

Showlight Review Special

Sweet Charity - Oh What A Lovely War (inset): two musicals staged in 10 days at The Royal Academy of Music. Lighting and photos by Rob Halliday. Page 15.



ALD #

FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers

"More art, less green issues..."

In the Backlight this issue:

Rob Halliday lighting in stereo • Slick designs for puppets • CAD survey results • Showlight '09 Awards galore • PLASA09 preview ... and much more...

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Rick's Report

Even though this summer is not so busy for me in terms of new projects, there have been plenty of ALD matters to keep the Exec busy.

As you get this issue of *Focus*, the AGM will be nearing. It is to be held at PLASA this year and we hope to present to the members the revised definitions of membership categories. The aim is to make what has been 'Associate Membership' more inclusive for all those working in the lighting world and to clarify who should be Professional Members. We can strengthen the Association and better target services and emails if people are in the most appropriate group. With the change in annual subscriptions some members may be surprised to find that their category is not the right one for them and we urge you to amend

your standing orders - we rely on members keeping the standing orders up to date.

I am becoming more aware of other organizations that have similar aims to the ALD. I have had an enjoyable chat with Sharon Stammers of the PLDA (Professional Lighting Design Assoc.) about a closer interaction through some joint meetings. Sharon had a theatre background but is now involved with architectural lighting, and as more ALD members are exploring this type of work, and more architectural projects use entertainment equipment and techniques, I am sure this will be of great interest (see page 8).

The ALD also welcomes the new initiative, reported in *The Stage*, that is being set up by Paule Constable and Sarah Rushton-Reid to support women working in technical theatre. While things have got better, there is more to be done in lighting and other areas of design and technical support. The ALD offers its full support.

As a result of Michael

Billington's piece in the last issue of *Focus* the ALD is working with Hansjorg Schmidt, lighting designer and the head of Rose Bruford lighting course, in setting up a workshop for The Critics Circle to introduce them to what we do and how we contribute to the theatrical experience. I hope we can have a report on this workshop after it happens in the autumn, and that it contributes towards the ALD's goal of raising the awareness and appreciation of what lighting designers do.

I had the great pleasure of being in the middle of Broadway's award season along with many other ALD members. It is fantastic that so many UK-based designers along with some of our overseas members were nominated for the bewildering array of awards in the US.

For the UK, the ALD is pleased to support is the *Knights Of Illumination Awards* for the second time that will be presented in September. Worth celebrating alone is that an Italian corporate

member is so impressed by the quality of work done in the UK that they created these unique awards to commend this excellence! The ALD has been at the heart of working with Clay Paky, who generously sponsors this event, in choosing how the awards in dance, opera, plays and musicals are judged. Not only does this produce lucky winners and runner ups, but by having critics of national publications discuss and nominate lighting work of outstanding merit the ALD is once again promoting our cause.

This, together with the TMA award, directly sponsored by the ALD and created after years of lobbying by the ALD, which specifically recognizes work outside of the West End producing houses should hopefully encourage the chief executives and bean counters to better value and reward the real and important contribution we are making to live performance lighting. If this happens the ALD will really have achieved something! regards, Rick#

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Professionals' Antipasti

Mark Jonathan is never lost in translation

Some years I feel like an expensive brand of perfume with branches in LA, New York, London, Munich and Tokyo. Is it just coincidental that the international circuit has calmed, or is the crunch biting? As I look ahead I feel more like a branch line with stops at Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham, Coventry, Watford and London and a bit less like Coco Channel.

Following on from the last issue when I'd just been out on a recce visit to Spoleto. Well, the job's done. It was sort of delightful to be in the beautiful, Italian hill town. I tried to discipline myself to going for runs round the nearby mountainside to counter the effects of the wonderful cuisine. One favourite restaurant was run by Filippo Matto who had been Gian Carlo Menotti's

butler in Scotland. He had set up his little restaurant and would shop each day presenting his mother with the provisions. There was no menu, just a continual series of courses of delicacies cooked up by Mama. Filippo would intersperse the courses with tales and revelations about the previous festivals. Breaking off to count the number of diners and then shouting: "*Mama! Ventotto per la Pasta.*" Mama shouting back "*Si,*" as she reached for her pasta pot for 28...

I always enjoy the additional challenge of putting the show on in another language. It needs patience on both sides. I will always attempt to use the local language and apart from occasional holidays it was more than 20 years since I'd worked in Italy. Even so, I much prefer to 'plough-in' and 'blunder away' as best I

can than resort to translators (remember, I was the LD who arrived on Broadway and told the Stage Manager to use a pencil and make sure he had plenty of rubbers. He gave me a box of erasers on the opening night - that I might understand the difference...). In this case, I dispensed with our well-meaning translator, a former ballet dancer, when I realised that my question about moving lights was being translated as 'follow spots'. Twenty spot ops is lot in any language!

The LX crew were all delightful and very talented. They loved light. We were transferring the opera *Gianni Schicchi* from LA where it premiered the last autumn. While there was an obvious buzz about what Woody Allen might bring to the production as director I also realised that there was a danger of us 'bringing coals to Newcastle'. Opera was important to the Italian crew and I realised that they knew this one off by heart. Woe betide us if we didn't give them a good production. I

showed the LX crew some pictures of the LA version and they enthused... My offer to use some moving lights as access would be difficult from the ground was not really necessary as the Italian electricians were quite happy to fly in on a harness to get to them. My programmer/supervisor was called Fiammetta, (little flame); what a perfect name for a lighting enthusiast. She had been trained 20 years ago by Margie Heymann.

On a quiet day, I found myself on a train travelling back to Rome for lunch with Margie and the lighting designers Guido Levi and Alessandro Carletti.

We discussed fees in Italy; the opera companies try to hide behind some sort of law where they claim fees are fixed. Guido confirmed that the law was never ratified. I was concerned that British LDs didn't become a cheaper option for Italian managements than our counterparts in Italy.

Meanwhile, back in Spoleto, Rick Fisher called

in and we went to the dress of Robert Wilson in Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, with stunning lighting by A.J. Wiseman. Needless to say, we found AJ afterwards and were treated to considerable hospitality. Last autumn AJ was lighting the new opera *The Fly* in LA on the days that I wasn't lighting *Il Trittico*. It's a small world... I suppose it's a rare occasion that you'll hear the LD declare that he had too much time.

Of course, the Italian system pays you a gross fee and you have to pay your accommodation and living expenses from this. That means that the management aren't that bothered about keeping you hanging about. I note that the companies that have to provide the accommodation and pay a per diem may schedule the time a bit more economically than summoning the LD to focus days before the cast arrive for the first day of rehearsal.

I know my forthcoming project in the Edinburgh Fringe will kick me back into

The ALD's Pro's Rep and the Chairman counter the toils of sitting at the production desk with some sit-ups in Spoleto. Photo by Marcus Tozini



his bond'. I told my agent to tell the producer that I was deeply relieved to at last be working with a producer who's word could be trusted...I'd better not go on. The very annoying thing is that proper billing doesn't really cost anything.

While I was away, the ALD made John Simpson and Brian Croft 'Honorary Members of the Association'. I'm sad I couldn't be at the event but delighted to send them my belated congratulations. Two great supporters of British Theatre. Brian was production manager of

the NYT when I joined the company aged 16 before he went onto to manage the Rolling Stones while John was founding White Light. Twenty years later when I arrived at the NT they were still going strong – both MDs of lighting companies with a keen interest in our needs and always encouraging us to make exciting theatre.

I should like to thank Simon Corder and Jeremy Walker for sitting on the Equity committee. I'm delighted that Johanna Town has stood for a further term. I think we need some more input from

members about what you need from a union or indeed if union membership is still appropriate for freelancers. Commendations to all the nominees on the recent awards in the US and many congratulations to our own chairman for carrying home both the Drama Desk, the Outer Critics and the coveted Tony for his lighting of *Billy Elliot* and LD! Theatre Lighting Designer of the Year.

I keep meeting people who are de-camping to Edinburgh – maybe I'll see you there and I hope you get enough time to light the show.#

ever mentioning the poor hard working AD. On the opening night a postcard appeared of the LA production with everyone billed except me and the AD. God, was I furious. We did write and that elicited a grovelling apology and the excuse that the postcard was commissioned a long time ago – sorry that doesn't wash because the original photo would also be covered by my US contract which definitely specified the need for billing. The rather amusing thing is when my agent negotiated my next contract she sternly rejected the contract that didn't have a billing clause. The British producer said he wasn't putting it in the contract but that I would be billed and 'his word was

reality where we have fewer hours in Edinburgh than I had weeks in Italy to get the show on. I'm sad to report that my sojourn in Spoleto was marred by the complete lack of respect accorded to me by the management regarding billing. You know how I go on about making sure you get appropriate billing for the LD... The negotiations had been protracted and in the end we agreed that I'd sign on arrival. I noticed that the LD's billing clause had been changed from "whenever the designer is billed" to "whenever the designer and assistant director are billed". Well, they had no intention of

ever mentioning the poor hard working AD. On the opening night a postcard appeared of the LA production with everyone billed except me and the AD. God, was I furious. We did write and that elicited a grovelling apology and the excuse that the postcard was commissioned a long time ago – sorry that doesn't wash because the original photo would also be covered by my US contract which definitely specified the need for billing. The rather amusing thing is when my agent negotiated my next contract she sternly rejected the contract that didn't have a billing clause. The British producer said he wasn't putting it in the contract but that I would be billed and 'his word was

"I showed the LX crew some pictures of the LA version and they enthused..." Gianni Schicchi from LA



Awards, awards, awards @ home & abroad

ALD Members Honoured

The Association of Lighting Designers was delighted to present two new Honorary Memberships in June at the ABTT show to Brian Croft and John Simpson. This category of membership is to recognize individuals who have supported the work of lighting designers and no two individuals could better represent service to the lighting industry and

designers more than Brian and John.

Brian's career took him from Stage Management at the RSC in its early days in Stratford into the world of rock music presentation with the forerunners of Vari-Lite and PRG through which he supplied lighting to countless tours and shows around the globe. He continues to be active in the industry even in retirement and is on the

board of the National Youth Theatre.

John Simpson is one of the founders of White Light and he is has helped to fashion this company into a leader in supply, service, rental and training across all aspects of the lighting world. He too is very active in other areas within the industry serving as a trustee of Light Relief and on the board of the Motley theatre design course.



Maurice was at the Palace...

As reported in the February/March issue of *Focus*, Maurice Marshal MBE received his award at Buckingham Palace on the 12th March. So just to prove the point, here's the evidence!

..and Rick celebrated in

Times Square with Tony Our very own Rick Fisher collected 'Best Lighting Design for a Musical Award' for *Billy Elliot* at the American Theatre Wing's 63rd annual Tony Awards® ceremony, which took place on 7th June.

LtoR: John Simpson, Rick Fisher, Brian Croft. Photo: Marcus Tozini



It's almost time for the Clay Paky 'Knight of Illumination' Awards

The second edition of the *KNIGHT OF ILLUMINATION AWARDS*, the only international awards designed and held to provide public recognition to lighting designers for deserving work in live and television shows, is at the starting blocks.

The award ceremony is organized by Clay Paky in association with STLD and ALD, and is sponsored this year by OSRAM. It will be held on 13 September 2009 at the Ibis Hotel, Earls Court, London.

The previous edition saw Dave Davey, Ben Smithard, Nigel Catmur, Al Gurdon (TV category), Jonny Gaskell, Richard Larkum (rock category), Lucy Carter, Paul Pyant, Paule Constable and Neil Austin (theatre category) triumph. They were presented

with a customized real traditional medieval sword and given the title of "Knight of Illumination", a slightly romantic and generous figure always ready to hold up and defend the values of integrity and professionalism in the world in which they work.

The contest has aroused great curiosity and interest among Professionals, also thanks to the precious cooperation of lighting design associations and the participation of the media, which have supported the event.

Applications to take part in the contest officially closed on 15 June 2009. Since that date, the judges have been at work analysing and assessing the best lighting designs in order to come up with the nominations and winners in

each category.

The credibility and seriousness of the judgement and performance of the contest are assured by the integrity and professionalism of STLD and ALD, the two British associations of lighting designers that were directly involved in defining the nomination criteria and in charge of selection.

The award categories are:

ROCK: Stage events | Arena events | Eco friendly tour

THEATRE: Musicals | Dance | Opera | Drama

TELEVISION: Light Entertainment | Drama | Music Programmes | Events

LIFETIME RECOGNITION

The prize giving evening will take place during Plasa 2009, the important entertainment technology trade show at the Earls Court exhibition centre, London, and will be another chance for professionals to meet: lighting designers and show operators, associations and specialist media. At the same time, the awards will stimulate deeper communication between the world of lighting design and the lighting industry.

Further information regarding the event and assessment criteria are available on the website:

www.knight-of-illumination.com



Michael Northen Bursary award

The 2009 Michael Northen Bursary will be presented on Tuesday 15th September on the ALD stand at 12:00.

Introducing the PLDA

The Professional Lighting Designers' Association - Sharon Stammers



This is to introduce both myself and the Professional Lighting Designers' Association. You may not be familiar with the name as it has only recently changed. PLDA was originally founded as the European Lighting Designers' Association ELDA+ but as membership began to grow in countries outside of Europe: India, Brazil, Singapore etc, the name was changed to encompass the new membership demographic. I have been working as the UK coordinator for PLDA for just over two years and have been an architectural lighting designer for 13 years. I moved into my architectural lighting career after several years as a stage electrician and a Masters from the Bartlett.

PLDA is a voluntary federation of lighting designers and lighting consultants who are active on an international scale

and the association's purpose is both to increase the reputation of the profession and to establish the profession as such in its own right. Membership is centered around the professional architectural lighting designer but has many affiliate categories.

PLDA believes that education is the key to establishing Lighting Design as a serious profession. The association thus dedicates a large portion of its time to the organisation and support of education programs at university level. The Workshop Program with up to four major workshops a year gives students and young designers the opportunity to work in teams under the guidance of a professional lighting designer to develop and implement a lighting design concept on a real project. PLDA also stages the Light Focus conference once

a year, usually in conjunction with a major lighting fair event, e.g. Light+Building in Frankfurt/D or EuroLuce in Milan/I. The sessions cover topics of interest and relevance to all those involved in architectural lighting design and bring to light a variety of professional themes.

More recently with the introduction of myself in the UK and my counterpart in the US, Glenn Shrum, local activities have been happening on a regular basis, relationships with other associations sought, various campaigns initiated and general promotion of both the association and the profession of lighting design has been undertaken successfully.

"The Association of Lighting Designers is a professional body representing lighting designers working in the live performance industry in the

United Kingdom and many other parts of the world. Its aims are to further the art of lighting design and to raise the professional status of the Lighting Designer as a member of the creative team."

Taking the aims of the ALD straight off your webpage shows that the two associations are undertaking parallel paths in terms of our aspirations. It makes sense that we seek to create a supportive relationship in terms of the professional issues facing both of us. With that in mind, we would like to extend invitations to all our local and international events to members of the ALD, foster cross fertilisation of the two specialisms and introduce ALD members to our own. I look forward to the possibilities that are open to us.

Sharon Stammers
sstammers@pld-a.org
www.pld-a.org

6th August

Talk In conjunction with the ILE on the social and cultural impact of artificial night-time illumination in place making and management. At BDP 16 Brewhouse Yard, Clerkenwell, London. Free to attend. 6.30 pm for 7pm

September

Farewell to the GLS lamp – date tbc. Free to attend. Bring a GLS!

October:

LoveLight is an inspirational one-day event which takes place on Thursday 8th at the Royal College of Physicians at Regent's Park in London. It's organised by the PLDA and Emap. Confirmed speakers include Eva Jiricna, Laurie Chetwood, Jonathan Speirs and Paul Finch. Free to attend. Date TBA via www.we-love-light.com

The Professional Lighting Designers Convention takes place in Berlin 29-31st October. PLDC Berlin has over 70 speakers, 1300 delegate places and streams on research, case studies, daylighting/sustainability and professional practice issues.

Join us. www.pld-c.com

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Grotesqueness in Glasgow

Slick lighting by Simon Wilkinson



"...creating the corridor of sidelight, and pools of toplight in which the boxes sat so the actors could appreciate from an early stage the precision of the positioning that was required." Photo: Simon Wilkinson

Slick lighting by Simon Wilkinson

Slick started life as a show about a cat in a Glasgow tenement, with the cat linking the floors, and stories, of its inhabitants. Whilst prototyping some cat and human puppets that were to be used to tell this story *Slick's* creators, Candice Edmunds and Jamie Harrison, discovered that the human puppets were much more interesting than the animal one. This led to the concept for *Slick*, a show told through grotesque puppets, where the head of the puppet is that of one actor, and the arms portrayed by another.

I was working with Jamie and Candice's company Vox Motus on a work in progress for another show *Bright Black*, when they asked me if I'd be interested in working on *Slick*. Vox Motus have a very interesting process for creating new work – they generally start with a separately funded 'Work in Progress' showing – a couple of week's rehearsal in which concepts for the work are

tried, followed by a very small number of public performances at which a short version of the work is tested in front of an audience.

It was April 2007 when we embarked on creating *Slick* at the Tron in Glasgow. At this point *Slick* was a broad comedy, revolving around a young child, Malcom, his doting parents, and his slightly eccentric, space obsessed upstairs neighbour Mrs Driech. It had a very static set design, with the whole show being viewed through a proscenium letterbox.

Well-behaved puppets

During the two week rehearsal period, we learned a lot about how the puppets behaved – what you could achieve with them without breaking the illusion and, critically for me, how you could light the space without drawing attention to the puppeteer.

From the beginning, we accepted that we'd be unable to loose the puppeteers

completely, but we wanted to ensure that the audience's focus was squarely on the puppet performers, and not on the actors manipulating the arms and other objects within the scene.

The lighting for the work in progress defined the performance space with tightly-focussed side and top light, with a very small amount of front fill for the eye sockets. Despite little attempt being made to define time and place, the space above the acting area was rapidly filled with equipment, and it was apparent that a different course of action would be required for any more elaborate design. The work in progress was very well received by its audience, and the feedback session that followed in the bar yielded many interesting, and contradictory, suggestions.

From WIP to just work...

Fast forward 12 months, and in May 2008 we all assembled once again at the Tron (now

co-producers) in Glasgow for a week. This time, we knew we had the funding to produce the full show, as a 2 week run at the Traverse during the Edinburgh Festival, followed by a Scottish tour.

The purpose of this week was to develop a staging and lighting concept for the show. One of the common pieces of feedback from the work in progress was that the staging was too static, and the letter box set too constraining – so the goal was to find a more fluid set concept. This had to still provide the puppets with the table height platforms they required to perform, and allow me to keep the tightness of the lighting that we'd discovered was essential to maintaining the illusion.

Prior to the design week, Jamie and Candice had come up with the idea of a number of wheeled boxes upon which the puppets would perform. However, these weren't ordinary boxes – out of each box all manner of scenery would unfold





Cora Bissett. Photo: Jethro Collins

to provide both signifiers of location, and important elements of the plot.

Fringe limitations

From a lighting perspective, the run at the Traverse provided huge constraints. Whilst the Traverse is probably the best equipped and most accommodating venue on the Fringe, there are significant limitations on what can be achieved. In Traverse 2, our performance space, we were restricted to the use of the venue's general cover, plus a limit of an additional 12 specials. Sadly, we already knew that lighting the puppets using a general wash was going to be deeply unsatisfying. With a design that had multiple boxes which could be positioned anywhere within the space, it rapidly became obvious that we were going to have difficulties stretching 12 specials to meet our needs!

We tried a number of different design ideas over the week at the Tron,



"...wee Malky skates..." WIP and photo by Simon Wilkinson

eventually hitting upon a scheme where there were 4 'islands' of light in which two boxes could be positioned, all of which were in a straight line. This allowed a design of 4 top lights, 4 front lights, 2 three quarter back lights, and 2 sidelights, covering all of these positions. These provided the basics of

illumination, but wouldn't really give much beyond that.

Once we'd arrived at this lighting concept, the remainder of the week at the Tron was spent prototyping the boxes - working out which pieces of scenery could appear from which box, and how much could be crammed in to each one.

Cora Bissett and Jordan Young. Photo: Jethro Collins



***Slick* lighting by Simon Wilkinson**

Location, location, location

Equipped with at least some of the answers, we left the Tron to consider how to solve the remaining questions. My primary concern was how to create all of the locations required by the script with such a limited rig. The design week had made it clear that whilst some scenic elements would be available to denote location they couldn't be in every scene, and so lighting was going to be required to provide the links between those scenes with set, and those without.

Colour had always featured strongly in our discussions about the show, so I became convinced that the answer was to place scrollers on some, if not all, of our 12 lights. Providing the scrolls were carefully crafted, it should be possible to just move live between scenes, without requiring two scrollers per position, or additional lights to use whilst the scrollers changed colour.

This left two hurdles to overcome. Firstly, it was obvious that *Slick* was going to have a large number of cues, and adding scrollers to the show wasn't going to simplify that at all. The Scottish touring circuit has a wide variety of desks, so touring the show on disk wasn't an option, and replotting the show in each venue would only add to the challenge of our one day fit ups. Hiring a desk was the obvious solution, but that ran into the second hurdle – budget.

Puppet-sized budget

Whilst *Slick's* lighting budget was generous for an Arts Council funded show, it was clear that there was a significant gap between what I wanted, and what I could afford. Fortunately, Gavin Stewart at Black Light in Edinburgh was interested in the project, and we managed to agree a price for eight S4s with scrollers that would fit into the budget. ETC kindly

offered to loan us one of their new (at the time) Ion consoles to control the tour with, happily resolving both problems. The 4 front lights would remain in open white, whilst the 8 remaining top, side and back lights would all have 16 colour scrollers.

Boxing clever

Then, an additional design idea reared its head. We had initially been considering setting the show entirely upon these boxes, however it was becoming clear that the final scene required a more extravagant setting.

The plan was that the entire back wall of the stage would fold down as a pop-up book, revealing a beautifully crafted roof top, with perches for all 5 of our puppet protagonists (their numbers swelled by the addition of Jerko, Mrs Dreich's paedophile son). This wasn't going to fit into the 12 lights available!

Fortunately, we were able to squeeze 3 more lights from the Traverse. Along

with using a portion of their cover for a moonlight blue key light, this allowed me to fit in this dramatic conclusion.

Getting darker...

In July 2008, we started on the final rehearsal period, of a show that was significantly blacker than the one we'd embarked upon a year and a half before. I was in the somewhat unfamiliar position of entering the rehearsal period with a lighting design pretty much sketched out – my primary concern now was selecting the colours for each scene, and figuring out how on earth to order them so that each scene change only required a single frame scroller move! We made an effort to get lighting into the rehearsal space as early as possible – creating the corridor of sidelight, and pools of toplight in which the boxes sat so the actors could appreciate from an early stage the precision of the positioning that was required.



Simon Wilkinson

Simon has designed lighting in venues from London's West End to the north of Scotland, and for companies including The National Theatre of Scotland, Nottingham Playhouse, Dundee Rep, Perth Theatre and the Byre Theatre. Over the years, his design work has earned a Guinness World Record and prompted reports of an alien invasion.

Simon is currently working on VoxMotus's next show "Bright Black" which features challenging mixture of live action and black art magic but, as yet, no puppets.

***Slick* lighting by Simon Wilkinson**

The precision and accuracy of their scene shifting became a key part of the show, they were constantly drilled in getting the boxes to exactly hit the marks. For me, the rehearsal period threw up a number of interesting surprises, in particular movement montages in which wee Malky skates from run down Glasgow streets, through Tropical deserts, Amazonian jungles, Alpine ski slopes and industrial wastelands, into a lift and an oil company's headquarters. All that in a single sequence, lit with 4 lamps.

Colour corrections

The shape of the show was constantly shifting, with scenes changing order, being cut, and new scenes being created. All of this led to constant changes in colour order on the scrolls. Despite leaving manufacture to the last possible moment, we still

ended up hacking them apart and reassembling on a few occasions to get the correct ordering for the show.

I an' an lon

We started plotting over a lengthy technical in the final week of rehearsals, when the lon console came into its own. I ended up plotting my own show (the technician was dealing with the even more complex sound plot), and its simplicity and intuitiveness was key to allowing me to retain my sanity!

In a show running around 75 minutes, we amassed nearly 200 called lighting cues with many more follow-ons and cue parts. The scroller rig really proved its worth – they light all bar the last 5 minutes of the show, and the majority of the colour changes are live moves. Lighting successfully created a vast range of locations, from the fantasy

movement montages to Malcolm's home, Mrs Dreich's apartment, Jerko's bedroom and hallway, the common stair, an Opera House, a death defying climb up the tenement wall, and the street in which Malky finally triumphs over adversity by perfecting his skateboard jump. In addition we provide power cuts, fires, explosions and gas attacks. Not bad, from a twelve lamp rig.

Nip and tuck

After three previews at the Tron, we dived back into the rehearsal room, making some fairly major cuts and structural changes to the show based on the audience's reaction.

This was a key part of the production process - ensuring that there was enough time to fully develop the show before its transfer to Edinburgh. We arrived in Traverse 2 at the start

of the second week of the festival, cramming ourselves into an already busy venue (the lon's small size was key to it fitting into a packed control room). The show had a hugely successful run in Edinburgh, being shortlisted for a Total Theatre Award and winning a Fringe First. Joyce MacMillan, in her review for the Scotsman, stated that the "entire creative team deserves a standing ovation"

Once Edinburgh was over, we still had a Scottish tour to mount. The creative team moved up to the new One Touch Theatre at Eden Court to make a slightly larger version of the show. From a lighting perspective, this involved adding some additional parcans to provide more saturated colour in the final rooftop scene and preset, and a couple of extra sidelights from a slightly more front-on angle to reduce the shadows as

Malky scales the outside of the tenement.

We also added a hazer, allowing beams to fill the air above, and to the sides, of the performance area. This was incredibly successfully, and allowed a show with a very small set to fill the space in the larger venues we played on tour.

Since the end of the tour *Slick* has been remounted twice – it was invited to perform as part of the Scotland Live showcase, and has just played the Midsummer Festival in Cork.

The team was reunited for the Critics' Award for Theatre in Scotland, where *Slick* was nominated for Best Design, and Best Technical Presentation. As Candice remarked whilst accepting the award for Best Technical Presentation: "Never call your show *Slick* - it demands a lot from everyone!"#

Seeing double

Two Musicals In Ten Days by Rob Halliday

Every year, in mid June, a group of people gather together for two weeks of divine madness: getting on two full scale musicals, plus a smaller cabaret show, in just nine days, then performing the two in rep for five more days, changing shows between each performance matinee to evening and evening to following matinee.

The reason? To show off the cream of new British musical theatre talent. London's Royal Academy of Music runs a hugely popular one year post-graduate musical theatre singing course. Led by Mary Hammond, vocal coach to the stars, it attracts about 25 people each year, and therein lies the problem. Very few musicals can truly showcase that many people. RAM's solution? Do two....

As you might imagine, that presents quite a challenge –

particularly in the Academy's 230-seat proscenium arch Sir Jack Lyons Theatre, which doesn't have much storage space and can't really fly scenery, the low grid there more to hold a set of motorised lighting bars, manual winch bars and good old-fashioned hemp sets. But there is a real will – and an enormous amount of support – from the Academy to present two shows to the highest possible standard.

That support has manifested itself in the theatre's infrastructure, which has seen many improvements over the decade I have been involved with these shows, most dramatically in the last seven years since the arrival of Jake Wiltshire as theatre technician. FOH focus is now by a crawl truss rather than a long wobbly ladder. The new dimmer installation (144 ways of Sensor including 5Ks)

doesn't flicker at random. Most importantly, this year Jake finally got to update the lighting stock: Strand's finest (the Patt 743s) remain now complemented by new Juliat 1.2k Fresnels, but their worst (the T-Spot) has been replaced by 55 Source Fours in a wide range of beam angles; White Light have been Jake's collaborators in all of this.

Jake also knew he needed colour changers, but was aware of the time and expense of making scrolls – so he opted for six SeaChanger dichroic colour changers for Source Fours, the 'xG' version with green as well as CMY. These are also silent – an important consideration in a small theatre regularly housing opera – and it was only when Jake was offered an unbeatable deal on six silent-running, tungsten

V L 5 0 0 Washes that he also added moving lights to the stock.

So, new toys to play with! Or, at least, the chance to form the core rig from stock, with any rental budget then used for particular specials...

This year's shows were *Sweet Charity*, directed by the Academy's Karen Rabinowitz, and *Oh What A Lovely War*, directed by Matthew Lloyd. Nigel Hook was the set designer for both – he is a master of designing structures that can be made to look dramatically different between shows with just a little re-arrangement and re-dressing (he and production manager John Pitt are also masters at then selling those structures on to other theatres!) Here Nigel designed twin truss arches



Rob Halliday

Rob began lighting at school and subsequently with the National Youth Theatre.

In the two decades since then he has worked on productions throughout the world, as lighting designer (Daddy Cool in London, The Wizard of Oz touring the US, many seasons at RAM), lighting programmer (Equus, Mary Poppins, Miss Saigon, Les Misérables and many more) and writer for many industry magazines and the books 'Entertainment In Production' vols 1 and 2.



Nigel Hook's white-card set-model, showing the principle elements shared by the two shows

Two Musicals In Ten Days Rob Halliday

the opposite masking), and a high cross light – this year 36° Source Fours with gobos to give texture across the set and actors, fitted with Jake's SeaChangers which were great – if you haven't seen these in action, you really should. Overhead, there is a two colour toplight (I love the richness of mixing colours), plus some diagonal PAR backlights.

The rented specials, from White Light, included three DHA Light Curtains, which I wanted as 'in view' lights from the back truss and to solidify the haze to make the exposed theatre back wall recede, and three shuttering Revolutions, to let us cut off scenery or frame rooms on the floor, one as a backlight (a second would have been great, but budget, budget, budget), two from the advance bar as steep moveable front specials. Both shows needed footlights, so three L&E battens. Then two

R&V Beamlights with scrollers, tucked behind the pros as followspots – a great position for making sure people can always magically be seen, the operators making them 'true' intelligent lights! With both shows needing projection, Creative Technology supplied a High End DL2 – Nigel Hook spent the tech generating then merrily uploading images from his laptop.

With the gear in place, it's really then a matter of making it up as you go along, based on earlier conversations with the directors (albeit brief ones!) and an inner mental 'idea' of what you're trying to achieve. This will vary from show to show but, for example, on *Sweet Charity* it was as simple as it being *Charity's* show, meaning she should always – in my mind – 'float above' everyone else – definitely, if almost subliminally, brighter. With *OWALW* the challenge was

as a base structure dressed with red legs and drapes and a slash curtain for *Sweet Charity*, dressed with old flags for *OWALW*, plus a moving 'room' piece and a moving tower.

Of course, the difficulty – one shared with big musicals – is that the rig has to be designed early enough let us work out how to afford it and make it work, which means it's designed before many specifics have come out of the rehearsal room. So design is a matter of seeing specifics required by the set (UV light for the poor-man's

neon created with UV paint), picking up any moments from the script or rehearsals, then designing a rig flexible enough to accommodate those and cope with anything else that might be thrown at us during tech while making best use of the gear and budget available.

Nigel's arches left me able to continue with the dance-style rig that has evolved for these shows, partly because the weight loading on the old - now replaced - winches limited the overhead rig, and partly just because it works so well, controlling

stray light by keeping it off the floor and losing it into the wings. Ultimately, it's a showcase: the performers must be allowed to dominate the space and 'win' over all else.

So the rig is based around four booms per side, each with a shin Source Four in open white, a head high Par can (a 'wide' crosslight that spills onto the opposite masking, with a scroller to give colour variety – White Light's stock scroll is pretty good for this), a head high Source Four in 202 (an 'invisible' crosslight, cut off

Oh What A Lovely War: Explosion behind the trenches. A mixture of technology: the red is from a Patt 243, while the green gas clouds are from the DL2 projector.



Sweet Charity: Digital Light Curtains helping to frame the show, the slash curtain cross-lit by Juliat Fresnels. The two central characters are lit by R&V Beamlight followspots.



Rob Halliday Two Musicals In Ten Days: *Sweet Charity* and *Oh! What A Lovely War*

to differentiate between the 'show within a show' and the 'real' scenes, particularly since we weren't using the traditional Pierrot costumes; here we lit the trusses and, gently in broken gobo light, the audience for the 'show' scenes.

The real trick, though, is having the tools – particularly moving lights, desk and operator – to be able to try ideas quickly as the cast rehearse, grabbing the ones that work and discarding those that don't. I'll start with a vague plan for each scene (and a lot of cues in the book – it's easier to have them there then delete some than be trying to write them in during tech), but sometimes it's the solutions reached for in desperation that look wonderful - using the DLCs to frontlight the people who suddenly appeared right upstage on towers in *OWALW!* After that, it's really a matter

of grabbing every spare moment to do notes and fix things...

The Academy has no technical courses and so no technical labour, so we draft in help from drama schools - a collaboration that, as with all areas of this project, has been improved immeasurably by the efforts of Jake and Nic Watson, newly appointed Technical Director of the National Student Drama Festival but for the last few year's RAM's Student Co-Ordinator, plus the show's other professional staff (stage managers Matthew Hales and Debbie Waters, production electrician Martin Goodman, plus technicians Richard Booth and Sam Fluskey).

The result, we all think, is a fantastic opportunity for the students – stage managers from Rose Bruford, electricians from Mountview - to learn by doing, working on relatively big shows away

from the familiar 'comfort zone' of their college. They get to face challenges they wouldn't on simpler shows – teching and calling 400+ cue shows for the DSMs (Abbie Farnsworth and Charlotte Eden), everything from using a telescope and locking off lights tightly enough to survive whacks from scenery to seeing – and being part of – that process of bringing a 2D plan and some vague ideas to 3D life for the electricians (Simeon Miller, Lewis Wilding, Pie Ramsay, Adam 'Twiggy' King, Charlie Strangeways and Maria Gozadinou).

The education extends to the performers: it's amazing how if you explain cross-light to them, they'll pay you back endlessly by cheating their positions to let light in to the eyes of their colleagues, and while this is a showcase they're also learning about radio mics



Oh What A Lovely War.

In the trenches. Sometimes you don't need anything more than a birdie...



Oh What A Lovely War. Wounded troops return to the UK; projection suggests location, crosslight isolates the characters.



from sound designer Mike Walker and his team, quick changes, and the thrilling tedium of tech.

Best and worst moments? Well, the worst always comes when having created 400 cues in just under three days you have to delete them all and start again at cue 1 on show two... and close second is the realisation that it's the longest day of the year and you've somehow missed the summer (again)!

Best: being part of two fantastic shows (plus the half, the cabaret show lit by Jake), performed by fantastic singers and backed by the kind of orchestra (28 in the pit!) you rarely hear anywhere anymore, let alone up close in a 230 seat theatre. Quite something.

Oh, and this year seeing the Academy realise the debt they owe to Jake Wiltshire for his work upgrading their theatre, and thank him by making him an Honorary Associate of the Academy. A touching and well deserved gesture. #



Sweet Charity

Above: The 'neon' skyline is UV painted and UV lit; deep blue frontlight adds depth and colour to the shadows

Below: Followspots and crosslight separate the performers from the scenery, which is dressed by cross-light gobos with Seachanger colour changers



Focus – The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers – “More art, less tools...”

Office Oracle

Latest news from Ian's production desk

The 2009 Annual General Meeting will take place at 12:00 noon on Sunday 13th September 2009 in the Cromwell Room at PLASA09 at Earls Court.

The main topic of discussion during the meeting will be how we can ensure that members and potential members are attracted to the correct membership category. How do we define a professional member? How do we attract more members to become associates? Is associate the correct title for the category?

The Executive has been discussing this topic for a few months, and now wish to present the membership with a chance to hear their thoughts.

If you do not currently receive email bulletins and would like to, please contact the office with a current email address. Members wishing to attend the AGM are asked to

contact the office so we can get an idea of numbers (and to check quorate status).

ALD @ PLASA09

The ALD will once again be having a stand at PLASA this year. We will be located in Earls Court 2 again, but in a different position to the last two years. Come and find us on stand **2-N7** which is located between the *Technologies for Worship Pavillion* and the *White Light zone*, and therefore, not far from the entrance to Earls Court 2. Please stop by and say hello. It's great to finally put faces to the names on the database.

There is a specific webpage for ALD members to sign up and receive their tickets and passes to get into the show this year. It can be found at **www.plasashow.com/register/ald**. For those members wishing to attend but are without internet

access, please contact the office for a complimentary ticket form to be sent out to them. We look forward to seeing you at Earls Court.

Exec Members Wanted!

With the AGM on the horizon, the Exec continues to welcome members that wish to serve on the Executive of the ALD or to help and assist on specific projects or tasks. If you are interested in doing so, please contact the office or any current Executive member for a chat.

2009 / 2010 Subscriptions

At the time of writing, the Association still has over 250 members owing a total of approximately £9000. This is made up from those that have not updated their standing order to reflect the increase in fees and those who have just not paid!

All annual subscriptions are now overdue. If you are

one of those members owing money then you should have received a letter informing you of the fact. If you are in ANY doubt whether you are fully paid up for 2009/10 then please contact the office as soon as possible. If you know anyone who may not have paid their subs, please feel free to badger them until they do!!

This is the last issue of *Focus* that non payers will be receiving.

Attention Student Members!!

You are about start the new academic year. Do you have your term time address on our database? Do we have the correct one?

We frequently receive post returned to us as 'Unknown at this address' during the autumn. If you are moving over the summer, please ensure that you update your information on the website



directory or contact the office. An incorrect address can result in you not receiving membership renewal notices, and places the continuation of your membership at risk.

Sponsored Student Scheme 2010/11

This corporate members' funded scheme for students studying at Conference of Drama School Colleges will open again for applications at PLASA 09. The closing date for applications is Christmas 2009.

All current student members will be contacted at the start of September with an application form to fill in and return to the office complete with proof of your student status in order to maintain their current



Meetings Will Evans

Wallace Collection

ALD Members are invited to a guided tour around *The Wallace Collection* in London, one of the country's premier art collections, on Friday 25th September or Friday 30th October.

The Wallace collection houses the country's finest collection of works by masters such as Canaletto and Van der Neer, as well as other masterpieces such as the enigmatic *Laughing Cavalier*.

The tour will be conducted by one of the collection's curators and will focus especially on portraying light through art. We have a strict limit of 25 people per tour and as we expect interest to be high we have decided to arrange two meetings.

On Friday 25th September we will meet at 2pm for a 2.30pm tour that will last an hour, followed by refreshments and a chance to socialise in the café

afterwards. Times for the October meeting are still TBC but will likely be the same.

We need to know numbers for the September tour no later than 21st August and for the October tour no later than 25th September. These meetings are open to all members and on a strictly first come, first served basis so please book early by emailing meetings@ald.org. **uk** and we will respond to confirm your attendance. The Wallace Collection is located in Manchester Square, Marylebone, London, W1U 3BN (nearest tube stations are Bond Street and Baker Street).

An Inspector Calls

What happens to a show that's been in existence since 1989, been on countless national and international tours, the National Theatre and the West End 3 times and has seen 3 generations of re-lighters, many generations of equipment and at least

3 sets? In late October/early November we'll be finding out with a visit to *An Inspector Calls* at the Novello theatre in London. Lit by Rick Fisher back in 1989 at the Theatre Royal York, the show was then taken on by the National Theatre and from there it has been on a stage somewhere in the world virtually every other year. We'll take you through the history of the show and find out what has changed and what hasn't and how improvements in technology have shaped the show's lighting through the years.

If you are interested, we need to know numbers. details will follow. If you don't have email and would like to attend, please call Ian in the office.

PLDA

Don't forget the PLDA's offer to attend their forthcoming meetings. Details page 8.#

membership beyond April 2010.

Please note that even if you are currently a member of the scheme you will need to apply again to continue your free membership through to April 2011. If you do not, your membership will revert to a normal student category and you will need to pay the annual subscription for a student.

We would also be pleased to hear from our corporate members with ideas for meetings or experiences tailored specifically to the sponsored students.

Robert Camac

Rick Fisher writes: It is with sadness that I have learned that the death of Robert Camac after a long illness.

Robert was the partner for over 50 years of Michael Northen, a past president and one of the founder members of the ALD. Robert was also most instrumental to the setting up of the Michael Northen Bursary

and made sure that Michael's wishes were enshrined in the ongoing support and encouragement of the Bursary which recognizes outstanding creativity in lighting design students and has been awarded through the ALD over the last decade.

One of the excellent legacies of Michael and Robert's vision for the bursaries is that they have consistently attracted the support of other leading lighting companies such as ETC, White Light, and PRG who along with the ALD sponsored additional bursaries that are given out at PLASA every year. He made sure of the Michael Northen Bursary's future by arranging that Michael's bequest was donated to the Mousetrap Foundation where it is currently held a foundation.

Robert always took great interest in the recipients of the Bursary and in all the news of the ALD and we will miss him.#

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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...

Honorary

Brian Croft, London

John Simpson, Surrey

Professional

Tanya Burns †, Oundle

Associate

Roger Ashcroft †, Doncaster

Antony Hateley, London

Mark Hughes, Glasgow

Aiden Johnson, Hinkley,
Leicestershire

Jonathan Laverlock, Dorking

Christopher Nairne, London

Marcus Robinson, London

Students

Jake Shurey, Uxbridge

Rob Casey, London

Elliot Griggs, Northampton

† re-joining the Association

Dates for your diaries

13-16th September

PLASA 09, Earls Court, London*

13th September 12:00 noon

ALD Annual General Meeting, Cromwell Room, Earls Court, London (at PLASA09).

13th September

Sponsored Student Scheme Opens.

23rd September

International Festival of Scenic Arts, V&A Museum, London.

25th September

Wallace Collection members' meeting.

30th October

Wallace Collection members' meeting.

31st October

Deadline for updating Yearbook entries

17-18th November

Event-Tech Ireland, Industries Hall, Dublin

2010

10-11th February

Event-Tech Scotland*, Thistle Glasgow

1st April

ALD Subscription Payments due

*the ALD will have a presence at these events.

One? Two? Three? Four? Five ALD reasons to visit PLASA09!

Andy Collier

It seems that everyone who is anyone in the entertainment technology field is gearing up for PLASA09, either before vacations, after vacations or instead of vacations... Exhibitors are finalising their stand layouts while putting pressure on their R&D engineers to have new prototypes ready for the show in time (vacation, what vacation?). The ALD's Nigel is excavating his garage to find the missing clips for our stand, and setting his alarm clock for *Sunday 13th September 2009*. But many of you may be thinking, "Well, I came down to the ABTT show in June, and saw people and stuff, so do I really need to go to PLASA09?" Well, the answer is "yes" – five times "yes".

If you use lights, are interested in light, or dabbled in sound (but never admitted to it), then this show couldn't offer a more comprehensive tour of the international lighting and sound scene. People that make, people that do, people that design.

Unlike other industries, the entertainment technology business is marked out by the expertise of those employed by companies that exhibit at a PLASA show. Many people you talk to on the stands either still are or have been users or designers. They speak our language. Hard sell and scripted presentations are rare; passion and experience are everywhere... so never feel intimidated.

Yes, it is big. The two halls at Earl's Court will be the home to more than three

hundred exhibitors this year, including most of our Corporate Members, so to give more time to socialise 'after hours', the organisers are opening the Central Bar until 8pm. And if you think you have seen it all before, there are no fewer than 40 new exhibitors this year.

So, reason 1: the show itself. If that isn't enough, what about us, the ALD? Reason 2: The ALD thrives through its personal contact with its members, and this year we are holding the AGM at PLASA. We value the opportunity to meet and talk to our members face-to-face at every PLASA. We are extremely fortunate to be offered a space donated by PLASA Events, so let's make the most of it. Come along and tell us what you are doing, try to dodge the editorial commitment to write for *Focus*, meet like-minded people. We are particularly excited to meet up with our members who visit from overseas. And this year, in addition to the Michael Northen Award presentation

(yes, that usually blocks the aisle... sorry) we are holding our Annual General Meeting on Sunday 13th. Errr, so that's reasons three, and four.

Talking of learning more about our business, here's reason 5: PLASA Events has confirmed some of the industry names that will headline its 2009 PLASA Education & Learning Programme, which runs throughout the Show. Leading the programme will be the *2009 Gottelier Masterclass* presented by last year's Gottelier Award Winner, John Stadius of Soundtracs/DiGiCo. Stadius is a highly respected name in audio circles, and will describe his early days in the industry, the formative years of analogue console design, the move to digital, right through to how the latest generation of chip technology has removed historical restrictions on console design leading to new possibilities for the future.

Other seminars cover such topics as speech intelligibility, ArtNet in

large scale applications, sustainability and BS8901, together with InfoComm sessions on planning and lighting live meetings and the highly successful range of Technologies for Worship seminars running throughout the four day show. Entrance to most sessions is free to registered show visitors, but if you are keen, book through the website now. And look out for manufacturer presentations, special interest seminars and workshops, the Innovation Gallery, hundreds of new product launches and so much more...

To recap: there's stuff to see, stuff to hear and people to meet. So there are five reasons...err, no, six!

PLASA Events is also offering **free admission to all ALD members**. Just go to www.plasashow.com/register/ald and follow instructions. If you haven't got internet, call the office.

So don't dither, don't search for excuses; postpone that opera and come along to talk to us and let me twist your arm to write for *Focus*!#

PLASASHOW 2009

EARLS COURT / 13-16 SEPTEMBER 2009

13.09.09

DISCOVER WHAT'S NEW

FREE REGISTRATION FOR ALD MEMBERS IS AVAILABLE
NOW AT WWW.PLASASHOW.COM/REGISTER/ALD

VISITOR ENQUIRIES +44 (0)845 218 6024





Left: Ian Dow, Chairman of Showlight, gives the opening welcome. The sessions in Studio A were a multimedia experience with HD projection and large pixel screens (which was so bright we were grateful when they were turned off on days 2 and 3). The whole event ran on time and appeared slickly organised on the day.



Below: John Watt's delightful demonstration of liquid dimmers with wine and water.



Left: Sustainable productions and green issues were a common theme. This session, Chaired by Mhora Samuel (Theatres Trust) involved Andrew Dixon (Sky TV), Nick Moran (CSSD), Ruth Rossington (PLASA), and Roberto Shaefer (DoP Quantum of Solace). Andi Watson explained how he used all LED sources to light Radiohead on their recent 'In Rainbows' tour and cut their electrical and shipping bills radically.

The Magic of Showlight

ALD members Sandy McRobbie and Paul Davies savour the colloquium

We were treated to a veritable international smörgåsbord of lighting delights courtesy of a 'spot-on committee' and a number of generous sponsors led by Martin.

The organizers panned out a broad palette of topics and speakers; the supporting companies knew that their audience couldn't have been more focused! *OK, enough of the sub editor speak and the puns.* Showlight 2009 was the genuine article.

The decision to hold Showlight 2009 in Glasgow couldn't be faulted. The city has an excellent record: employing a lighting coordinator, Simon Smith, and being co-founder of LUCI. As the Deputy Lord Provost stated, "We are keen on lighting" – they need to be

as it's dark quite a lot of the time this far North! Glasgow regards its annual lighting investment as providing improvement, enhancement, safety & security and highlighting for architecture and art around the city.

The venue was BBC Scotland's new HDTV studios at Pacific Quay. The BBC were keen to be involved with Showlight from the start. It was certainly an opportunity to show off the versatility, connectivity and suitability of their new multipurpose complex. And what a view from the top floor lounge bar (reminiscent of the Green Room at London Weekend).

The Showlight Committee, helped by their industry sponsors, produced an event with keynote speakers and hospitality galore.

The People

John Watt admirably demonstrated that wry sense of humour, which fortunately affects many in our industry, by revealing a 'green breakthrough' with his organic and recyclable dimmer – any resemblance to an outside toilet was pure coincidence!

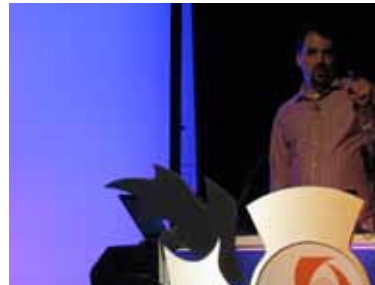
Bill Klages – the 'lighting guy' proved that the best stories, "Never lose anything in the telling". Tales of incompetent producers, petulant Barbara Streisands and blacked-out tightrope walkers at Barnum & Bailey's all benefited from Bill's' inimitable style.

Dorian Kelly admitted to being a 'lover of the art of light' and then proved it quite conclusively! Describing something as abstract as the 'philosophy of light' in mere words can get poetic. He did try to justify it more scientifically, using terms such as intensity, colour, texture, motion and direction, but the poetic still shone through.



Above: It was all about talking, meeting, exploring ideas, and enjoying good company; the booths were small and friendly with a limited range of products but time to explore ideas. The coffee and meal breaks were relaxed and unrushed, again a good place to meet and continue discussion on all things lighting design.

Below: A bizarre set of contrasts came from three fascinating presentations in one session from Alex Wardle (left), Rob Halliday (centre) and Iain Ruxton (right). Alex was explaining plans to light a Baroque Opera House appropriately in candles, Rob explained how LEDs can replace fairly subtly traditional cyc lighting and Iain showed how comprehensively, and many felt inappropriately, The Grand Mosque had been lit.





There were a wide variety of design disciplines represented, going well beyond theatre staged performances: film, TV, politics, and mountains for instance. Also represented were the fields of architecture, city planning, product launches, the Olympics and photography.



The Technology

Jim Bornhorst, although starting out as a sound boffin, was to lead ShowCo's development of the Vari-Lite. It started out as a project to build an integrated moving light system for a Genesis tour in 1981. What began as a probable tax write-off developed into one of the most significant uses of technology in lighting before or since – and that's before you take the dichroic filters they used into account! The group huddled around one of the few remaining VL1s in working order after Jim's talk including a few of us who had actually used them in anger – and I thought I was still a relative youngster!

Rob Halliday's talk described exactly what it promised: 'Impossible cyc lighting'. The perennial lack of space on and above stage meant that the current *Mary Poppins* tour only left 25cm for whatever was going to light the cyc (which also had to fly out). Rob worked with LD Howard Harrison to source a solution. This turned

out to be a 'next generation' LED wash – the EvenLed. These are modular 1m x 1m soft LED panels using 26 universes of DMX to allow the "artist to draw colours on the cyc". Here were old effects enhanced and facilitated by new greener leaner technology.

Simon Hall had the unenviable task of giving the physics lecture! Assessment of the hazards generated by multiple bright light sources does need to be quantified before it can be regulated. Once this has been achieved it may lead to a rethink as to how certain LED sources are utilized. It seems doubtful that this will curtail their use – it didn't hold back the use of lasers – just made them a little safer.

The Big

Paul Collison's description of lighting the Beijing Olympics ceremonies was a fascinating tale of multicultural lighting production. It was as much about the who and the how to achieve a result as it was about artistic merit. Whatever

you were doing it was large, and it was on an even larger canvas. Language barriers and the autocratic Mr. Zhaa seemed to be lighting for the live audience. Combine this with the Chinese love for saturated colour and this made the camera imaging tricky. Picking your battles definitely became the order of the day.

Ian Ruxton the Speirs & Major consultant on the Grand Mosque, Abu Dhabi project never pretended that it was either green or environmentally friendly. With 19,000 lights, 1250 of them intelligent, and 50 DMX universes, it certainly wasn't modest. Indeed it was massive. Combine this with a naïve client, a brief to make the lighting follow the cycles of the moon, and numerous sandstorms, and it's hardly surprising that this installation was to take nearly 5 years.

Paul Pyant's lighting of *The Lord of the Rings* involved interacting set, projection and lighting within a traditional theatre environment. The

production kept shifting location, backers and hence budget limitations. This placed obvious constraints on creativity, and elongated the time scales considerably. He couldn't praise both his crew and the VL3000 highly enough.

Bernie Davis on the other hand had just 3 days to light the equivalent of a West End show – *The Royal Variety Performance*. This show had a wide diversity of artistic requirements: rock and roll to ballet – 14 acts. It had to look good both for the live audience and those watching on TV, and it had to happen in real time and within the confines of a proscenium theatre. No overnights needed there then!

The Diverse

Roberto Schaefer can list *Quantum of Solace* and *The Kite Runner* as recent projects on which he was Director of Photography. The challenges of filming in remote locations and deciding on natural or artificial light sources made interesting listening,

especially when illustrated using familiar film bites from the movies.

Jim Tetlow graphically illustrated how 'basic' techniques often work best when giving his excellent talk on lighting the iconic Presidential Debates for American TV. Keep it simple portraiture lighting between 600 and 800 lux was demonstrated with clear and concise explanation and Autocad lighting plans. A few snippets on Presidential foibles kept the production notes in context!

Tanya Burns now works in the world of Industrial Theatre, lighting presentations for producers Imagination. Sometimes these shows can become 'over the hills and far away' type productions involving putting high technology in places it really wasn't designed to be used. Interesting to note that these events are still one of the best places to see high tech new wave technology being used to stunning effect with the added benefit of some theatrical fine tuning – if only

the rain would hold off until I've plotted this cue!

The Green

The Green Panel had various sustainability questions set to a group of leading industry figures. Three recurrent themes seemed to be:

- Changing existing work practices can save up to 30% off your venue's or event's carbon footprint.
- Sustainable Event Management wherever possible is another good place to start.
- Would somebody please come up with an effective LED Fresnel!

Angus Farquhar described the (non) ground breaking *Lighting the Storr*, a spectacular rock pinnacle on the Isle of Skye. This was a multimedia event which had to be totally non-intrusive i.e. no generators, no foot traffic and minimal helicopter access; beautiful scenery and plant life in the middle of a seriously conserved area. The technology had to work reliably and repeatedly in an

SHOWLIGHT '09

environment and climate known for its unreliability. Much of the innovative equipment was developed and adapted by the late Dave Bryant. I believe even Angus was still somewhat in awe of the final result they achieved – and he knew what to expect!

Andi Watson, LD for the band Radiohead was also given a green remit – light the tour with a hugely reduced carbon footprint. Minimise air freight, power consumption and use of such gadgets as dimmers. The band were very committed, and personally invested considerable sums on developing and buying the appropriate LED technology. The reward – a stunning show drawing only 135A, 3-Phase of electricity as opposed to a previous tour which demanded 900amps per phase.

The end

These are only some of my highlights from Showlight

2009... Everybody came away with their own.

By the time of the Conference Dinner in Glasgow's Old Fruit Market a good time had been had by all – new friends and ideas, old colleagues and older stories! Some sage and sensible words from Martin Professional A/S CEO Christian Engsted left most still optimistic that lighting would somehow see the current crisis out. More importantly though - where and when's the next Showlight?#

Main text by Sandy McRobbie, photos and extended captions by Paul Davies.

A Showlight student thank you!

As I got the chance to be one of the sponsored students at the Showlight conference, I just want to say thanks to all those who made it possible – and I believe I speak on behalf of all of us! This was a great experience and an opportunity I recommend every student to pursue!

During the four days of the conference I soaked up the experience and the knowledge of the people around me. The lectures all had something to tell us – whether they were regarding issues that we urgently need to act on or simply describing the process behind a project.

More fascinating though were the stories people had to tell – and if there are stories to tell (and songs to be sung) it surely is in the theatre world! Creative problem solving barely covers the measures people have had to go to in their work and hearing about this all is just as much preparation for 'the real life' as formal education!

Time was also neatly

divided between activities and we students got a very equal chance to participate; in every coffee or meal break, at the dinners, in the tours, at the pub or the hotel bar and all around there was the chance to hear these stories and mingle with the core and the body of performance lighting. And we weren't assigned to or made to do anything. We were pretty free-range and most of the companies sponsoring students understood and respected that it was more beneficial for us to get to see and touch and feel as much as possible at this event.

The venue was also a great selection, not only because we were in the amazing-and-oh-so-technical-most-recent-first-fully-HD-BBC-studio-one of the BBC in Scotland, but also because we were in Glasgow. And what do I find so great about Glasgow? I had no idea there was any council anywhere that had the interest and made the effort of re-energizing their city with a policy in lighting. For those readers who

weren't there and don't know: Glasgow's city council has a committee and an informed policy of how to light the city. The idea is that the city doesn't only need to be visible, but it should be made attractive and comfortable with lighting. So rather than re-organizing, demolishing and re-construct parts of the city it's given a new breath of life with lighting, underlining its importance as a part of the overall aesthetics in life. Now how about that!?

As Ken Billington rightly pointed out at the end of the conference (if I remember correctly), Showlight is a great place to meet and make friends as collaboration appears to be more important to us then competition. In few other industries, he said, could this kind of sharing of ideas and work happen. Furthermore, I would like to add: I can think of no other industry where this kind of an opportunity is presented to students. Surely there are internships and work experience schemes here and there, but to meet

all these people who have all this experience (and all those stories to tell) is made unique as we are treated as equals. Most – if not all – of the international-high-profile-designers, production electricians, programmers and company representatives made a point of approaching students and hear about our work and ambitions. It makes us all feel appreciated and boosts our confidence a little – something all lighting designers need, every now and again!

Thank you designers, production electricians, company representatives, other students and other visitors – but most of all thanks to the planning committee and thank you for the sponsored student opportunity!

Fridthjofur Thorsteinsson

*3rd year lighting design student
The Central School of Speech and Drama*



*The event was about inspiration; we had presentations from two of the student winners of scholarships to attend: One Eliot Griggs is pictured **right** with his show from Warwick University.*



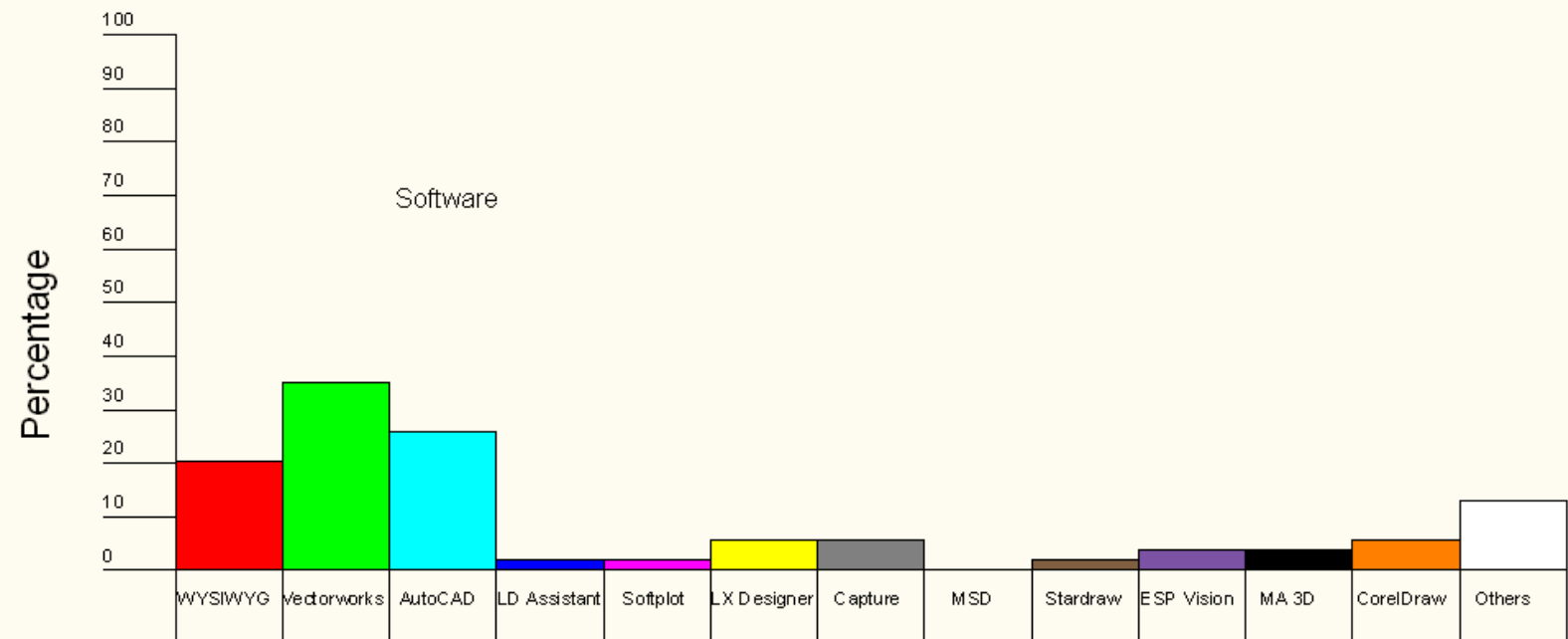
***Above:** On the Monday evening following the trips we dined in style at The Old Fruit Market.*

Left: There were many visits to choose from on the second full afternoon with 6 buses doing two or three visits locally. Here is one group at The Charles Rennie Mackintosh designed 'House for an Art Lover', but there were other trips to local distilleries, the Philips lamp factory, RSMD, and The Burrell Collection.



*LD Dorian Kelly (**below**) reminded us of the Art rather than the technology of lighting.*





Software for Lighting Designers

Focus asked David Ripley to survey the software that is used for lighting design and here are the findings

David Ripley

David Ripley runs cad4theatre, providing draughting services, training and consultancy to the industry in all things CAD.



The survey officially closed on 30th June and by that time I had received 54 responses. Most of these were by email following the mail shot to ALD members but a fair few originated from Showlight in Glasgow.

In terms of ALD membership 7.6% of the membership replied – thank you to all of them – of whom 39% were full members, 33% associates and 13% students. I also had replies from 5 non members and 1 Fellow (thanks Francis). Unsurprisingly the vast majority (87%) were UK based but we also had contributions from the US, Europe, Mauritius and Australia.

Of those using a software programme (9.25% of respondents did not) most were using the Windows platform and people often had more than 1 computer

that they were using (59%).

The software used (in order of popularity) were

- 1 Vectorworks Spotlight
- 2 AutoCAD
- 3 WYSIWYG
- =4 LX Designer
- =4 Capture Sweden
- =5 ESP Vision
- =5 MA 3D
- =5 Corel Draw
- =7 LD Assistant
- =7 Softplot
- =7 Stardraw

A couple of results here are worth mentioning. Firstly, AutoCAD is often used in combination with other programmes. This may imply that AutoCAD is used initially to draw the scenic elements (or that these drawings are received in that format) before moving to other programmes to complete the lighting design. However many just use AutoCAD.

Secondly, the position of CorelDraw – a raster based graphics package – is perhaps surprising.

Several people used more than one package, using a ‘pure’ CAD draughting or 3D drawing package for laying out stage arrangement and then importing it into their preferred lighting programme.

Most people bought the product they used based on its reputation, followed by recommendation and then price. Nearly half of users had tried the product out before buying them but most did not bother with an annual upgrade or subscription preferring to wait for useful new features to appear and the price to be right before taking the plunge.

In terms of where these programmes are used the highest number was in drama,

followed by opera and dance, live music and corporate events. Percentages here are confusing as many people naturally picked more than one, reflecting the way most of us now work.

Most people use the symbol content the programme provides however quite a few download them from other sources or create their own. This probably reflects the rapid advance in lantern development as well as the reluctance to sign up for subscriptions or upgrade programmes indicated above.

Lastly, in terms of numbers what do we use the software for? By far the highest number used the programmes for drawing plans, both the initial draft and final version. The next highest use is for generating the paperwork required for a production,

although of course not all programmes automatically create these reports within themselves and so other, allied programmes are also used. These include Lightwright and spreadsheet programmes such as MS Excel.

The next highest use is for visualisation although not all programmes provide this and not all versions of some programmes either. Below that comes using the programmes for sketching out ideas (at least one respondent put paper/pen for this) and finally Pre Programming.

In conclusion

92.4% of those who responded used some sort of software for lighting design. This means that it is now a skill that is expected of most of us (colleges take note!)

Software for Lighting Designers

David Ripley

However whether many of us use the full potential of these programmes is open to question as it seems they are mainly used to replace the manual drawing board.

This may be a reflection of the fact that the vast majority of users are using the software in the collaborative environments of theatre, opera and dance where the LX focus and plot followed by the technical rehearsal (no matter how long or short) is where the lighting design is actually realised, rather than each state or look being preset before entering the venue, as is often required in other disciplines.

Considering how relatively small the entertainment lighting market is there is a remarkably wide range of programmes available at a range of prices from several thousand pounds to less than £100. You can even find some very basic free programmes.

There is also a very wide range as to what these programmes do and certainly at the top end of the market a lot of R&D is obviously being undertaken from taking photometric measurements of lanterns through to control protocols for the wide range of lighting consoles available.

How sustainable this makes some of these products is open to question, especially in the current economic climate and given the evidence of how reluctant people are to upgrade unless the features offered become essential and the price is right.

There is also the increasing use of visualisers within the control consoles themselves. How this will change our approach to design remains to be seen.

For UK users there is also the fact that many programmes are US-oriented so they don't have the full

range of lanterns that many of us are used to. There are, after all, many places where SLs and Source 4's are not the norm and so ways need to be found to include these into your programme.#

Postscript

In my first article I stated (in my opinion) that CAD stands for Computer Aided Draughting and not Computer Aided Design.

Alex Wardle replied:

David Ripley uses AutoCAD strictly as a draughting tool. Draughting is the art of producing clear, concise and beautiful drawings, which may have originated as back-of-fag-packet sketches in a creative frenzy. Most lighting designers do not have the luxury of draughtsmen to finesse our drawings, so we end up doing it ourselves. Vectorworks (along with other CAD packages)

includes helpful tools which aid the design process, rather than simply drawing nice neat symbols. For instance, what diameter beam does a 19 degree Source Four give from Bridge 1, and what is the intensity on an actor's face standing DSC? I've drawn all of my sidelight as 26 degree Source Fours but actually I want them all to be 36 degree: that will be the "Find and Modify" tool.

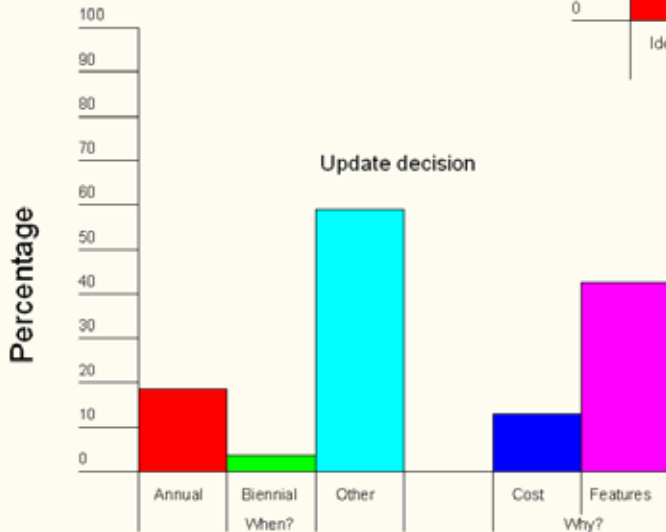
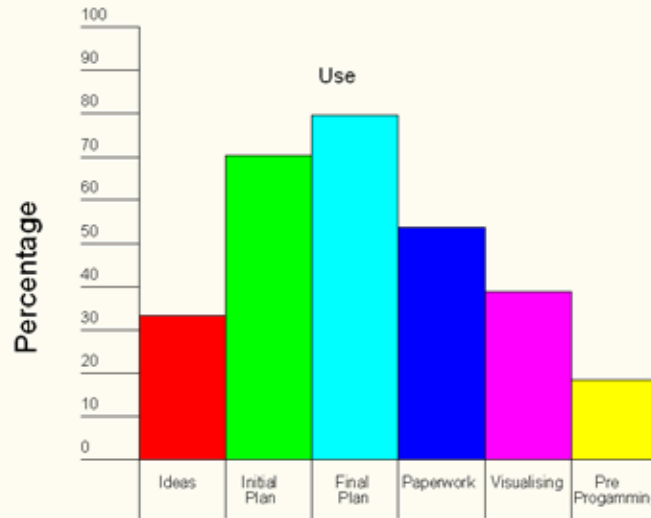
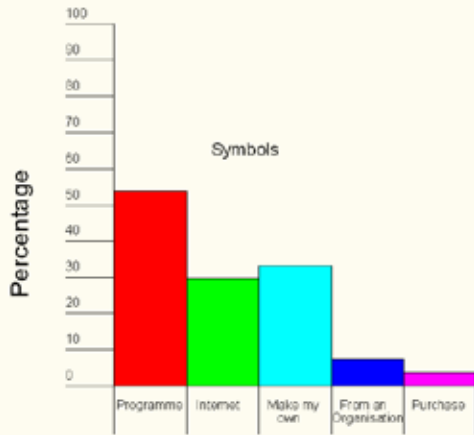
In the world of theatre consulting (my other job), we often produce sketches to show architects how a theatre space might be used: hanging real scale drapes, truss, luminaires, loudspeakers, people - and I've sometimes included 3D scenery models of shows which I have worked on. This process relies heavily on seeing what the practical possibilities are: can this balcony be wider and used as a control position, or will that

jeopardize the sightlines? We sketch in rigging positions to show how they might be incorporated into the building structure and architectural finishes.

The deliverables from this stage of work are typically 3D still images or flythroughs, rather than neatly drawn plans and sections (although we often re-use the same 3D model to produce those). Our draughtsmen never touch this kind of work - it is produced by the people who are generating the ideas. It's like standing inside the shell of a theatre and asking for a bar to be fixed to the wall, there and then, hanging a luminaire on it to see what it can do. This use of CAD is 100% design tool.

Alex Wardle, #822

I feel this is a very important debate so let's have the thoughts of the rest of the membership on this. DR



Links

Vectorworks Spotlight

www.vectorworks.uk.com

AutoCAD

www.autodesk.co.uk

WYSIWYG

www.castlighting.com

LX Designer

www.lxdesigns.co.uk

Capture Sweden

www.capturesweden.com

ESP Vision

www.espvision.com

MA 3D

www.malighting.com

Corel Draw

www.corel.com

LD Assistant

www.ldassistant.com

Softplot

www.stageresearch.com

Stardraw

www.stardraw.com

Lighting Design (free)

<http://theatre-freeware.peartreeuk.com/page1.htm>

Symbols Libraries

Modelbox

www.modelboxplans.com

cad4theatre

www.cad4theatre.org.uk

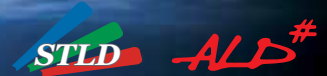
Field Template (VW only)

www.fieldtemplate.com



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