

ALD # FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers

"More art, less kilowatts..."

'Small Craft Warnings' at the Arcola Theatre, London
with just 5kW of lighting by Johanna Town. See page 6.
Photo: Johanna Town

February / March 2009

Colour Filter Secrets Special

Under the energy-efficient fluorescents this issue:

Roger Frith • Design demands for Johanna Town • SMs and LDs • MM=MBE • LDs and colour • Guest reviewer David Barbour with 'The Brits on Broadway' ... and much more...

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Rick's Remarks

Welcome the to our first issue of *Focus* for 2009. Firstly, I would like to remind you all that the rates of subscription to the ALD are changing this year, and please make sure that you alter your standing orders so that the ALD can continue to campaign on behalf of all lighting designers, continue to publish *Focus*, and run efficiently. I am sure we all agree on the value of staying connected and in having a unified voice for lighting designers, as we are so often isolated from our colleagues.

I think with the depressing economic situation we face, the importance of the ALD to raise awareness of what lighting designers do and add value to our projects will become even more crucial. The office is already hearing of a downturn in terms of real fees being offered for work and particularly for

productions that take have a new life after the original contract, such as tours and transfers. The information that we gather in the fees database will become an even more useful resource in making all of us aware of the going rate for the job and to help resist the pressure to accept lower fees. Please continue to input fee information into the ALD, it is now more vital than ever.

I also believe that there has never a better time to invest in union membership. With increased risk to production at all levels, having access to the support and legal clout of Equity to make sure that contracts are honoured could be invaluable, as I fear that more producing organisations will be trying to wriggle out of previously agreed deals. I know from personal experience that it is being suggested that even with a current signed contract

agreed by the producers, I accept a re-negotiation of an existing deal for a new reduced rate with no offer of any improvement should business conditions change and no incentive other than the threat that the project will collapse unless we all agree to cuts.

The ALD is actively working to improve our relationship with Equity and to improve the union's understanding of the concerns of working LD's. I have always likened Equity to a breakdown cover for driving. With tough road conditions ahead, having a rescue service might be one of the best investments we can make!

It is getting closer to *Light Relief Day*, which is on April 24th. For this third annual fund-raising day we are being joined by our US colleagues who have started a similar day to support their charity *Behind the Scenes*. Many



designers are joining in on the day on both sides of the pond! Please do not only support the day with your productions wherever they are, but also if you know of anyone in either country who might need assistance please let the charity trustees know via www.lighrelief.org.uk or www.estafoundation.org/bts.htm. Light Relief is grateful for generous donations from ETC and Richard Pilbrow, and bequests in memory of lighting designers Howard Eldridge and Roger Frith (see page 31).

Regards, Rick#

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Recession... what's in the LX store?

Mark Jonathan searches for lights at the end of the tunnel.



Minimal minimums

I've always been incensed by the pitiful minimums that our union and the management bodies agree to. While Equity and the ALD advise that the minimum rate is not what should be paid I can see examples where producers think that the minimum is an acceptable amount to offer.

Lighting designer Simon Corder who sits on the Equity designers' committee is also incensed by the minimum rates to the point that he says let's make it quite clear how ridiculous the rates are and lower them to a pound. Equity says "You can't do that?" Perhaps they are right - perhaps we would be offered shows for a pound.

It's most unfortunate that we are entering a period of financial austerity at a time when the rates paid to LDs were already undervalued for the time it takes us to

do what we do. Why do I feel that producers put their hands on the ears when I start to talk about how many days are involved in preparation, attending rehearsal, long technical days and the burgeoning period of previews?

Dividing the fee by the number of days worked, never mind the creative contribution we make, rarely adds up to the daily rate of pay that is paid to unskilled workers let alone other production staff. It's unfortunate that it seems we are punished for wanting to do the job we do. I realised recently that the way forward is plumbing... No one asks 'how much?' they just say 'How soon can you come?' We are still struggling to get the massive contribution that we make to be valued properly.

For me, as a freelance LD, it's also interesting to see the difference between the

support one may get from a decent producing house to the absence of it in some commercial managements. The feeling of being abandoned as one discovers that the programmer hasn't been booked through to the opening night or no time for mods has been budgeted for, set against the complete support that I'm currently enjoying with the RSC.

Transfer Fees

Meanwhile, a colleague called me this week to discuss his West End transfer, which was 3 days away and there was still no sign of a contract or any payment and the producer was taking up to 3 weeks to return his calls. While we are in a period when I'm sure we will be grateful for any work we get I'm sure this will make us reticent to 'rock the boat' or make a fuss about the offer. We know already that we, myself included,

find our contracts may not be honoured by producers with regard to Royalty payments and yet we are reticent to advise Equity or object especially when we are told that the rest of the creative team have already agreed to the deficient deal.

I don't think things are going to get easier for the foreseeable future. We need to stay calm but we must keep sharing information. We've had some very valuable meetings of professional members and I certainly hope that we shall re-convene soon. As I've said before your feedback and active contributions are essential and if you are working professionally but still subscribe to the ALD as an Associate Member, please upgrade now because you are missing out on the discussions and meetings we hold specifically on issues of professional concern.#

Maurice Marshal MBE



We are delighted to record the news of Maurice Marshal's MBE, which was announced in the Queen's New Year's Honours List. The MBE was awarded to Maurice, an ALD Fellow, for his outstanding and dedicated service to drama which reflects a lifetime's commitment to the theatre.

After completing three years in the army as a tank mechanic, Maurice moved into theatre and has worked for much of the last 40 years as chief electrician for the Northcott Theatre in Exeter. Maurice has been committed to training new entrants to the industry for numerous years and many of today's

top lighting designers and technicians have benefited from his tutelage. In addition to his commitments to the Northcott Theatre and to national training, Maurice co-founded Stage Electrics with David Whitehead in 1979 and remains actively involved in the business today.

Maurice, who was notified of his award in November 2008, said that he was "overwhelmed to be awarded an MBE". He is especially respected for his unwavering enthusiasm for training by so many in all areas of the theatre business, with many of Maurice's trainees leaving the Northcott to develop their careers as highly-respected theatre technicians, lighting designers and even technical directors.

When we called to congratulate Maurice, he quickly turned the conversation around away from him, to mention the recent loss of a man he greatly admired, Robert Ornbo. "It was always such a joy to work

with Robert," he said, "all my trainees enjoyed it when he came down to Exeter. He helped so much with training; he knew the right way of plotting and his plans always worked perfectly."

In his inimitable and humble way, Maurice replied to any hint of congratulation from the ALD, "I have been honoured to help people; not everyone has gone on to lighting design (with a few notable exceptions) but I have always been a fan of the ALD and join in when I can."

Maurice receives his prestigious award at Buckingham Palace on March 12th and he explained, "I am allowed three guests at the ceremony," and when pressed, in true Maurice style, he confided, "...and I have asked three of my ex-trainees to join me, because without the trainees, there would have been no award."

Congratulations, Maurice.

Maurice, with some of his ex-trainees, including LD Hugh Vanstone, left, shortly after receiving his ALD Fellowship in 2006.



*Big fish, small load: 'Small Craft Warnings' at the Arcola Theatre, London.
Lighting by Johanna Town. Photo: ©Nobby Clarke 2008*





WHATEVER THE PRODUCERS WANT!

Less energy in one, more light in the other.

Johanna Town on the challenges faced by an environmentally-aware LD.

Last autumn started for me with an interesting couple of shows in London: *Small Craft Warnings* at The Arcola Theatre and *Fat Pig*, transferring from the Trafalgar Studios into the Comedy Theatre. I already had a very busy September booked with four shows opening in six weeks, so I knew that I needed to be well prepared for what was in store.

Just one little restriction...

The location for *Small Craft Warnings* was a 1970s bar on the Californian Pacific Coast Highway, with the

action taking place over the course of one evening. From the initial design meeting I knew the lighting could be created in advance of rehearsals starting, so I confidently promised the technical manager an early delivery of the lighting design and okayed the theatre equipment list.

On the first day of rehearsals, feeling confident, I walked in with my plan in hand. Then Dr. Ben Todd, the producer of the Arcola, walked over and whispered, "So a bit of a challenge this show... whole space being

used the whole time... and keeping the lighting within our 5kw fuel cell?"

Well this was news to me. "It's impossible," I said. "I have a 7m square acting area, with audience on three sides. You don't have the equipment for this and the production week is in three weeks."

"Well yes," replied Ben, "it's never been done before... we have tried but not succeeded. But this design will be lit within our limits."

"I have already designed it," holding up my plan, "and I don't have the time to do it again!"

As the words came out of my mouth my pride took over. *Is it possible? How would I have gone about the challenge if I had known? Maybe the equipment they have really could do it? How can I rise to the challenge?*

On my way out the plan was tossed into the nearest recycle bin and I went back to the drawing board...

Starting over with LEDs...

The first challenge was a general cover, a base that represented the ceiling fittings around the bar. The original design had 8 x 1kW

Fresnels over-rigged in the ceiling. Plan 2 had the ceiling full of the Arcola's Micro E LED floods, which I thought would be alright because they had been used before. In tests they appeared bright enough to do the job but they had too tight a beam angle to cover the area. Maybe we could get more? But then if I had over 20 LED exposed floods hanging over the stage area I'd be creating an 80s disco not a run-down bar from the 70s. Back to the drawing board again!...

Whatever the producers want!

Johanna Town

... On to plan 3, fluorescent The Arcola Theatre was in the middle of setting up a deal with Martin Professional and had been loaned six Stage Cyclos. As I didn't know what these looked like, I spent another morning travelling to the Arcola to look at more equipment.

Martin's Matt Pittman had come along to demonstrate their RGB fluorescent colour-changing units, and I have to say I was most impressed. The Stage Cyclos' output was bright, the dimming good (except for the classic 'fluorescent start') and colour mixing was also very good; partly due to the fitting having four tubes and not the usual three. However, what I really loved was the

discrete off-setting of the tubes into the back of the unit covered at the front with a reflector, no more disco! Could I have twelve please, eight overhead and four for the cyc? Thank you.

So plan three was drawn, I changed all the Arcola's Acclaims and S4's profiles to 375W (personally I think they should just keep them this way.) The Acclaims filled in the sides as FOH for all three seating banks and the S4's did my deep blues. The tables, pillars, and bar area were lit using Selecon Aural 50W beam shapers; these units are especially punchy and focusable (though I do wish they would make a theatre version with a proper lock off and hanging point). And

finally, there were birdies dotted around everywhere.

How to control it all?

I then had to control all these DMX-heavy units, and knowing that using the Arcola's lighting desk would have been a painful experience, I made more phone calls, asked more favours. This was now taking up much more time than my Arcola fee allowed - this show was taking over my life! Luckily for me, Mark White from ETC quickly came to the rescue with a lovely Ion desk plus a manual that I had to read.

With the plan and show designed, I could get onto redesigning the next show, *Fat Pig*.

A spanner in the tubes

Then on the Monday before the Arcola fit up, Matt Pittman phoned, "Really sorry, we have just had a mass order from a TV studio and they require all our Stage Cyclos - yesterday". There was nothing I could do - Martin were already doing the Arcola a huge favour by lending the original six units. So for the fourth time I returned to the drawing board, I juggled, sourced new kit, redrew, kit withdrawn again, re-drew. I even threatened to rig the Arcola's own Codas, making the whole exercise pointless. I didn't care anymore; I had other shows to work on, if they couldn't get the kit required, *the Codas were going up!* But as the 11th

hour approached I relented; considering all the work that had already gone into the project and the support from Martin and ETC, I really had to make it happen. So, there was one last call to my old mates at the Royal Court who had some Anytronics colour mixing fluorescents, and yes, the cyc was lit.

Lighting on the limit

I was pleased with the results, all the kit worked well and did what was expected, there was a grungy feel general cover, and the whole stage was illuminated throughout the piece with the actors having total freedom to move around as naturally as they would in a bar they felt at home in.

*"...if they couldn't get the kit required, the Codas were going up!"
'Small Craft Warnings' at the Arcola. Photo: Johanna Town*



With over 30kW of lighting at her disposal at the Comedy Theatre in London, Johanna lit "Fat Pig" featuring Ella Smith as Helen and Robert Webb as Tom. Photo: Stephen Cummiskey



'Small Craft Warnings' at the Arcola with 5kW. Photos: Johanna Town



Whatever the producers want!

Johanna Town

There was an enough scope to change the mood of the evening from early to night and enough specials for all the monologues. Incredibly all this was achieved inside the Arcola's 5kW limit; everyone, including the producers, were pleased.

Lighting contrast

As I said at the beginning of this article, I had a few shows happening one after the other, and one of them was *Fat Pig*, on the move and being re-lit by my production electrician Tim Bray. So, whilst the second preview of *Small Craft Warnings* was running in Dalston, I went into town to work on the first preview of *Fat Pig* with Tim.

They had done a dress

the night before and the producers wanted the lighting levels to be raised because of the play's relocation to a bigger house. I was happy to oblige, and as we went through the afternoon rehearsals I increased the levels by 10-20% in most of the states and did some re-balancing to keep the look of the original show intact.

That evening as I watched the show I was again pleased with its look, which was very different from my other show in North London. As the laughs rang out, the producers relaxed and I had another job done.

On reflection

As I settled into the 2nd Act of *Fat Pig* I began to look at the

different demands the two shows had put on me and how they had been resolved in totally different ways. Each show was about people and their relationships to each other, both were funny yet dark. One was set in a grungy 70s bar whilst the other was set in a high-tech office. The shows had the same acting area; one was in a 120-seat studio space, where I had been asked to use less than 5kW of light and the other was a 750-seat proscenium theatre, with a lighting rig pulling over 30kW of power. My creativity had been equally great on both shows and my end results gave a look both I and the producers were pleased with, yet the shows could not have been

further removed from each other.

They showed me how clearly two pieces of theatre could look so different yet be designed by the same lighting designer and how varied and interesting it is being a lighting designer in today's world.#

Office Oracle

Latest news from Ian's production desk

2009/10 Membership Fees

This is the final reminder that the subscription fees for ALD membership have now increased (as of January 1st 2009). The following membership fees now apply:

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

Please note that if you currently pay your subscriptions by standing order, you will need to change the amount it currently pays to match the respective fee of your membership category. A standing order is an arrangement between you and your bank, the ALD cannot change the details of such an arrangement for you. Please help us to avoid chasing members for underpayment by updating your payment prior to it

leaving your bank. Although we have investigated direct debits with our bank, we have been informed that we need to have a turnover of £1 million or more to be eligible.

Please change your standing order in advance of April 1st 2009 to ensure your membership remains current and continuous. Chasing up members' payments is a time consuming exercise for the office which means that we cannot be working on members' behalf to improve the other services we offer you.

Professional members who have reached retirement age may be eligible to apply for 'retired' membership for an annual fee of £25. If you believe you are eligible, please contact the office.



Showlight 2009 Bursaries

The ALD is pleased to announce the sponsorship of three places at next year's Showlight conference in Glasgow 16th – 18th May 2009. We are offering three bursaries of £400 each to Professional members of the ALD to cover registration and other expenses related to attendance, at this most fascinating symposium on lighting design.

This event only happens

every four years and it is always interesting, enjoyable and, unlike the other trade shows, completely focused on the creative use of light in a wide variety of applications. This conference looks set once again to bring together many world-class designers from the worlds of theatre, film and broadcast as well as leading people in the lighting industry. The hospitality of host cities in the past has always been exceptional, offering many opportunities to meet other delegates.

In 2005 the ALD funded two bursaries on similar principles, with PRG kindly supporting a third bursary when submissions were too close to separate. It was well received by the recipients and so we are now offering the opportunity to Professional members again.

In order to apply for one of these bursaries simply write



to or email the ALD office detailing why you would like to attend Showlight 2009

Conditions of entry

1. Professional members who wish to apply must be fully paid up!
2. The recipients will arrange their registration, travel and accommodation.
3. Bursary recipients will write up their experiences at the conference for *Focus*.
3. Entries will be judged by members of the Executive and assessed on the applicant's reasons for wanting to attend the show

how the applicant intends to make their report for *Focus* the presentation of their application.

4. The bursary cannot be transferred to another person.

5. If a recipient is unable to attend the show then they must assist the ALD in transferring all travel and accommodation arrangements to another member of the Executive's choosing and the unspent balance of the bursary must be returned to the ALD.

6. Applications must be received by the office no later than **1ST MARCH 2009**.

ALD Website Forum

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.

Thanks to Richard Williamson for all his help in setting this up.



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 Northen 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 Northen 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 the PLASA08 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 1st 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.

New Student Rep



If you turn to page 34 you can read an introduction from our new student representative on the executive committee, Jack Knowles. He takes over from Mary Pope who has filled the role admirably during the last three years and we thank her for all her work.

Focus in a bind?

The current design of *Focus* was launched two years ago this issue. So how do you store yours to maintain their value and condition? We

have found a supplier that can produce and binder for a dozen copies of *Focus* to do such a job. They would cost members approximately £5.00 each.

We asked in the last edition of *Focus* whether there was any demand for this supply before we ordered a batch. Unfortunately, only a couple of members expressed an interest, and so at the current time, we will not be pursuing this course of action. However, if you are interested, we would be grateful if you could contact the office to let us know.

Under Discussion

Although the Executive only meet every couple of months, there are a number of issues we thought you'd like to know that currently being actively discussed:

Do we need a definition of what a professional LD is?

Does accreditation help to further the ALD's aims and objectives (as also discussed in the pages of *Focus*)

How do we attract more members of all categories to join (and stay as members)

Survey of membership.

Planning the AGM.

Increase press coverage for the ALD and its members to improve the awareness of both the discipline and the art of lighting.

and finally...

Congratulations to the 'What's on Stage' award nominations...

... and for the first lighting designer award! The *White Light* 'Best Lighting Designer' nominations are:

Chahine Yavroyan – *Relocated* at the Royal Court Upstairs & *Wig Out!* at the Royal Court Downstairs

Jean Kalman – *The Year of Magical Thinking* at the NT Lyttelton & *In the Red & Brown Water* at the Young Vic

Malcolm Rippeth – *Brief Encounter at The Cinema*, *Haymarket* & *Six Characters in Search of an Author* at the Gielgud

Mark Henderson – *Under the Blue Sky* at the Duke of York's, *Marguerite & The Sea* at the Theatre Royal Haymarket

Neil Austin – *Piaf* at the Donmar Warehouse & *Vaudeville*, *No Man's Land* at the Duke of York's & *Oedipus* at the NT Olivier

Paule Constable – *Othello & The Chalk Garden* at the Donmar Warehouse & *Ivanov*, Donmar West End at Wyndham's

Winners will be announced on 9th February. Check at www.whatsonstage.com#

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To submit ideas for articles, information, correspondence, corrections and any comments about *Focus*, please email editor@ald.org.uk

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...

Associate

Erik Larsen, Denmark

Anders Akermo, London

Student

Mark Summers, Newcastle

Sponsored Student Scheme

Craig Kilmartin, Rose Bruford

Angela Anson, Central SSD

Elizabeth Newport, Central SSD

Jinhee Park, Central SSD

Dates for your diaries

1st March

Deadline: Showlight Bursary Submissions

15th March

Deadline for *Focus* content submissions.

1st April

Membership subscriptions due.

28th & 29th April

PLASA Focus 09*, Leeds.

16th – 19th May

Showlight 09 – Glasgow*.

10-11th June

ABTT Show 2009*

1st July

Deadline: ALD subscription payments

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.*

Broadway Babes

We are delighted to welcome our guest reviewer, the editor-in-chief of *Lighting & Sound America*, David Barbour, with his view of the British invasion of Broadway this Fall (tr: Autumn)

If the first half of the 2008-09 Broadway season will be remembered for anything, it will be the economic meltdown that led to a general housecleaning, with nine shows shutting down at mid-season. Most of them were long-runners, which, having made their profits, were unwilling to face the rigours of another winter, especially in a recession.

From the point of view of lighting, however, the season was marked by an invasion of London-based designers. Indeed, there were so many English lighting types in town that two of them, Richard Pilbrow and Rick Fisher, threw a party to welcome them all. This lovely, hands-across-the-sea gesture drew an excellent crowd and raised money for *Behind the Scenes*, the rough U.S. equivalent of *Light Relief*, to boot.

Although he's lived here for decades, running Theatre Projects Consultants, Pilbrow is still thoroughly English, and he kicked off this season of Brits on Broadway with *A Tale of Two Cities*, featuring scenery by his fellow expatriate, Tony Walton. This musical, based on Dickens' novel, attempted to bring back the glory days of the pop opera, with plenty of power ballads and massed French peasants on the barricades. Using a colour palette partly based on the French flag, Pilbrow created a muscular lighting design with plenty of big sweeps and dramatic chiaroscuro looks. Audiences loved the show, but, sadly, critics didn't agree, and *A Tale of Two Cities* was sent to the guillotine before Christmas.

Equus came to town via the West End, in a revival that starred Daniel Radcliffe

and Richard Griffiths. (Once the buzz about 'the naked Harry Potter' subsided, people started to notice that Radcliffe is, in fact, a skilled actor.) This was an unusual situation, in that John Napier, who designed the original production in 1973, returned with a variation on his original scenic concept, which evoked both a Greek stage and an operating theatre. David Hersey's lighting featured a great deal of carefully controlled crosslight, in order to carve the actors out of the darkness. Also bundled over from Britain was Ian Rickson's Royal Court staging of *The Seagull*, in which Kristin Scott Thomas had a triumph as the aging actress Arkadina; Peter Mumford lit the proceedings with typical delicacy, blending white light with subtle undertones of colour.

The new revival of Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* featured an all-star American cast – including Katie Holmes, otherwise known as Mrs. Tom Cruise – but the staging was by England's own Simon McBurney, who brought along many of his regular design collaborators, and ideas: this naturalistic, almost Ibsenite, play was turned into an Expressionist drama through the use of projections, read-aloud stage directions, and stylized movement. The approach was controversial, to say the least, but Paul Anderson's lighting added to the sense of impending doom lurking over this tale of a family's implosion.

Finally arriving on Broadway several years into its West End run was *Billy Elliot*, which quickly established itself as the new

must-see musical. Stephen Daldry's production looks like no other musical, with Ian MacNeil's dilapidated, low-rise sets evoking a North Country coal mining town in crisis during the Thatcher years. It's a story that blends stark drama with various fantasy sequences, and Rick Fisher made use of a battery of lighting techniques, somehow achieving a sense of unity despite the many tools at his command. His handling of the show's celebrated Swan Lake sequence was particularly brilliant.

Finally, in terms of the English delegation, there is *Shrek, the Musical*, based on the animated film apparently seen by every child in the Western World. It's an American production, but the Englishmen Tim Hatley and Hugh Vanstone, who spoofed castle-and-knight

'A Tale of Two Cities.'
Lighting: Richard Pilbrow.
Photo: Carol Rosegg





David Hersey's lighting for 'Equus.'
Photo: Carol Rosegg

conventions in *Spamalot*, found themselves on familiar territory here. Hatley, who designed sets and costumes, created a fairy-tale world packed with visual gags. Like

Fisher, Vanstone's work was protean in style, blending numerous colour palettes and light levels to achieve a wide variety of looks. Sunsets figure prominently in *Shrek*,

and Vanstone came up with some brilliantly colored examples.

Among the locals, Brian MacDevitt qualified as the busiest man on Broadway,

lighting two revivals of David Mamet plays. *Speed-the-Plow*, about scheming movie executives, was a hit, and MacDevitt gave two of its three scenes a hard bright

look; the middle sequence – a nighttime encounter between a producer and his secretary – had a quieter, more seductive quality. (The production became something of a punch line when one of the stars, Jeremy Piven, exited before the run was over, claiming mercury poisoning from eating sushi twice a day. David Mamet commented that Piven had left the show to establish a new career – as a thermometer!)

For *American Buffalo*, MacDevitt brought infinite levels of shading and dimensionality to Santo Loquasto's enormous, and enormously cluttered, junk-shop setting. (Sadly, few people saw it, as *American Buffalo* is, to date, the shortest running Broadway show of the season.) MacDevitt also lit *13*, a musical about 12-year-olds, which, despite

'Shrek The Musical'. ©2008 DreamWorks Theatricals.
Lighting: Hugh Vanstone. Photo: Joan Marcus.



Lincoln Center Theater production of 'Dividing the Estate', a new play by Horton Foote, directed by Michael Wilson.
Lighting: Rui Rita. Photo: Joan Marcus.



a bouncy, intelligent score, never really caught on; here, the designer's made use of a Pop-Art palette with plenty of patterns.

[*title of show*] qualified as Broadway's summer cause célèbre. It also qualifies as Broadway's first reality musical. As written by Hunter Bell and Jeff Bowen,

it was about a couple of guys named... Hunter and Jeff, who decide to write a musical about... themselves. The show had a small army of loyal fans, known as 'tossers'(!), but the show's self-referential fun didn't come across to casual theatre-goers. Ken Billington and Jason Kantrowitz used their combined skills to

transform Neil Patel's grimy rehearsal-room setting into the Technicolor world of the characters' dreams.

Frank Langella, in the running for and Oscar, thanks to the film of *Frost/Nixon*, is also in the running for a Tony, thanks to his magisterial performance as Thomas More in a revival of *A Man for*

All Seasons. David Lander's lighting easily navigated the tortuous assemblage of timber that was Santo Loquasto's set, creating a wide variety of evocative candle-lit looks. *To Be or Not to Be*, Nick Whitby's adaptation of the classic '40s comedy, about a troupe of Polish actors who tangle with Nazis, pleased

nobody, but Howell Binkley expertly lit an unbelievable number of settings, designed by Anna Louizos. *Dividing the Estate*, Horton Foote's mordant comedy about a wealthy Texas family going broke, couldn't have arrived on Broadway at a more appropriate time. Rui Rita lit Jeff Cowie's elegant country



*'Pal Joey'. Lighting: Paul Gallo.
Photo: Joan Marcus.*

house setting with supreme sensitivity, shifting focus among the many members of large cast without one being aware of it. *Pal Joey*, Rodgers and Hart's musical about hustlers and losers in Chicago nightclubs in the '40s, returned, with a new book. Scott Pask's setting

wrapped a section of the Chicago El train system around the stage; Paul Gallo's strongly directional lighting attacked the stage from every available angle, creating a dark, alluring, film noir look.

December brought a pair of Christmas presents to Broadway. *White Christmas*,

based on the Bing Crosby-Danny Kaye film, has been rolled out in three U.S. cities for the last few years. It made its New York debut this winter. Its many production numbers were given a gloriously colourful sheen by Ken Billington, who probably knows as much, if

not more, about how to pace a musical number than any designer working today. And Liza Minnelli had yet another improbable comeback at the Palace, in another evening of fan hysteria paced by multiple standing ovations and spontaneous cries of "We love you, Liza!" from the audience. In truth, the star looks and sounds better than she has in years, and Matt Berman's lighting bathed her luxuriously in layers of saturated colour, switching to fast-stepping pastels for the second-act tribute to the Minnelli's godmother, the nightclub star Kay Thompson. It ended the first half of the season on a note of high show business—and, after all, this is Broadway, isn't it?#

An SMA/ ALD Forum...

Q? What happens when you put the Association of Lighting Designers and the Stage Management Association in the same room? Hey, let's ask a stage manager for a change! Bethan Mair-Hughes obliged...

The opportunity to answer this question presented itself when the ALD and SMA met on the 17th January at 11am. However, the SMA members did get a half-hour call (10:30 for an 11am start for those who have forgotten what a half-hour call is)! I was quite surprised the ALD weren't shouting at the top of their voices, 'Give us more time!', something that we hear only too often.

Name, rank and number
Kate Astbury gave a very short introduction, and I was transported back to school when asked to give my name and profession, while sat in the circle. Am I the only one who hates that part? Then there was silence. How do you start a meeting that

isn't a production meeting? Thankfully, Rick Fisher started it all off by pointing out that a lot of lighting designers have personal relationships with stage managers. I can tell you how true that is, seeing as I am in a 'soon to be married to an LD' relationship. So what does that say about both disciplines? A small fact that Rick pointed out was LDs and SMs were once the only departments to talk to each other via cans, but how did that lead to a relationship outside the theatre?

Importance of comms
Communication is vital to any show, project or relationship and maybe that is why the relationships work. Is that why a large percentage of people in theatre 'go out' with people

in theatre. Or is it because there is more understanding between each department? But let us remember that this is a generalisation. I know there are those of you who also take a fancy to wardrobe, sound, set, and the rest.

Value of Equity?

Moving on from that point, and what really set the ball rolling, was: is it worth lighting designers joining Equity and can the SMA advise? A small percentage of SMs are with both Equity and the SMA. There are many reasons for this; Equity have both good and bad points. For SMA members they are very good at negotiating guidelines for our fees, because unlike LDs we can't name our price, and that is probably the best place

to start. Get Equity to improve the rubbish LD fee guidelines, which I believe does not at all reflect the amount of work LDs put into their designs. That said, this point shouldn't be for LDs only, this should also be considered for any lx discipline (re-lighters, production electricians etc).

There were concerns about the lack of confidence industry people had about turning to Equity regarding some conditions certain disciplines have to deal with. Rick explained, metaphorically, that Equity is like car breakdown cover. You hope you never have to use it, but it's there for when you do. Both the SMA and the ALD agreed that they could work together on this matter to improve memberships.



Bethan is currently stage manager at the Royal Court in Liverpool and long-suffering partner to a lighting designer. She has worked on many scales from TIE to Mid scale producing, including re-lights on many small scale productions.

Stage managers' and lighting designers' forum

Bethan Mair-Hughes

Relights!

The next subject in which there has been many a quarrel about is stage management relights. Don't throw this edition of *Focus* out the window just yet!

There were a lot of noises from the SMA members, saying a high percentage don't like re-lighting but as there is so much competition coming out of drama school, either they do it, or a graduate takes that job. It's supply and demand. The room talked about this subject for some time, and we came up with possible solutions, one being: pay the SM to do this job as well as their other duties.

Secondly, should we accept that at a small scale level, many graduates are expected to relight or stage-

manage along side their particular discipline? Some are very good at it, some actually enjoy it – I do for example – but there is no way I would accept a job in mid to large-scale and do both relight and SM. I would be taking the work from, well, my fiancé and as the scale grows, the responsibilities get bigger and time gets more precious. So, could we both agree that it's okay for small scale companies to employ a SM/ re-lighter, and fight to separate the jobs, as the scale gets larger? Thirdly, it was pointed out that in programs the SM re-lighter is never credited for re-lighting; should they be? Both sides agreed that accreditation should be given, to avoid any confusion.

All about timing

Ever had a DSM complain about why they don't understand what a particular LX cue does? Ever said or thought 'why do you need to know?' e.g. follow-on cues. They are a thorn in a DSM's side... Why, you wonder? Well, it's all to do with timings.

Actors deliver lines at a varying speed once they are comfortable – they speed up or slow down, or change it every night so it's anyone's guess. There are some cues where it is necessary to put follow-ons on. But next time think; can the DSM cue this or does this really need to be a follow-on? It's important for DSM's to know what ALL the LX cues do, no matter how minor. It makes us better at cueing the show, often

when a show has passed press night, the LD and programmer are never seen again, and little cues can get lost over a period of time. So with the DSM having a list of *all the cues* they can monitor what is going on. Granted, not all DSMs care about LX or want to know what any cue does, but if a system was in place the rest would be happy (this was brought up by Jo Bradman).

In conclusion

I could go on forever as both sides discussed many things: some drama schools being too specialized; two-year Degree's being to 'tick boxy' (I agree, having doing a two-year degree); how students (all disciplines... including acting) should learn what

each role in each department does.

We talked about how the SMA and the ALD share a lot of common ground, and how we should all keep in touch and do another forum, but send an invitation also to the SBTd. And we should look at the possibility of a joint re-light session? (Deep breaths!)

The list is endless. However, there is a crisis (as always), and I have to go and sort it out (as always!).... #

Letters

David Harvey on 'defining professionalism'

Following John Leventhall's key questions in the last issue on how the ALD might raise its game in recognising the definition of professionalism for LDs, David Harvey responded to illustrate how other professions do it.

David has worked for many years both lighting and as CSM in smaller scale production at London venues such as Southwark Playhouse, Riverside studios and Café de Paris for companies such as Network Theatre Company and Class Stage Productions and, critically, he also works in IT where professional frameworks are already well developed.

He compares how others tackle similar issues to those experienced by LDs in the

ALD (because these are general issues for all freelance practitioners and members of many a professional body). He writes: "Having seen your article in Focus, I wanted to give you my thoughts on professionalism. In IT, where there are established professional bodies of which I'm a member e.g. the British Computer Society (BCS) and the Engineering Council, their approaches can guide us in the ALD with our approach to defining professionalism - but we don't need to go the whole way to royal charters!" David outlines a number of perspectives which these organisations address: "They seem to fall into three categories:

"What you do", - competency in a (range

of) defined roles, skill sets, levels of experience, with expectations of ongoing professional development of that competency.

"How you do it" - professional behaviour using code(s) of conduct which define how a professional should behave, their responsibilities to clients, other professionals, society etc.

"Outcomes" - delivering benefits to your clients - achieving something for the client in their terms perhaps creativity, innovation or cost-effectiveness."

Using the BCS as a reference David refers us to weblinks where definitions and professional codes of practice can be found. To understand how these

might work in supporting the professional standing of lighting professionals but without over-con trolling methods or being prescriptive about creative practice, your editor recommends you take a look. To help you click and compare, these will be published as live links in the next professional e-mail bulletin.

BCS Website

www.bcs.org/

BCS code of conduct

www.bcs.org/server.php?show=nav.6030.

BCS Code of practice

www.bcs.org/server.php?show=nav.6031.

BCS Challenge to professionals

www.bcs.org/server.php?show=nav.8666

Engineering Council Website

www.engc.org.uk/

David concludes "There may be other professions we could borrow ideas from".

He is most probably right! Let's keep this important debate very much alive. Write to office@ald.org.uk

Any volunteers to start a Professional practice working party? office@ald.org.uk

Letters

Prema Mehta on 'dealing with illness'

Dear Editor,

There are moments when we take our health for granted. Perhaps it is easy to do so when contracts come and go and even on a supposed day off, there's always something to be done.

I've been promising to write in for a while now, but I wondered why discuss an incident that happened once in over four years. Something I had almost forgotten until I decided to finally sit down and recall it. Why? Because at the time it wasn't something that was at the back of my mind, it was all that I had on my mind.

Tech week began with what I hoped was just a cold. We've all been there, doses of Day Nurse, Night Nurse,

sipping on honey and lemon. But when nothing's helping, you begin to search the schedule for a slot to get it checked out. The GP makes a diagnosis and hands me a sick certificate and I'm trying to haggle. "I'll swap you this bit of paper for a clean bill of health for just one more week". But no amount of explaining "it's tech week!" seems to change the doctor's orders.

When we sign contracts months, maybe years ahead, we can't predict our future health or family bereavements. It's an incredibly frustrating situation when your body can't put in the hours to make your design work when you've been planning it for months.

Sometimes it's not so much the issue of money, it's the issue of creativity. The company I was contracted to were very co-operative and caring and there was never any anxiety or discussion about a change in fee. But the bigger anxiety was, as Mark Jonathan pointed out in a previous issue, who do you call for cover and at such short notice?

The Stage Management Association has created a freelist which is updated monthly. This list shows which members are available to work. I wonder if it's an idea to have a similar arrangement within the lighting industry to show which designers are available to offer cover?

Prior to my experience, I had never thought about

how I would deal with this sort of situation. Now I'm asking, do we say 'c'est la vie' in such situations or should we have a back-up plan? Sometimes we don't like to think about worse case scenarios but when a situation rises, how prepared are we to give a show the lighting it deserves?#

Letters

Pete Watts on 'accreditation'

Dear Editor,

I have just read John Leventhall's page in this month's edition of *Focus* on *What does "Professional lighting designer" really mean?*

I would like to add to the debate, or maybe open up another route a bit further down the tree! This being the link from associate to professional member.

I am currently an associate member but I find the category too broad. It covers "Any individual interested in the design of lighting", which is me. My problem is that I've moved up from unpaid design work to where I am now as a freelancer, I find myself doing more touring relights than my own design

work. All the design work I do is paid but I don't feel that I fit in to the professional category even though I make a living out of lighting and relighting. This puts me in the same category as people who are designing for amateur companies but have another day job and have no interest in progressing this beyond a hobby.

I think there should be another category for members who are working in the lighting industry full time but their main income is not from their own designs. This way there would be a useful resource for professional members who are looking for a relighter, assistant LD or a production LX. I also feel it would be beneficial to be able to list relights as credits,

and maybe have a way of linking to the original LD if they are an ALD member.

A *Professional Associate* category would provide a good stepping-stone to full professional membership as well as bringing the designers who are available for work alongside professionals to the surface.

It would also help the debate over the original question as all the professional relighters, production electricians and upcoming designers would have their own category. This leaves the full-time LDs to be professional members.

I have talked to other people in my position working as programmers and relighters and they share my opinions.

Thank you for taking time to read my views on this and I hope they can be used to further the debate.#



We may all be created equal, but unfortunately when it comes to work there are the great and the good, and then there's the rest of us. Except at *Showlight*. At *Showlight*, everyone is definitely equal – where else could a lighting student pick the brains of a Director of Photography of a Hollywood movie, or a TV lighting director learn from a rock and roll specialist how to speed the rigging of *Songs of Praise*, or a West End lighting designer get a useful idea from a Yorkshire dentist who lights a drama in Bingley Little Theatre?

Held once every four years, the next *Showlight* takes place on May 16th – 19th at the BBC's newest high definition studio complex at Pacific Quay on the banks of the River Clyde in Glasgow. With some 25 speakers, the programme of subjects promises to be wide ranging and all encompassing – not just theatre and TV, but outdoor art (mountains!), the Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, James Bond and Dr Who, presidential elections and candle lit plays, Beijing and Glasgow, to name but a few. And the beauty of it all is that the majority of papers are delivered in bite-sized

sessions of 15-20 minutes, with time for discussion afterwards.

Regulars will know that *Showlight* isn't just about the papers though. There really is no better networking event, for students and professionals alike. The company and conference dinners provide plenty of scope for catching up with old acquaintances and making new friends, while the visits on Monday afternoon offer a choice of work-related tours (the Philips factory and Glasgow Royal Concert Hall) or pure fun (not one, but two distilleries and Charles Rennie Mackintosh's

House for an Art Lover). Full details of both speakers and the visits can be seen on the *Showlight* web site (www.showlight.org).

Add to this mix the opportunity to talk to up to 40 manufacturers of all things to do with lighting: luminaires from Martin Professional, ETC et al, LEDs (Pixel Range and G-LEC), accessories and gels and filters from Roscolab and Lee Filters. And remember, they are not there (just) to sell you something, but to listen to your comments and suggestions.

Of course, you can only take part if you're a delegate,

so don't put off 'till tomorrow ... go to the *Showlight* web site and fill in the delegate registration form. For £180, including lunch and dinner on each day, it's the best bargain you'll get all year.#

This page and facing: Scenes from Showlight 2005 in Munich



Trade Secrets: How Do LDs Choose Colours?

Focus' intrepid roving reporter John Leventhall swatches out the answer.

When LDs get together 'shop' is talked! At the end of an ALD Exec meeting, for some inexplicable reason we began comparing the thousands of colours available to the UK-based LD today compared with the 100 or so available up to the 1970's.

How do LDs go about choosing colours from amongst the profusions (and diffusions!) available



today? Steve Huttly, head of lighting at the Guildhall School of Music and Dance keeps around 2000 colours in stock! It is estimated that there are between 3000 and 4000 available. Where do you start? Where do you finish? For every choice is there always a tempting alternative or perhaps a 'safer' shade?

Prominent LDs quizzed

Focus asked three prominent LDs, Ken Billington, Jo Town and Paule Constable (left) to reveal their darkest (and most saturated) secrets and tricks of the colour trade and perhaps throw a shaft of rosy-cosy glow on the matter. From the other side of the sales counter Margie Heyman, sales director of Rosco, unrolls the manufacturer's viewpoint.

What surprised your humble roving reporter was the enormous difference in approaches between the

three LDs and how personal a process the choice and use of colour is. Far from discovering some Fred Benthamesque or Stanley McCandless-like 'colour method', the fact is that the choice of colour is the most unruly, emotional, personal and impulsive aspect of the mysterious process of designing light.

This must be particularly irksome for the suppliers. "Not really," says Margie, "but a new colour has to be saleable and its minimum batch is hundreds of kilos of polyester and dyes to make hundreds of rolls and thousands of metres of colour. So at Rosco, we value as much dialogue as we can arrange with LDs. It's good business practice actually, because close co-operation gets LDs what they need. And, it enables us to manage our production planning effectively!" Margie added, with a twinkle in her

eye, "For each LD there is a process for colour choice whether it be opening the swatch book or sticking to a safe well-tried selection of shades."

Choosing colours

So, let's test that point and start with process and preparation. All three LDs and Margie stressed that in choosing colour, a common language was needed between the LD and the members of the creative team. In an office or rehearsal room how do you express the idea of what the light is going to express when you have only words, pictures or swatches? Everyone stressed the importance of that key communication.

For Johanna Town (right) the process of colouring the light is a concentrated and thoughtful one. Each show is preceded by study

of paintings, art books and images which others can relate to which usually result in a visual portfolio of ideas she can share with the director and designer. "Each piece is a painting," she says. "I find the works of Edward Hopper and the photography of Gregory Crewdson particularly stimulating. Themes and design of the placement of colour are so important to the instinctive response you want to suggest." Amongst the fabric swatches and concept boards, the best discussions seem to be the ones about



“Mere colour, unspoiled by meaning, and unallied with definite form, can speak to the soul in a thousand different ways.”

*Oscar Wilde,
‘Intentions’ (1891).*

feelings. Jo spends a lot of time thinking through what she wants and keeping up a dialogue with the director so that she ends up at the fit-up with the right choice that everyone is expecting. This is very true too for Paule’s method; “Find something to hang on to,” she advises, “work with the designer looking at source materials, responding to the design and adding your own spin.” That Paule Constable values collaboration, almost above all things in the creation

of her art, is clear in the intensity of thinking that she brings to it and the often expressed acknowledgment of her collaborators for their mutual part in developing ideas. Paule prefers words to pictures on the whole. “Pre-production you need a clear, shared approach. I engage in a lot of discussion to build up the concepts. Particularly good is an ongoing working relationship with other members of the creative team which builds a shared and mutual understanding over several (or many) productions.” Not so with Ken Billington (right). “I rarely talk about colour outside the lighting rehearsal. It’s my job to absorb the feel of the production and translate that to a choice of colours.”

But equally for Ken, the emotion and language of the pre-production translates to the concept. “Stark lush or pretty mean most to me. I don’t have a ‘colour language’ as such.” Whilst he asserts that he rarely makes a change once he has decided, he told me, “I hold off picking the colour

to the last possible minute!” This means specifying a wide range of gel to be available either in scrollers or medium on site so that flexibility can be held for as long as possible “Supermarket Sweep,” he joked. “Keep your options open so that the ‘invention’ of colour by mixes and contrasts is still available even for that



moment of inspiration at the final dress rehearsal!” Could you find a more diverse set of approaches?

I asked the LDs if they ever changed a colour. All three LDs were relaxed about maintaining some flexibility.

“Picking colour is the most personal part of the plot,” Ken told me, “it’s real easy to screw up but it’s one of the easiest things to fix.” Paule too, says that, whilst her choice of colour, once made, rarely changes radically, “a re-gel here and there can always be fitted in”. Jo also rarely changes a colour once

flexibility to adjust the quality of light during rehearsal and you make sure you have a palette of possibilities for each show.”

How did you get a feel for colour in the first place and do you use some colours regularly? I asked naively. Each LD again expressed a different journey towards a place of command over colour, which each clearly identified was a continuing evolution. “Theron Musser and Abe Fader were a great influence on me.” says Ken, “Abe regularly had new colours made especially for what he wanted to achieve. I used to look at the sample books in my early days and sometimes experimented with a 3-inch fresnel and a sheaf of swatches. But there’s no substitute for experience of the real thing! Learning by doing has been vital. My advice for the up and coming is to take careful note of what you do, what works well but don’t be afraid of following your first impressions. Your mind contains the look and that’s what they hire you for!

Trade Secrets: How Do LDs Choose Colours?

John Leventhall

Chicago contains a whole evening of first impressions! Be bold, you can always turn a light off if it's not right!" Indeed Ken too has created quite a few colours for Lee Filters.

Jo Town's journey was very different. From her trainee days she found, as she was enduring the drudgery of cutting the colour call, that she became fascinated by why the LD had chosen these colours and followed that through. So she learned about some good and bad choices and why a colour was used and was useful. Learning from others made her think hard about what she should do. "Nowadays, I still experiment a lot with colours and mixes. I try to get one step above naturalism. I use a lot of subtle greens, even for sunlight sometimes, and I try to use colour to heighten and play with perceptions. I often look at art, nature and the quality of light in

everyday surroundings, and I take a lot of pictures as a reminder." The Constable viewpoint was very different again. "As I developed, met more LDs and talked about palettes, I gradually homed in on the hyper-realism that pervades my work nowadays. Oh yes, I do have colours that I return to again and again; pale, and clear shades that enable subtle change of the environmental temperature with the unfolding of the piece. Pale avoids clichés which are an obstruction. Orange for sunset tells the audience, heavy-handedly, what to think. Engagement of the audience comes via subtlety and lends a motivation to every state or change of the light. There has to be a sense of the reality of what a space or story would be and this comes from subtle shades to tease out the impressions of the scene, not from saturated conventions. Dramas deal

with change and this tends to go with those moments of temporal flux, the dusk, the dawn, the passing of a year. The light has to subtly flow with it and enhance the journey that is a theatre piece. I try and use a new colour every show to keep fresh and to rethink often – every show." Ken Billington added that intensity plays a big part. "Too few people think about the change of hue with intensity," he admonished. "I tend to have fewer lanterns at higher level, so the true quality of the colour comes through. Paule revelled in this when I put this point to her. "I rarely pre-plan the colour-versus-intensity effect but," she added with a broad smile, "I succeed with it often!"

I felt privileged to have had time with each of these seasoned practitioners and thank them for the time they took out of their busy schedules to reflect on their

art and technique. So what have I learned? The thing that came over most strongly was that each LD indeed had a language of light and colour that pervaded their style. But that language was truly individual to each one.

With Ken, the ongoing organisation of thought - taking note and remembering of what works and the effect of colour in many situations; with Jo, the assiduous preparation of a visual representation of her ideas to share with the team; and with Paule, continuous discussion and understanding of the piece to translate into variations on a career theme. These were my lasting impressions of each practitioner.

When asked what advice they would give to people newly developing their colour palette, I can sum up their points of view in three comments:

• **Prepare, prepare, prepare.** Learn by doing, mark and

inwardly digest all your experience and influences. Use them to thoroughly think through what you will present on stage and find the means of communication of your ideas to each new creative team.

• **Be bold, be instinctive.**

Don't be afraid of doing what you feel and going where your courage and instinct take you. Picking colour and using it is a personal thing. You have a style of your own, don't hesitate to use it.

• **Always develop.**

Keep fresh, re-think often, every show. Experiment with the new and ringing new changes with your personal favourite colours.

And my overriding impression of talking to these top-ranking LDs?

"The purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love colour the most."
John Ruskin; *The Stones of Venice* (1852).#

And the lights went out... “Farewell, Rog”.

Roger Frith, 1939 - 2008

Roger Frith was one of the most talented theatre lighting designers of his generation. He was born in Streatham, south London on 1 June 1939, and grew up in Histon, Cambridge, where he attended St John's School.

Rog the puppeteer

When he showed early promise as a puppeteer, his parents formed the Rogoli Puppets, which became a successful puppet company. At 17, Roger toured the country with Hogarth Puppets. He regularly operated puppets on children's television, including *Muffin the Mule*, which he operated on live television from Alexandra Palace and he achieved a certain amount of fame as Britain's youngest puppeteer.

He was rather embarrassed about his career as a child puppeteer and was very reticent about his achievements. However, it was the Rogoli Puppets that introduced the young Roger Frith to the world of the theatre and, perhaps, ultimately led to him becoming a lighting designer.

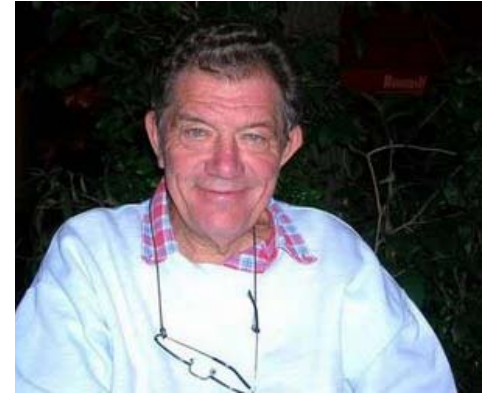
Art college and theatre

In 1957, Roger won a scholarship to study art at Goldsmiths College where he showed considerable promise, but left after a year to take up a job as assistant electrician at Sadler's Wells Opera. In 1962, he married the ballet dancer Anne Harrison and his daughter Louise was born in 1965, but the marriage was dissolved in 1975.

Louise remembered, “Much of my childhood was spent backstage with Dad, mainly at the Coliseum. One of my favourite memories is of watching the production of *Peter Pan* which Dad lit every Christmas. I loved watching it in the lighting box with him.

Last November, I met Dad before he went into hospital for the operation. We had a drink in the pub, then went home for lunch with Joyce. When it was time for me to catch my train home, Dad insisted on walking me to the station. He talked about the forthcoming operation as we walked.

‘In a funny sort of way’ he said, looking into the distance, *‘I am looking forward to it. It’s a challenge. An awfully big adventure.’*



Dad loved adventure. Like *Peter Pan*, he retained a childlike love of new experiences. He never tired of meeting new people, travelling, trying new things, having fun. In Joyce, he found his perfect partner - someone who shared his love of theatre and had an equal thirst for adventure.

Those who know *Peter Pan* will know what ‘an awfully big adventure’ means. It was far too early for Dad to embark on his last big adventure, but I take comfort in the fact that

he lived his life to the full right to the end and was loved by so many.”

During the 1960s, Roger enjoyed the London theatre scene, drinking at the Coach and Horses pub in Soho with Jeffrey and Bruce Bernard and others from that set. Dudley Moore once greeted him from the stage with “Hello Rog!” as he sat down in the front row to watch a performance of *Beyond the Fringe*.

In 1968, Roger moved with Sadler's Wells Opera to the



'Anna Bolena' for the 2006 Festival of Music at the Tower of London.

Coliseum, becoming a lighting supervisor and designer for English National Opera, where he was responsible for over fifty productions. During 1979 he met and married the actress and singer Joyce Rae, who later became a theatrical agent.

Roger designed numerous productions for English

Bach Festival including: *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Fairy Queen*, all at the Royal Opera House; *Telemaco* at Sadler's Wells and the Herod Atticus amphitheatre near the Acropolis; and *Platee* at the Alexandra Trianti Opera House in Athens. He also lit other productions

for English Bach Festival in Valencia, Granada, Monte Carlo, Madrid, Versailles and Cyprus. His twelve seasons for Opera Holland Park included *La Boheme*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Werther*, *L'Arlesiana*, *Adriana Lecouvreur* and *La Rondine*.

In London, he lit productions of both operas and ballet galas at Queen

Elizabeth Hall. In Ireland, he designed productions at the Druid Theatre Company, Galway; Cork Opera House; and the Abbey Theatre, the Olympia Theatre and the Gaiety Theatre, all in Dublin. In America, he designed both *Carmen* and *The Merry Widow* for coast-to-coast tours.

Other productions included *La Boheme* on a floating stage in Malta, *Anna Bolena* for the Festival of Music at the Tower of London and *The Bohemian Girl* for Opera South.

In 1984, Roger toured America with ENO, a tour which culminated in him supervising the lighting of



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

And the lights went out... "Farewell, Rog". Roger Frith, 1939 - 2008

Rigoletto, Turn of the Screw and *War and Peace* at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. He left ENO a year later to turn freelance, which gave him the chance to extend his repertoire into the commercial theatre. He recently designed the premiere of Ronald Harwood's play *An English Tragedy*.

'What was striking was how well - especially latterly, with Roger Frith's lighting - this opera came across.'

The Independent
review of
Anna Bolena

Roger's varied career included work with English Bach Festival in London and Europe, as well as 12 seasons with Opera Holland Park. Also in London, he produced operas and ballet galas at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, as well as West End commercial plays. His work in Ireland with, among others, The Abbey Theatre, Druid Theatre Company and Cork Opera resulted in him being voted *Lighting Designer of the Year* by *The Irish Times*.

In his work, Roger demonstrated patience and humour, managing to pull lighting effects out of the bag in spite of low budgets and short timescales. He was very generous to students and worked extensively with young people at RADA, ArtsEd and, most recently, St Mary's

University of Minnesota and the Drama Centre London at the Cochrane.

Although Roger specialised in lighting operas, he was extremely versatile and also lit straight drama and farce, as well as many pantomimes and musicals.

Last year he was diagnosed with cancer but continued to work right up until the time he went into hospital. Although his operation initially seemed successful, he suffered complications that proved ultimately fatal. His death on 29 November 2008 was a huge shock to the many people who knew and loved him.#

An LD on top: Rog on the roof of Wimbledon Theatre.



Students' Huddle:

Introducing our most recent ALD Exec member... Student Representative, Jack Knowles



Hello, I'm Jack and am taking over from Mary as the Student Rep. I graduated from the Lighting Design course at The Central School of Speech and Drama last summer where I was involved in a huge range of projects and productions, both within and outside of the course, varying from spending a cold and wet November in a car park in King's Cross for ETA, an event tied into the opening of St Pancras Station, to designing a piece of physical theatre at Arts Depot.

In the few months I since leaving central I have carried on working in a wide range of situations, including relighting a show

for Oily Cart, assisting on a ...Sisters (lit by Anna Watson) where the whole show was improvised every night, as well as lighting a show in a burnt-out shell of a building with only fluorescents, birdies and sun floods.

Being a member of the ALD brings many easily accessible benefits to students. *Focus* is a source of up to date and relevant information about the world of lighting design, containing a variety of articles which can inform students about a variety of aspects of lighting including among others processes, design decisions and insights to productions. Being able to experiment with these ideas within the safety net

of college I found can help to develop a style or practice that suits the individual whilst also expanding on ideas. Articles about things such as photography and what designers expect of assistants provide useful information about life as a designer and not just the designing element of the job.

It is also important to remember the Michael Northern Bursary, which is not only an opportunity to win some money, but also get images of your work seen by professionals, and the Student Seminar at PLASA where there is the opportunity to discuss directly with professionals about issues that you wish. The

networking side of the ALD offers opportunities to meet with professional lighting designers at meetings and events, and allows students to get in contact with those working in the business. The on-line directory and the *ALD Yearbook* also provide a way of being seen and making yourself known. Thanks to the directory, I found myself working on an opera in an eighteenth-century palace theatre in Germany.

As students are essentially the future of lighting, I feel they play a crucial role within the ALD, especially with important issues that could have major effects on the lighting industry – crucially the phasing out

of incandescent bulbs and the emphasis on energy-efficiency and environmental issues.

I would like to encourage more students to attend events and try to bring together those from all colleges and universities. It would be great to hear from you, find out what you are doing and be able to share experiences, I would also appreciate any feedback that you have and anything that you feel the ALD could offer.#

Contact Jack directly at:
jack.knowles@ald.org.uk

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