2010 subscriptions by cash or cheque!!

Equity Designers' Committee Elections

Since it welcomed theatre designers to its membership over 30 years ago, Equity has fought hard to represent the best interests of all designers working in every corner of the industry.

Nowadays, the presence of the Design Committee within Equity is as crucial as ever. It provides an essential lobbying group within the Union to ensure that designers' needs are served and to co-ordinate these with the needs of the many other disciplines who work within the Theatre Industry and who are represented by Equity.

Without a vigorous and active Design Committee, not only would designers be progressively isolated from the industry in which we all work, but the many real issues – TMA/SOLT Agreements, Sole Trader Contracts, Professional Indemnity, Public Liability,



and the special needs of the increasing diversity of design that now exist, would be marginalised.

The Design Committee currently has four ALD members sitting on it. Johanna Town, Mark Jonathan, Simon Corder and Jeremy Walker have made valuable contributions to the committee's work.

In July 2009, the present committee, of which I have been privileged to be Chair, will complete its term and will be up for re-election. This gives an opportunity for anyone who is a fully paid up member of Equity and a lighting designer who cares about our industry and the

people who work within it, to stand for election. The greater the range of expertise within the new committee, the more effective it will be.

The responsibilities are not onerous – the committee meets no more than 4 times each year, but the work is essential if the rights of theatre designers are to be respected.

If you wish to stand, you just need to be seconded by two other Equity Members – at least one of whom must be a fellow designer. The nomination forms were included in the Spring 2009 *Equity Magazine*. If you do not know anyone to second you, please feel free to contact the office. The deadline for nominations is 12 noon on Friday 1st May 2009.

Showlight 2009

Taking place every four years, *Showlight* is one of the few international events

organised for lighting professionals by lighting professionals. You will meet a whole range of people – those whose reputations have been established and those who are just starting out in the industry. You will also hear from some of the leading names in the industry, see the latest products in the associated exhibition and enjoy a fascinating and entertaining social programme, the highlight of which is the Showlight Conference Dinner.

Showlight 2009 will be held in Glasgow at BBC Scotland's new state-of-the-art headquarters on the banks of the River Clyde, which boasts the latest broadcast technology and is the biggest TV recording space to be built in Scotland and the second largest TV studio in Britain.

With registration on May 16 and the papers programme from the 17th

to 19th, Showlight 2009 will be of interest to anyone involved in entertainment and architectural lighting design. The BBC's high definition equipment will be utilised to illustrate papers from all genres of lighting, including theatre, film, event, education, architecture and, of course, television.

For more information about the event itself and to register as a delegate, please visit www.showlight.org.

The winners of the ALD bursaries announced in the last edition to enable professional members to attend Showlight are Ken Coker, Simon Corder, Sandy McRobbie and A. Paul Davies.

ALD Website Forum

As announced in the last issue, we are pleased to be now able to offer our members a new forum on the ALD website. It can be

accessed from the members page once you have logged into the website. The forum is kindly hosted by The Blue Room and is restricted only to current ALD members.

We are hoping that this will be a useful resource for lighting designers to discuss professional lighting issues amongst themselves, as well as to talk about industry issues that may not want to be visible to the general population.

To access this forum, you must first join the Blue Room site. When you register you must use the same email address as you use for the ALD website (the one that is listed on your details held on our database).

You then need to request access to the ALD Forum. To do this, go to your "My ALD" page (the first page you get to when you log in to this web site), and click on the "Edit Publishing Settings"

link at the top left of the page. Make sure that the box next to Allow Access to the ALD Forum is ticked, and click Publish these Changes. You can now visit the ALD Forum.

We are hoping that some of the discussions taking place there may be worked into articles relevant for Focus publication, or even spark an idea for future articles. So come on down and contribute....

Michael Northen Bursary 2009

We are pleased to announce that the 2009 Michael Northen Bursary will be awarded by the ALD in conjunction with ETC and The Mousetrap Foundation. This prestigious award is open to all students in full time education. You do not have to be a member of the ALD.

The Michael Northen Bursary was set up by Michael

Latest news from Ian's production desk

Northern shortly before he passed away in 2001. It takes the form of a £500 prize awarded to a student who shows exemplary talent in lighting design. The award is to be judged on a project that the student has produced within the past academic year (July 2008 – June 2009). The award was originally made in conjunction with the White Light Bursary but since 2004 the ALD has administered the scheme and organises the presentation of awards as a fitting tribute to Michael who was a founding member of the ALD and a previous President.

The ALD awards the bursary each year in conjunction with The Mousetrap Foundation, an organisation committed to encouraging young theatre practitioners.

The Michael Northern Bursary Award winner will receive £500, and this year two other winners will receive

prizes of £250 sponsored by ETC and ALD. All three winning submissions will be displayed on the ALD stand at PLASA'09 in September, where the prizes will be presented. The judging will take place by a panel of industry professionals. Previous judges have included Rick Fisher, Howard Harrison, Mark Jonathan and Paul Pyant.

Applicants are asked to complete a submission form (downloadable from the student page of the website) as part of their application which will demonstrate the development and processes of a successfully realised lighting design performance project. Additional material to support the application such as photographs, storyboards or plans are set out in the guidance notes of the submission form.

It should be emphasised that this is a design bursary

and the ALD are not looking for wonderful project management or equipment lists. The submissions will be judged on an imaginative design and creativity in lighting. Students should therefore consider carefully how to communicate their concept for the lighting design and how their ideas were realised in performance.

- Submissions must be received at the ALD office (address below) by 31st July 2008.

- Judging will take place in August 2008. Submissions should not be larger than an A4 envelope.

- Entrants may submit work in an electronic format on CD, but must ensure that files are printable and in a common format (i.e. Word, Excel, Jpeg's, Bitmaps). If electronic entries cannot be viewed by the judging panel then the entry cannot be considered.

2009 / 2010 Subscriptions

Those members who do not pay their subscriptions should have by now received a letter stating how much they owe to retain their membership for another year. If you have not yet received this, or you have not informed us of a change of address, please contact the office as soon as possible.

Those members who pay by standing order, will receive their new membership card sticker as soon as we have checked your full payment has been received with our bank. Please be patient during this process as we receive over 350 standing order payments into the account

Please note that if you currently pay your subscriptions by standing order, **you will need to change the amount it currently pays within 6 days at the start of April.**

To help speed up this process we ask members to include their membership number as a payment reference.

Those members who did not update their standing order ahead of the payment date will be contacted in due course to pay the remainder owing. Chasing up members' payments is a time consuming exercise which means that we cannot be working on members' behalf to improve the other services we offer you.

Please note that a standing order is an arrangement between you and your bank, the ALD cannot change the details of such an arrangement for you.

The following membership fees now apply as of January 1st 2009:

Professional	£75
Associate	£40
Student	£25
Non-profit Org	£20

Contact us

The Association of Lighting Designers

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Owing to space restrictions, we regret that we do not accept press releases for publication in *Focus*. However, Corporate members of the ALD may send press releases to the ALD office (office@ald.org.uk) so that they can be posted on the News section of the ALD website for immediate and wider coverage. Corporate members only may advertise in *Focus*, please contact the office for details. Editorial guidelines for authors are available on request from the editor.

The opinions published within Focus are not necessarily those of the ALD. E&OE. #

New Members

welcome to...

Professional

Colin Wood, Birmingham

Gian Bortolotti, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Michael Nabarro[†], London

Mark Howland[†], Middlesex

Adam B Carrée[†]

Associate

Michael W.J. Donoghue,
Nottingham

Alan Valentine, Reading

Ayse Ozkiper, Istanbul, Turkey

Student

Alistair Nicholson, Cumbria

Rejoining

Gary Bowman, London

† from Associate

Dates for your diaries

28th & 29th April
PLASA Focus 09*, Leeds.

1st May
Closing date for Equity Committee nominations.

15th May
Deadline for June/July *Focus* content contributions.

16th – 19th May
Showlight 09 – Glasgow*.

10-11th June
ABTT Show 2009*

13th June
ALD AGM (venue and time TBC).

1st July
Deadline: ALD subscription payments

31st July
Deadline: Michael Northen Bursary Submissions

13-16th September
PLASA09, Earls Court, London*

31st October
Deadline for updating Yearbook entries

**the ALD will have a presence at these events.*

From Broadway to South Bank, August: Osage County

American LD Ann Wrightson describes how she transferred her Tony-nominated lighting design to the Lyttelton

“The National Theatre is a spa for designers”, Todd Rosenthal said, accepting the Olivier award for Best Set Design. It is indeed.

Our transfer of AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY from Broadway to the Lyttelton last November could not have been better... or more fun.

Rick Fisher wanted me to describe the experience: the differences, similarities and what I thought.

I thought this is the best job ever.

The thought processes behind the lighting design for AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY were brief but very specific. Anna D. Shapiro, the director, said the house, when we meet it at first, is dying, almost gone except for the beating heart in the den centered on Beverly Weston, the patriarch. As the family gathers, to find Beverly and then to mourn him, the house and family come alive and as family members flee, the house begins to recede again.

So armed with that imagery and the fact that the house is “closed” up and stifling, I began... The design team and Anna felt it was important to have a very real house here. Tracy the playwright is very detailed in his description of the rooms he needed so Todd, the set designer, provided a fully

realized house but without a lot of structure and walls. It is a house of emotions, things, stuff, gathered over many lives.

I put a pale red wash on Beverly’s chair in the den to be the shadows to the life left in the house. We meet the house with only that den lit and the rest in near darkness. The atmosphere in the house itself needed to be hot, hot, hot. It is August in Oklahoma. With all windows shut and shades pulled. I wanted an atmosphere that didn’t breathe. Since there were few walls to project a feeling of heat on, I filled the playing space with side and downlight that were a strong warm colour and added low front light from the balcony rail to give the feeling of no place to hide, a bug pinned to a white box. The house looked lit from

within through to the end of the second act. The only sense of outside light were some cool or warm washes on the roof.

Anna felt that the house was its most alive during the family dinner just after Beverly’s funeral [see photo page 19]. They are all packed around a dining table and virtually trapped with their drug addicted mother, Violet. There is a moment when all characters are speaking at once, really shouting or arguing, pushing and pulling when I fill the shadow space, architecture and playing space with a deep cinnamon colour [see photo page 20]. It just expressed a certain amount of passion and guts.

But that was the last time that quality existed. Barbara, the daughter takes over from Violet as head addict of the household and



family members start to flee over the course of the 3rd act. The house then became transparent. Washes from the outside spill through the house, past windows and roof tops. Practical lights start to fade and the colour shifts to cool. The low front fill is replaced by a high front cool light. Less of the back wall of the house is lit keeping the focus on the characters.

It was Anna’s idea to introduce the space at the top of each act, room by room. It animated the set and introduced the lives in each room. Carefully timed to beats in the music, each



“...the house, when we meet it at first, is dying, almost gone except for the beating heart in the den”

August: Osage County Ann Wrightson



Photo: Mark Douet

opening was about five movements. In the 3rd act, there are two sequences of time passing where the atmosphere changes primarily around Barbara in the living room and washes, paler and paler in colour shot through the house going from night to day in a more abstract expression.

By the end of the 3rd act you know the house is dying. Almost no practicals are on and almost all family members

are gone. The colour is a steely blue white. As Barbara leaves Violet to her caretaker, the house starts to close down around her. I had lights dimming as she was moving from floor to floor. At the end, a special picks out Violet and Johnna, her caretaker, on the top most floor on the bed. The final image of the house was enhanced with the slightest pattern barely reading transforming it into "dead bone."

And on to the Lyttelton..

Because I was allowed to hang my original plot, the transfer to the Lyttelton was almost seamless. A difference was a greater clarity in the overall look because the wattage of the units was much higher than the standard 575W of a Source 4. So colours looked clean and crisp. All practicals looked very familiar and I had shipped a police beacon so that was familiar.

I confess what I loved in

the Lyttelton was seeing *NO* lighting in the front of house. Generally I am never bothered by box booms and the like but the Lyttelton is such a clean concrete space. The AUGUST house had much more deep black surround around it so it floated in that space with no other source to distract. It was superb.

Lighting translations

To begin with, the translation of lighting units, primarily Source Fours to Juliats and the like was totally foreign to me. Having never designed abroad I did not have experience with Juliats. But luckily I have friends and friends of friends. So Rick Fisher, Jim Ingalls and Neil Austin were thankfully generous with information about what I would and would not like. Comments like, "These units are older than you are," and "These (Juliats) are the Mercedes of lights," helped sway my decision making.

So I stayed away from Candenzas and Cantatas. The results were startling. Because the average Juliat was 1.2k or 2k, the clarity of light and colour was noticeable to everyone, director included.

Other differences or at least issues to consider and discover were: need for an assistant, the cue file transfer from *Obsession* to *Eos*, the dimmers, and work time. My NY assistant was not brought over and I needed one. The show was big and time was short. Rick had already demonstrated in the *Imperial*, during *Billy Elliot*, how he manages with just a plot and the crew. I was in awe. Not only of the ability to manage that many units, but the casual attitude towards paperwork.

I think we Americans are *MANIACAL* about paperwork. But the National was taking apart their Rep plot to accommodate my plot so I needed someone to keep track. They volunteered one of



End of the third act, end of the house and family.



Sheriff arrives with bad news.



"the family dinner just after Beverly's funeral" Photo: Mark Douet

August: Osage County Ann Wrightson

the crew, Chris Savvides, who had “assistant tendencies”, to help me out. He was perfect. He ran the focus and kept track of a rather large plot.

The file transfer was a surprise. It seemed fine at first. Sarah Brown had done a lot of prep work on the file and so day one in tech we bring up cue 1 and then cue 2 though 5 and they all look alike. ODD. *And cue 5 should have been a black out.* Mind you, I had a stage full of the cast, the director in the audience as well as a million other people. So I call Anna, the director, over to my table and basically say, the file is bad, I don't have answers yet, but our choices were to run with “ugly” cues to at least keep the rhythm going or do the tech in worklight.

She graciously gave us the evening period to finish focus and fix the cue file and ran the afternoon with “ugly” cues. The cast and director and other designers are basically a cool, casual bunch. And this

was not our first time at bat. The file transfer had been corrupted by the Obsession offline program, we think. So “Crispy” from the Royal Opera came over and fixed us up nicely. We were back in business by the end of the day. Lessons had been learned.

The dimmers were a more subtle challenge. On Broadway, I had many channels reading at 15 or 20, because they were practicals or setmounts etc. On the National dimmers, they did not even read as on, so I had to chase down a lot of things that were simply “missing”. And this segues into work time. I found our “note time” short in the morning. By the time tables were set up I had about an hour left before lunch and rehearsal. With some negotiation, I got crew in earlier so I could catch up.

I love to collaborate. It is fundamentally my most favorite part of the business I love. The crew at the National

LOVES doing their job. The combination was perfect. They would help me in anyway to get what I needed done. They sat behind me in the theatre and just waited for anything I needed. That was a first. To be so attended to. I am also rowdy, irreverent and respectful so once the ice was broken it was divine.

Working with American LDs

I think the National's experience with American designers had been mixed and I was a *TOTAL* unknown. A relationship needed to be developed. So we are focusing away the first night. I am fast and no nonsense, so it was going well even though we were late getting onstage due to set and masking issues. Steve is 45 feet in the air on the new truss, hanging in space. I say “lock it” and he immediately says “locked”, so I pause and think, “I didn't hear enough metal on metal noise to have

that response so quickly”. So I say “ Steve, if I come back tomorrow and find this light focused over there I am going to rip your head off”... silence, and then gales of *LAUGHTER* throughout the theatre. I was honoured with being quoted on the white board in the cage. I made the board often that week. The director was honored by “She finds her light like a stripper” and I added, “Let's finish this fucker”. It was all good.

Teatime with cake and “nappies” (the full harness rig for going above the floor) were the newest experiences

for me. Teatime is inspired and should be mandatory worldwide.

The National was the busiest theatre building I have ever seen. People just hung out in the lobby space at all times of the day and evening. The energy and vibrancy that creates is intoxicating, not to mention walking over a river Queen Elizabeth I sailed down.

I found myself elated for two weeks. I was supported by a crew and bevy of staff that respected the work and participated in its creation. All good.#



Ann's 'honeys' - her Lyttelton crew



The Equity Designers' Committee term is coming to an end this summer and Simon Corder has decided that after two years, it is time to step down.

I would personally like to thank him for all his sterling work on the committee. Simon is a modern designer with very strong views on working practices as well as business practices and I think his outlook on the world, and the way we actually work in it, has had a very strong influence on the direction the committee is now taking.

Simon has really helped in making the committee join the 21st century and I for one have really enjoyed the back up and support he has offered me when debates have become quite heated.

At last week's quarterly Equity meetings I was able to reflect on just how much it has changed since I was first asked to join by Mark Jonathan. At that stage Mark had just joined himself and was continuing the lonesome battle that Tony Simpson had begun – fighting hard to get the voice of the lighting designer heard within the walls of Equity.

Today we have four committee members and this has really opened up debates on working practices, Health & Safety, insurance and copyright issues, as well as the latest modern phenomenon: digital broadcasting.

In general I think the LDs on the committee have really helped start to push Equity Designers' Contracts into the

modern world. However slow and painful this is!

The ALD, as we know, has its own dialogue with Equity and Rick is doing excellent work pushing our position within the union, but when the union retorts that there are so few Equity LDs on their books, it really does weaken the ALD's cause. So it really does help having nearly half the members of the committee being ALD members and it is really important for us not to lose any of these seats.

I am asking if you would like to join us in keeping the voice of the lighting designer alive and help support all the work Mark and Rick and the ALD have achieved by standing to be on the Equity committee.

The committee sits once a quarter and I for one only manage to attend half of these meetings, but most of the work is done via email throughout the rest of the year. With so few meetings and we all being so busy, keeping the numbers up is vital, and this way we do often manage to have a good representation at each meeting.

Nominations need to be submitted by the 1st May 2009 to Equity, so it would be great to have some new nominations sent to the ALD office by 19th April 2009.

Please consider joining us, we are the only people who can help move Equity forward it won't happen without you.#

Letters

Jonathan Dawson - Butterworth on 'defining professionalism'

Dear Editor,

I noted David Harvey's suggestions [Letters, *Focus Feb/March 2009*] and checked out the websites. Whilst the theory sounds good, it doesn't look so good having scratched the surface a little. I hasten to add, I'm not meaning this personally against David in any way, I think it is great he's been active and made the suggestion - this is purely my observations/perceptions in relation to potential benefits to the ALD.

The BCS only has over 65,000 members in over 100 countries and has been going for over 20 years. As a percentage of the total number of IT workers, an average of 650 per country does not appear to be very high.

It is quite easy to apply to be an BCS associate member and, looking at the application process, there doesn't appear to be much vetting despite what is implied. Also, it would appear that non-related qualifications can be used to gain a higher level of membership which would appear to negate some of the implied standards.

The engineering council do have a bit more clout but still, in many cases it is something people pay for to look good and not necessarily a way of progressing ones career. I know of several people who have felt paying their fees was worthwhile if they wanted to go to the dinners and play golf with the school tie brigade but didn't help them in their day to day work.

If we were to apply similar rules as these organisations for the ALD, we could hopefully improve our profile, maybe try create some benchmark standards and possibly create a framework for continuing professional development/qualifications.

However, would:-

- 1) the current membership stay?
- 2) we just be undercut by non ALD members?
- 3) there be a real attractive incentive for choosing an ALD member to do a design compared to an non-member?
- 4) there be issues about who approved the members?
- 5) there be any practical action which could be taken against members failing to uphold rules

except expelling? them?

- 6) members have action taken against them if a show failed, there was criticism of the lighting in the press or some other designers didn't like the look of a show? Also, could the ALD be liable to being sued if a member failed to provide a design approved by the person/persons commissioning the design and yet staying within the ALD rules?

Sorry to sound negative but I'm afraid I see more pitfalls than benefits to the ALD going this route.

Another thought is if people want letters after their name or to be part of one of the big organisations, there are plenty of ways to already

do this via, for example the I.L.E. or I.A.L.D.

I'm relieved to see it would appear from Pete Watts letter that I am not alone in my thinking in relation to associate and full membership.

Cheers,

Jonathan Dawson -
Butterworth#

Letters

Dan Short on 'retired members'

Dear Editor

I note on page 12 of the Feb/Mar 09 issue of *Focus* that "professional members who may be eligible to apply for 'retired' membership [of the ALD] for an annual fee of £25." My imagination started to run away with me when I read that. Do they have to pass an exam, or submit a thesis, or otherwise prove perhaps with a detailed CV that they are worthy of a reduced membership fee?

I can visualise elderly LD's having to attend for an extensive interview under the heat of an interrogation lamp (a Patt 264 perhaps?) before the ALD membership committee reluctantly agrees that a reduced membership fee will be granted. What happens if an applicant fails

the interview or other test? Does he (or she) have to resubmit their application after further experience which might improve their chances? Would there be a time or age limit for repeat applications?"

Applicants who have failed their test or interview will not be eligible to reapply for reduced membership of the ALD for a further period of ten years or one hundred successful shows whichever comes later. Evidence of successful lighting plans will be needed. Deceased members need not reapply."

This all made me think about reduced membership fees for other classes of membership of the ALD. I have been an Associate Member since soon after the

formation of the ALD (note my membership number) because I was an enthusiastic amateur, but have now been retired (from my profession) for eighteen years.

Although I have recently and happily increased my Standing Order for membership to £40 I cannot help wondering if any consideration has been given to a reduced fee for retired Associate Members. Or do I have to prove that I am no longer 'doing' any lighting?

Yours faithfully

Dan Short (ALD #49)

Postcard... from Mark Jonathan



Greetings! Just a brief note, this time.

I hope you are all 'weathering the storm'. I have the impression the phone is not ringing quite so often but maybe that's just me. I wondered how long it would be before I started to hear the wail from producers beseeching us to accept even lower fees. Well I've heard it... From Italy, 'due to the World-wide crisis our funding has been cut.'

In the UK, 'it's a labour of love...' said the producer. I grind my teeth muttering "Yes, I love what I do but I do it for a living."

Oh, and one major institution that apparently won't be inviting LDs back to review their work on revivals which is sad as that's when I

would try and finish off the job that I never quite got enough time to do the first or even 2nd time round...

I'm really sorry that I can't make it to *Showlight*; I'll be focusing. I think it's the best 'lighting meeting' around especially as its not product and manufacturer driven. Try and go if you can. We need to have another professionals meeting soon to review ALD Strategy and get your input.

I will also echo Jo Town that we need to keep our presence on the Equity Designers' committee. Do let us know if you would be willing to stand.

Best regards,

Mark

Magical Tales in an Oxford Carpark

Ian Saunders lights Creation Theatre Company's latest project in The Mirror Tent, BMW Oxford



One of the elements of any job when working as a lighting designer is to be able to react to the unknowns as they arise during a production period. But as Dick Cheney might be paraphrased "what can you do about the known unknowns?" Well when your venue is a vintage Spiegeltent with walls lined with mirrors, then you know you are surrounded...

When I was approached by Creation Theatre Company in the autumn of 2008, I knew to a certain extent what was in store. I had been the technical stage manager on Creation's first production to use the Mirror Tent, set up on the car park at BMW Plant Oxford a few years before. The shows are staged in the round with the audience facing a raised central stage. The positions

for possible lighting bars are both restricted and restrictive as they are a little over three metres from the floor of the tent and about one and a half metres from the edge of the stage.

Since the initial production, Creation have used the tent for another four shows and they have developed their systems and organization on each occasion. The main advantage now is that the tent itself is situated in a more sheltered position, which has allowed the company to use a dedicated electrical supply rather than noisy generators. However the supply is still limited and also needs to power the entire tent site with such fundamentals as FOH and car park lights, bar and dressing

rooms and just enough for our friends in sound. This left the production lighting with 32 amp three phase. Not impossible, but some clever planning and prep work would be needed to manage the overall loading.

Versatility was the key

The show itself was based on a number of Hans Christian Andersen's Tales such as 'The Ugly Duckling', 'The Emperor's New Clothes' and 'The Princess and the Pea' weaved into a narrative framing device to move us from story to story. Inevitably the rig had to be as flexible as possible. Units would need to have multiple uses, the actors playing in the round would need to be 'relatively' well lit most of the time, and the producers were

very clear "of course you will ensure that you don't shine lights into the faces of the audience won't you?"

So how to approach it?

Fortunately, there are 12 main structural support uprights to the tent, which naturally turns it into a clock face for references.

Having decided that we could probably utilize six dimmer racks stored under the stage. These could serve two 'portions' of the clock face each without the need for long cable runs to pair units, which would have minimized the ability to be flexible.

The 'known knowns' were that there are three actor entrances at 12, 3 and 7 o'clock. These and the vomms serving them from the

outside of the tent needed to be lit. There were three traps in the floor to allow the actors to enter from under the stage. Each needed to be lit individually. There was a mirror ball for 'The Snow Queen' story. Locations needed to move from inside to outside, day to night, be colourful and magical, as well as being functional. Mmmm. I began to enter the world of the unknowns.

Unmagical positions

My main issue was the low slung lighting positions. The stage was to be 900mm high, and therefore an average actor head height would be at approximately 2.6m, only 700mm below the bar height. There had to be a way of getting some units

Magical Tales in an Oxford Carpark: Ian Saunders

higher to allow a much kinder angle to both performers and audience sat with their heads just above the stage level on the far side. After investigating some past productions and layouts Creation had used previously, we realised that the main supports of the domed plastic roof were essentially scarf bar diameter.

Some elevation technical drawings later, I became aware that the space just above the windows at 4 metres would enable a steeper angle without putting too much loading on the supports. Therefore alternating high bars at the even clock positions (2, 4, 6 etc) with lower ones at the odd numbers allowed a certain flexibility and kept the weight spread evenly across the structure.

Darkness centre stage

However, the drawing also unveiled an unknown. Whilst the general cover would light the near side of the stage,

to keep it out of the eyes of the audience on the far side meant that the cover was rather lacking right bang on centre stage at head height.

Also by this point initial forays into the rehearsal room discovered the actors inevitably standing at the outside edge of the stage looking across the stage. So how to light the faces of the actors on the far side of stage as well as getting some light centre stage?

The answer lay in the low bar positions. By shooting straight across the stage, I calculated that I could light two clock positions with one unit. It would also give the effect of sidelight but fulfil the requirements for both centre and far side.

They would also have to be profiles to enable a sharp, frosted shutter cut to keep the beam out of the audience's eyes and off the fabric of the tent. The result was that I was essentially going to be focusing to and lighting the mirrors on the

internal walls!! How would that look? Would it distract the audience? How would the light react as it bounced off it? This was the biggest 'known unknown', and would remain so until we got the actors onstage and possibly an audience into the space.

Budget magicians

The budget on the other hand was very much a 'known known'. Compared with other budgets I get to play with, it sounded pretty reasonable. However the run was 10 weeks, and everything had to be hired. Some fantastic number crunching and dealing from the production manager and an understanding ear in Derek Gilbert at Henley Theatre Services, allowed me to get a tool kit to be able to achieve the look I wanted for the show.

This basically meant six scrollers on Source 4 Parnels (lamped at 575w to save that power supply for elsewhere) to get a colour wash of the

stage. The trusty Prelude fresnel was the work horse unit with six (and later eight) of them doing a general cover in L702 Special Pale Lavender to enable me to light the actors. An additional Source 4 Junior wide profile on each bar also allowed me six gobo options from the high bars.

In the low positions, Prelude 28/40 profiles in L063 Pale Blue acted as the 'shadow light' to the warmer general cover. With vom flood and mirrorball specials, the dimmer allocation was almost spent. A pair of birdies, one each side of the three get off treads (to avoid audience sightlines), allowed some uplight to the hanging fabric snowflakes from the roof, as well as doubling as the match strike effects for certain stories. So we had the bare bones. House lights, working light and the decorative fairy lights were run from a separate dimmer rack but still through the Zero 88 48 channel Frog desk.

Problems defeated

In the end the 'known

unknowns' were defeated just like the bad guys in any fairy tale. The 'mirror specials' as they became known were not too distracting. They added much to the picture onstage, occasionally being the only lights on to help punctuate the gap between stories (and allowing the scrolls to move!). This was a particularly ethereal effect that was only heightened in those moments soon after the smoke machine had done its business.

The rest of the rig gave me the flexibility to achieve what was needed; from bright day, to the night in a "dark, dark wood", from the frozen wastes of the Snow Queen, to the depths of the Sea King's ocean. I was pleased with what was achieved on the limited resources available, as were the producers who were also happy to note that there were no audience blinders included in the rig.

I do wish though, that winter days would be even shorter when the tent is effectively 'unlightable' before four in the afternoon!#



Clockwise from top: The internal roof of the tent lit by birdies • The Tinder Box Soldier - mirrored walls in the background • The Little Match Girl • The Sea Witch. All photos by Creation Theatre Company and Peter Wolfes.



Eonnagata: Dancer- Robert Lepage. Photo: Félix Dagenais



The Illuminating Present

We welcome our guest reviewer **Donald Hutera** of *The Times*

Lighting seems the most obvious enhancement of a live dance performance. Without out, how else would we ever see what's going on? Yet if that were all lighting is about, there'd be no need for anything more than glaring work lights to illuminate a playing area. In some cases it's meant to support a work without calling undue attention to itself. Others prefer to treat it as a major - and therefore usually noticeable - creative element. For them lighting conjures atmosphere out of the air. It paints moods, defines space and sculpts bodies.

The best designers offer no push-button theories or formulas for this branch of stage magic. Essentially their task is to provide the environment in which a dance exists. Finland's Mikki Kunttu regularly collaborates with his fellow countryman,

the choreographer Tero Saarinen. Kunttu believes that light can create three-dimensional illusions by suggesting intimate proximity or unfathomable distance. In performance his contribution to Saarinen's work is so essential that, as the latter has remarked, 'It's like Mikki's dancing with us.'

My sensitivity to the possibilities of stage lighting, particularly in dance, increased ten-fold thanks to a self-generated assignment for which I interviewed a handful of top designers. Kunttu was the sole foreigner. The rest were Brits: Lucy Carter (who, apart from fruitful associations with Shobana Jeyasingh and Charles Linehan, has worked extensively with Wayne McGregor), Guy Hoare (whose main creative partner in dance has been Henri Oguike) and the two Michaels,

Mannion and Hulls. 'Lighting can ruin or help a dance,' the former told me. 'It can also take the choreography somewhere it couldn't go alone.' Mannion's approach varies depending on with whom he's collaborating. 'Javier De Frutos has been exacting from the start. He architecturally marks out the space with dotted lines - long corridors coming off circles. With Mark Baldwin I nearly always have to describe colours.'

Hulls, for his part, has been absolutely integral to the development of Russell Maliphant's choreography, so much so that their joint work on *Sheer* garnered a *Time Out* Award in 2002 for Outstanding Collaboration. Their latest project, a Sadler's Wells production entitled *Eonmagata*, is an artful investigation of the sexually ambiguous 18th-century

spy, the Chevalier d'Eon. Here Maliphant joined forces with French dancer Sylvie Guillem and Canadian director Robert Lepage. This starry trio was decked out in costumes - gorgeous, unsurprisingly - by

of its real-life source story. Having said that, a string of ravishing stage pictures drew directly on Hulls' genius. In one of the earliest Guillem and Maliphant - and the oblongs of red and blue light



Eonmagata. Photo: Erik Labbe

Alexander McQueen. Despite such abundant collective talent *Eonmagata* came across as strangely sterile and hollow; it failed to maximise the full dramatic potential

they respectively occupied - merged together, an eloquent evocation of the blended and blurred life under consideration in the show. Later, near the end of

The Illuminating Present: Donald Hutera

the show, a large pendulous light swung ominously over the examination table upon which the Chevalier's corpse was being dissected. Could there have been a better way to symbolise the ultimate unknowability of someone who took genderbending to such fascinating extremes?

With his knack for fashioning big, bold yet furtive group pieces, Hofesh Shechter has rapidly become one of the hottest names in UK dance. Lit by regular collaborator Lee Curran, and featuring live music (mainly percussion and strings) from a 19-strong ensemble assembled on a tiered set, the Israeli-born choreographer and composer's latest show at London's historic Roundhouse lent a literally darker streak to a gig that felt like a rock concert. Curran's shadowy, smoky lighting capitalised on the sight of bodies emerging from or disappearing into inky

blankness, aiding the almost cinematic feel of dances through which the cast - like citizens of some unstable, self-oppressed society ready to boil over or implode - either pounded the air with their fists or scuttled fast and low. Aside from supplying a stealthy, even fugitive atmosphere, Curran's work was a key means by which Shechter could organize and edit his movement material.

Shechter, like Guillem and Maliphant, is an associate artist of the Wells. The venue now ranks as the country's leading international dance house, a reputation bolstered by a programming policy that embraces everything from ballet to ballroom to hip hop. *Flamenco Festival London* is now an annual fixture there. The two-week season spotlights some of the best Spanish dance available. The sixth edition included the five-star *Mujeres* (Women), a hugely entertaining showcase

for three generations of flamencas. One of the most visually memorable sections paired the 24 year-old sensation Rocio Molina with Belén Maya, a thirtysomething delight. Clad in identical skin-tight dresses of salmon pink, the two shifted with a geometrical symmetry across a stage floor fixed with bars of green light. The combination of colours was as striking as the juxtaposition of patterns, both the kinetic ones devised by the women and those provided by lighting designer Oscar Gómez.

Ballet Nacional de España, another festival highlight, earned a rousing audience reception for its triple bill. Fernando Romero's curtain-raiser, *Caprichos*, was aptly described by its maker as a non-narrative work. The subtle yet luxurious lighting of Joan Teixidó, however, told its own story. Taking a cue, perhaps, from the floral images fronting the women's

costumes, this ambitious piece seemed to be set in a nocturnal garden of the imagination. Teixidó might've drawn partial inspiration for his vivid, seductive palette of tones and moods from the vicissitudes of weather, or the paintings of Mark Rothko with their vibratory gradations of colour. Thirteen tireless dancers unleashed a torrent of steps beneath a backdrop lit like a lowering sky. Meanwhile the soft band of blue behind them segued into pearly grey. Was this dusk, or dawn? No matter. It was certainly arresting to look at. In one of the more dramatic moments the entire cast rushed off downstage left, leaving one lean man etched in side light. Slowly he walked centrestage, bathed first in amber and then white as the space around him brightened and expanded. Contradictory shadows nonetheless remained on a backdrop that appeared

both burnished and clouded as the dancer shot through a pepper-footed solo accompanied by a guitarist caught, gently, in his own pool of light.

Outstanding lighting devised for other recent shows has ranged from the epic yet ephemeral to the minimalist. In Cloud Gate Dance Theatre's *Wind Shadow* the Taiwanese master choreographer Lin Hwai-Min treats the stage like a magic box. This dream-like piece (which arrives at the Barbican in October 2009) uses black and white designs, film projections and the lighting of Chang Tsan-Tao to conjure a parallel shadow world that is then turned upside down. The climax is a strange but arresting combination of harrowing, post-9/11 apocalypse and trippy laser-light show. Lin's remarkable dancers move through it all with their trademark turbulent calm intact.

Cambalache 2. Photo: Josep Aznar





The Illuminating Present: Donald Hutera

Eonnagata

Left: "...Guillem and Maliphant - and the oblongs of red and blue light they respectively occupied - merged together". Red dancer-Sylvie Guillem, Blue dancer- Russell Maliphant. Photos: Eric Gautron

Below: "a large pendulous light swung ominously over the examination table upon which the Chevalier's corpse was being dissected". Photo: Erick Labbe



The scale of his vision could find no sharper contrast than with the leggy, extraordinarily limbre French dancer-acrobat Pierre Rigal's *Press*. Set in a gradually shrinking rectangular space, this metaphorical marvel of a solo about the claustrophobic pressures of modern life features recessed fluorescent lighting by Frédéric Stoll. Chillingly effective it is, too, but not as much as the tiny but penetrating, long-necked lamp that seems to watch - and maybe even silently dictates - Rigal's every move. Operated via live remote control at each performance, this small, inanimate object of illumination has an ominous stage presence unimagined by any other movement-based show I know.#

Donald Hutera

Donald Hutera writes regularly about dance, theatre and live performance for The Times of London, Dance Europe, Animated and many other publications.

'Mary Poppins' on tour in Manchester

Will Evans reports on the ALD visit...

On Thursday 28th of February at the Palace Theatre, Manchester, the *Mary Poppins* team opened the doors to ALD, ABTT and STLD members for a talk and 'look round' hosted by Rob Halliday, who was one of the associate lighting designers.

En route to Manchester

Mary Poppins started life in 2004, has played the West End and Broadway and is now coming to the end of a year-long UK tour. Directed by Richard Eyre, choreographed by Matthew Bourne, and lit by Howard Harrison (with Oliver Fenwick and Rob Halliday as associate lighting designers) this is a production on an epic scale: so big it fills 18 articulated lorries!

The set design for the show has been scaled down for the tour, meaning that finally it is possible to get lights overhead down stage and more lamps on the side of

stage ladders. Rob pointed out that this has been a great help and has meant the FOH rig has been able to be cut down considerably.

Overhead is virtually all moving lights with a mix of Mac 700s, VL 3500Qs, VL 3000 and a smattering of VL1000 tungsten units front of house. This means focus time on stage is cut right down; a considerable advantage when touring a show of this scale.

Importance of the cyc

The main lighting magic is created on the cyc however. From the outset, space has been at a premium on stage with a pretty large playing space and a whole house truck that lives upstage behind the cyc when not in use. Inevitably this meant that at most venues there was insufficient space to backlight the cyc and various scenic cloths.

Rob went through many options including bouncing light off of another cloth behind the cyc (as they did in New York) but on the UK tour some venues could not even find the space for this. The idea came up of using a LED wall, but then problems arose with fading and refresh rates.

LEDs to the rescue

But then EvenLED came on the market. This system is DMX controlled (rather than needing a media server) and 16-bit, allowing incredibly smooth fades with no flicker which is common with dimming LEDs. It also can light a back projection screen evenly from 30cm without the need for frosting.

After some persuading, White Light bought the system to hire to *Mary Poppins* and provided enough modules to build a wall 13m x 9m. The EvenLED



Rob shows everyone around backstage

'Mary Poppins' on tour in Manchester

system is very DMX hungry. With each LED unit using 3 channels (RGB), and with 16 LED groupings for each 1m square panel, it's easy to see why the wall needs 26 DMX universes!

This system solved more than just the space problems. Colours are now infinite and available in any combination. One problem the show had suffered from in the past was lighting the park scene cloth which has every colour conceivable painted on it in high detail. Rob explained that he could never find the right gel to light the whole cloth well enough to bring out every colour. The EvenLED system solves this by making it possible to back light in different colours for different parts of the cloth. Rob did this by up-loading a graphic of the cloth onto the grandMA lighting console and replicating it on the EvenLED wall.

The system also allowed

such effects as rolling clouds in the skyline without the need for VSFx projectors. It also led them to the choice of lighting desk. The grandMA has a very good pixel mapping facility which can be used via the desk's touch screen for easy editing, and meant there was no need for a media server which, as Rob pointed out, would have added another 'link in the chain' with much more time needed for plotting, and having to upload a graphic for each colour needed.

Replacing movers with generics

In spite of all this technology Rob proudly pointed out how he had replaced many moving lights on the ladders with Source Four Profiles. After New York Rob noticed a lot of the moving lights were only being used in one or two positions and a few gobos and colours.

One pleasant side effect of

reducing these movers down to generics with scrollers was that now it is possible to mix colours through combining different lights at different intensities opposed to the single source moving lights.

After the change, it was also noted that there were slight split colour shadows which added a lot of depth to the side lighting. It just goes to show high technology is not always the answer and that lighting from multiple sources in different colours provides depth that a single source cannot.

Rob also commented that costume designers prefer tungsten because the full spectrum is much better at picking out colours and details in costumes.

Mechanisms

After the chat about the lighting we moved on stage to take a look at the mechanics of this show. The technology does not stop at the lighting

desk here. The huge house truck is free running on two sets of motors allowing it to be 'driven' in any direction across the stage. Steering it is just like a tank, to turn left, the speed of the right motors is increased.

The grid is also bursting full with a whole nursery set piece, a giant umbrella that flies in, opens and rotates, not to mention numerous legs and cloths!

Of course the two show-stealing moments both involve flying humans. The first being the character of Bert 'dancing' round the prosc. In fact, he actually dances round the show's false prosc and the mechanism is concealed on the most down stage flying bar. Nevertheless, it is still an impressive feat of stage magic!

The other, of course, is Mary Poppins herself flying over the audience. This has been one of the biggest challenges on tour as every house is

different. At the Palace she actually flies into the (empty) FOH lighting bridge and then has one and a half minutes to get down to the stage for the curtain call. That means moving fast in any venue! The challenge is finding a suitable position FOH not only to accommodate the flying lines and the crew but also with good enough access to allow the actress to make it back to stage for her curtain call!

This was a very interesting visit where all of us whether lighting designer, stage manager, technical manager or TV lighting director learnt something new and marvelled at the scale of this mammoth show. A big thank you to Rob Halliday and the lighting team: Anna MacInnes, Oliver Thomas and chief Simon Sherriff and also company manager Chris Boyle. Who gave up their Thursday afternoon to show us round.#

[Left] Behind the scenes and the lack of space for cyc lighting



The cyc in full split colour mode





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