

June / July 2009

*Congratulations Special*

# FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers

*"More tools, fewer whinging..."*

*In the CFL's luminous flux this issue:*

**Michael Billington on lighting • Projection for 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' • Moving lights shoot it out • Update on low energy lights • CAD survey • Showlight '09 ... and much more...**

*The end of incandescence?  
Kevan Shaw provides an update  
of the low-energy lighting debate  
on page 24.*

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# Rick's Roundup

You will read in this instalment of our *Critic's Column* Michael Billington's excellent suggestion of organizing a workshop for the Critic's Circle to help them appreciate the role of lighting in performance and what lighting designers can contribute to the final project. It is a great idea and one that we have been contemplating on behalf of the ALD for a while. But how should such a workshop be structured and who should be involved for it to be informal and fun, yet give our critical friends a better idea of what we all do? Answers greatly received and we should try to make this happen soon.

## ABTT soon

I look forward to seeing many of you at the ABTT show and at some of the upcoming events listed in *Focus*.

## AGM postponed

We have decided to postpone the annual general meeting till the autumn to ensure that most of the Executive can be there, and we want to fine-tune some of the ideas that we have as a result of the strategy document that we put forward at the last AGM and particularly our redefinition of membership categories.

## Light Relief Day

I am also delighted to report

that with many of the pledged contributions to *Light Relief Day* received now, we should have raised approximately £2,000 from this day. If you have not been able to figure out your contribution there is still time to be included, and I thank the many lighting designers and companies for their continuing support for our charity.

## Showlight in Glasgow

Rushing around, as I have been recently, it is easy to feel that ALD things slip by the way, but it was great to get back in touch with the best that the ALD represents at *Showlight* in Glasgow.

I was delighted that the

ALD was able to sponsor four professional members to travel to Glasgow and I look forward to reading their reports in this and future issues of *Focus*.

It was also good to meet many other lighting professionals from all aspects of Film, TV, and events and realize how much we have in common and how we can always learn and share with each other.

That is ultimately the best thing that the ALD can do – bring us all together to exchange our experience our frustrations and our dreams of what and how we want to be lighting next.#

*regards, Rick*



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# Professionals' Pastimes

Welcome home (briefly) to our very own EU lighting ambassador, Mark Jonathan



It's a gloomy, cool day in London in contrast to the bright sunshine I experienced in Italy where, in a week, I managed to do London, Rome, Spoleto (meetings), Chichester (rehearsals), London and Glasgow.

## Colloquially in Scotland

Courtesy of the fit-up schedule in the West End being delayed by a day I realised I could slip up to *Showlight* for the weekend.

What a great event it was; many congratulations to all involved who worked so hard to make it such a success – it really is an outstanding event. Thanks should also go to all the corporate and business sponsors for all the support that they provide. Although I was only there for the first day it was great to hear designers and lighting directors talking about their field of work from major musicals, inspirational product launches, TV spectaculars,

film, architecture and large scale, live music events – what a range we cover. I felt quite humbled by the brilliance of those who spoke. I can see we will have to keep a close eye on the new safety directives. Please tell me that I'm not damaging the retinas of all the people that I may light from the odd cranky angle.

## Drying out the passport

As you've gathered I've been travelling, hauling my wheelie bag up the steps of inaccessible railway stations and hoping that it's not going to be overweight at the airport check-in. I had been looking forward to lighting ballet in France. Given that I can speak the language I thought that would give me an advantage over working in America, for example, where I don't speak the language so well and I wouldn't need to get a visa.

Even though France is in

the EEC we need an E101 and they were insistent that they would tax me. I shall claim the tax paid against future UK tax. I found the contractual stage fairly annoying as we were negotiating with the Mairie (Town Hall) and I think the contract they used was probably the same one they used for street light engineers. Finally, despite my snarling and gnashing of teeth, my agent reached an agreement but it took about 15 months from the original offer.

The French Government deems that lighting design and costume design cannot have a copyright clause as you can 'buy clothes in a shop' and lighting is just 'turned on and off'... I decided just to ignore this bizarre view.

What I found even more frustrating was that the French Government has dictated the maximum number of hours staff can work, this combined with the local management's

inability to actually find a way of managing the legislation led to some really frustrating work.

While the opera house continued to work 3 shifts a day, the permanent staff could only be there for two of them. So, the morning shift, which starts at 8am, tended to be staffed by casual labour. We were programming generic lights on one desk and movers on the other so with the shift system I encountered five programmers in 24 hours. Not good, especially when one operator couldn't index the gobo position and another couldn't put a delay on a down fade.

## Amusing accountants

I was amused when I asked how it was that the accounts department deemed me to be an employee but that I was expected to attend all three shifts a day. I was told that no one had told me when to

come in but that I had chosen to turn up! It also came as a surprise to the production manager that I might want a body to stand on the stage when I was lighting; I made do with an abandoned genie tower and a white sheet. At the end of an evening's work I would say something like 'Tomorrow, could I have Act one on stage?' This would be agreed but of course in the morning it would be a different shift and someone else would decide that they needed to do something else so I mostly lit the show without the right scenery on the stage. The dancers gave an exemplary performance on the opening night but the journey to the premiere was really frustrating.



### Accommodating Italians

I can't pass judgement yet on the Spoleto Festival as I've only been for a pre-production meeting. On first viewing Spoleto is a delightful Umbrian hill town, unspoilt by my any modern intrusion. It has an outdoor Roman amphitheatre and two beautiful, old theatres. We have the composer, Gian Carlo Menotti, to thank for the famous music festival. I will be based in Spoleto for 3 weeks. I always think it's a good idea

to check out accommodation while I'm there on a pre-production visit. I'd asked for an apartment with Internet. On reflection, maybe I was being a bit demanding in expecting the Internet to be available.

The accommodation lady walked me up the narrow, historic streets to view a prospective apartment. At the viewing the estate agent explained that the grandmother who lived there would move out as would her

two Rotweillers who were snarling from the terrace. I had to say that I didn't think the smell of the Rotweillers would move out. "Don't worry," the Accommodation Lady said jauntily, "I know what you need"... I viewed a few more dumps and had to say she had seriously misjudged what I wanted. In Italy, the deal is you get paid a gross fee and you choose your accommodation and pay for it out of your fee. Suddenly, the rental price trebled but still what I was being shown wasn't really suitable.

I left Spoleto a bit worried that nothing was fixed. Back in the UK I Googled 'apartments in Spoleto' and found, contrary to what I had been told, that there were plenty of apartments available, far nicer and cheaper than I was being offered. So, don't believe everything you may be told.

### Home comforts

Meanwhile, back in Blighty, I had to light two plays in the West End in zero time. We actually got the shows on despite the inadequate time. Thank goodness that no one got stropky despite the very long hours, the noise of carpenters trying to use power tools in the darkness while we tried to work at height over the din.

It's the evening after the opening night and I breathe a sigh of relief that the job is done. I was delighted to get an availability check from a UK regional drama house but I still struggle to believe the fees that are being offered. How do we get the message across that the number of days we work putting a show together are really undervalued?

In this case, the cost of working would be further exacerbated by a limit on expenses that clearly is inadequate to cover my

anticipated travel and accommodation costs.

Given the global financial situation I think it's unlikely we are going to see companies increasing our fees for the time being. While some members have questioned whether Equity is the best option for us, and certainly this is one of the strategies that professional LDs need to consider, we are currently represented by Equity.

To benefit from the cover you do need to be a paid-up member of Equity. I'm delighted that Johanna Town is continuing to act as the ALD Equity Rep on the Equity Designers' committee and I have also agreed to stand for a further term. We do need more LDs to consider joining the Equity committee if we are going to make any progress.#



The Teatro Nuovo, Spoleto



*"...the pinks and purples of the saloon bar..."*  
From the original Nottingham production. Photo: Mike Robertson

# ALD 'On the Waterfront'

Members' meeting report by Will Evans



On Thursday 23rd of April, ALD members gathered at the Haymarket theatre, London, to see *On the Waterfront* and to meet the show's lighting designer Mike Robertson.

Based on the 1954 film of the same name, *On The Waterfront* is adapted and directed by Steven Berkoff. The play charts Terry Malloy's struggle with the corrupt union bosses in 1950s New York Docks who bribe, intimidate and even murder to get what they want.

## Dramatic lighting

Mike's lighting is dramatic, eerie and stark yet still has flashes of colour. In many ways these little touches of colour such as the intense red of the scene in the car between Terry and his brother

Charlie 'The Gent' Malloy heighten the action make you sit up and pay attention telling you that something is about to happen. Likewise with the pinks and purples of the saloon bar (photo left), they tell you this is a different place but also that something different is happening here. The other striking feature of Mike's design is the use of movement. Each scene 'cuts' into the next with a dramatic shift of lighting as the tight, soft and enclosed back light of one scene expands and morphs into a hard-edged square encompassing the whole stage in one fell swoop. This gives a dynamism to the production that I think would be hard to

replicate in any other way. Mike later revealed that this method was employed to keep the 'filmic' nature of the play on track, so the audience would always know the action was jumping from one location to another.

## How was it done?

After the performance we were treated to a whistle stop tour of back stage where



Mike Robertson

I was surprised to see how few lights were used overhead. Four moving lights in the rig, a few out front and some Par 64's on booms for side light did most of the work of lighting the stage with only a few other supplementary units such

as pin spots for specials and some extra Source Fours for cover. It just shows you don't need a huge rig to make a huge impact and that less is nearly always more!

## Colour call

As mentioned previously bold colour features rarely in the design but Mike did have a two new colours commissioned from Lee Filters which are used for his side light cover. Mike's aim was to create a new 202 and 201, cool colours that can be used to tone down the warmth of tungsten lamps but without degrading down into the green end of the spectrum. Lee Filters plan to put these new colours into production next year although the numbering is still yet to be decided, (it

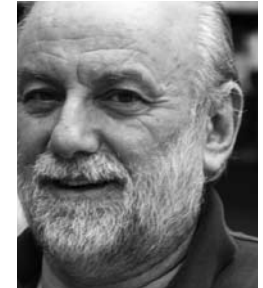
was suggested a whole new '800' range could be in order 802+ 801 if these colours did indeed replace 202/201!)

Mike also explained how colour perception had affected the work, with Steven Berkoff perceiving one colour one day and another colour the next even though it was the same lamp in the same colour at the same intensity! A common problem I think we have all found with directors at one point or another!

All in all a very fascinating glimpse into the challenges and solutions in lighting a landmark production such as this. A big thank you must go to Mike and the company manager Matt for allowing us to hold this meeting.#

# Focus' focus on Focus

Nigel Lawson Dick at PLASA Focus Leeds April 28-29



After a number of years as a successful AC Lighting North exhibition the Phoenix arose this year as PLASA Focus – now where did they get that idea from?

As usual the ALD stand was in evidence and we enjoyed a steady stream of visitors. There was the customary horde of hungry students hovering up goodies – and our new lanyards attracted attention – but persistence and diligence did enable us to stop a few of them for long enough to explain the virtues and benefits of the association; and even to get a couple on board!

Our presence in Leeds also gives a good opportunity for those from 'the North' who are members, or expressing an interest, to come and say Hello and have a face to face

chat. We all spend our time endlessly on mobile phones (there were some wandering round who seemed to do nothing else!) but it is good to put faces to names. So the stand became quite a social centre for a while with acquaintances re-acquainting and some new contacts being established. It was good too to meet a couple of 'lapsed' members and be able to bring them back into the fold. Add to that a couple of likely Professional members and some Corporate leads and all-in-all that made for a productive trip. My particular thanks to Richard Thompson who popped in on Tuesday – and then stayed helping to man the pitch for most of the day!

The organisers have done well to maintain the

companionable and relaxed flavour of the exhibition. The size had grown from last year, extending back into the hall in the Armouries, but in other respects it was a steady development from the previous structure. The get-in and get-out is the easiest of any of the exhibitions – good access and help on hand – and on this occasion clearing the complete stand, loading the car and getting on the road in under 30 minutes must be some sort of record!

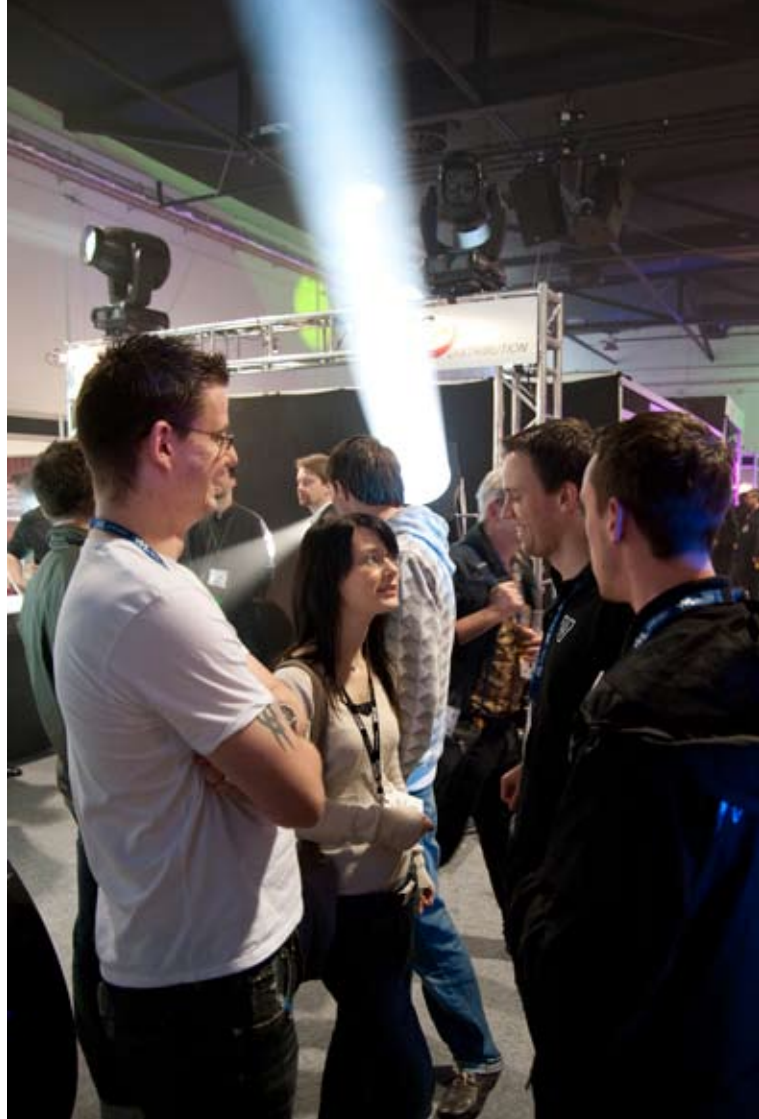
They also maintained the 'free lunch' which is clearly an attraction for visitors; and they arranged an excellent evening's entertainment for all the exhibitors which included a Pool competition. I can report that the ALD representative (having never played pool before)

managed to win the first round robin group but fell at the quarter final stage when pitched against someone whose approach appeared to be that their life and liberty depended on success! I didn't know that one could take it all so seriously and of course it does then rouse the competitive streak .... But there we are. And my 20-year old granddaughter (she really is my granddaughter) who is at Leeds University and who joined me for the evening was much impressed – lots of energetic texting going on as she relayed progress to my daughter (who is something of a whiz at Pool, the main benefit of two years sixth form college!!).

Well.... There's never a dull moment.#



Photos: Chris Toulmin





Tanya Burns - brand launch for AkzoNobel  
"a superb looking gig on a barge in Amsterdam".  
Photo: Lesley Harmer

## Spectacular Showlight 2009

Simon Corder Corresponds from the Colloquium in Glasgow

I wrote an article for *Focus* in 2001, following my first Showlight attendance, concerning the value of the colloquium, the generosity of the hospitality, and the trade show as dialogue rather than hard sell. It's all as good now as it was then, probably better, and thanks to the organisers and sponsors for their fine work and contributions.

There are many varieties of lighting person represented at Showlight: architectural, cinema, concert touring, corporate, musicals, the performing arts, photography, site specific performance, television, and not forgetting the Olympic thing; they all give papers alongside scientists, engineers, and urban planners, who are lighting people too. And I've no wish to exclude the many students of lighting present and the suppliers of the tools

and services we all use, hugs all around!

Job descriptions vary from country to country, and as individuals like to describe themselves; we have directors of photography, lighting directors, lighting cameramen, lighting consultants, lighting architects, visual designers, lighting designers who feel they are artists, and those who are content to design...

Now, it may just be the Showlight magic provoking a feeling of community in me, but I sense a convergence of these specialisms.

We have long discussed theatrical technique in architectural lighting, but there is also the change in television from salaried jobs to freelancing, standard practice in other fields for a very long time. More and more stage work is being

broadcast and sold in DVD format, music videos borrow from cinema, television variety imitates concert touring, the corporate world takes any inspiration to flog a few more cars, and so-on.

Alongside this mixing of styles and purposes we are increasingly using the same technology across and within disciplines – full multi-camera relay in concerts; projected video in performance; the mingling of video and lighting in moving heads; pixel mapped scenic elements driven from lighting desks, the list goes on. And LEDs are spreading all over the place faster than the pig flu; numerous coughs and colds in evidence at Showlight notwithstanding. (You read it here first!)

It seems to me that Paul Pyant (lighting designer of *Lord of the Rings*) has a great

deal in common with Bernie Davies (lighting director of the *Royal Variety Performance*) in that they are both essentially team-leading and directing in situations where the issues of time and complex systems make it impossible to grasp every detail of the lighting rig.

Similarly, Alex Wardle (candle-lit stages for the 21st century) and Roger Simonsz (using Svobodas to realise his concept in a feature film) have a great deal in common as artist/designers, although in these examples one is a theatre consultant and the other a director of photography.

So I come away with the feeling that we are defined at least as strongly by the style of our approach as we are by the industry sector we work in, and these approaches range along a continuum

from an artist's individual practice, through design, to directing a team. And the logic which follows from this is that the time to define ourselves by industry sector may be passing and the good feeling and community of Showlight may be a model for how lighting people should be getting together for more than the quadrennial celebration of lighting which is Showlight.

A big talking point at Showlight was sustainability, not that there's much agreement within or without the lighting industry as to what exactly sustainability means. We had a green panel discussion which included the assertion that our industry is a "massive user of resources and energy", and a celebration of driving off-road for recreation. The man from California was concerned

about the excessive use of plastic water bottles on film sets.

Your correspondent felt compelled to ask Showlight to keep a sense of proportion. He'd like to see the data for our "massive use of resources and energy" alongside other industries and in the context of the essential cultural role we fulfil; he can see no justification for driving just to go for a drive; and he agrees about the water bottles.

For many, sustainability in lighting seems to mean improving the efficiency of light fittings to reduce their carbon footprint. Not a bad thing of course, but I really don't think the frenzied enthusiasm for LEDs is the only way ahead on this, it's a very complex issue; much more complex than simply considering how many lumens per Watt a light fixture outputs.

Which is not to dismiss LEDs – Andi Watson presented his work with Radiohead, currently on tour with an all LED rig including the follow spots. Not only does it look amazing; it's an intelligent, innovative and spectacular staging, putting to excellent use the very latest technologies – stuff that hardly cares if it's a light or a reconfigured TV set.

To spare his blushes I'll not name the designer who presented the most spectacularly unsustainable, not to mention unsuitable, project at Showlight; a project so unbelievably un-green, un-cool, and unlikely to be working in five years time that I award it the *Showlight 2009 Chelsea Tractor Award*. You know who you are, and don't do it again!#



### Finally, a few favourites not already mentioned:

**Tanya Burns** - brand launch for AkzoNobel - a superb looking gig on a barge in Amsterdam.

**Mark Kenyon** - *Strictly Come Dancing* - appropriately camp, very well achieved, and a happy presentation by a very happy lighting designer.

**Jim Tetlow** - *The Presidential Debates* - a very clear and detailed presentation which shared a lot of useful knowledge.

**Paul Collison** - *The Olympic Ceremonies* - a celebration of international collaboration, and an amazing show.

# Office Oracle

## Latest news from Ian's production desk

### 2009 AGM

Owing to the indisposition of a large number of the executive, the 2009 Annual General Meeting has been postponed from the previously announced date of Saturday 13th June 2009.

It will now take place on **Sunday 13th September 2009** during the first day of the PLASA09 trade show at Earls Court. Actual time and location will be confirmed in the next issue of *Focus* and the email bulletins.

### 2009 / 2010 Subscriptions

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

receive over 350 standing order payments into the account during the month of April.

*Two thirds of these have now been processed and it is disappointing to see that only about a third of these have been changed to reflect the change of subscription fees for 2009/10 (see rates below).*

Chasing up members' payments is a time-consuming exercise which means that we cannot be working on members' behalf to improve the other services we offer you. Therefore you should have received a copy of the current standing order inserted into this edition of *Focus*. **Please complete the details and return it to the office to ensure that your subscriptions are paid on time at the correct rate even**

### if you do not currently pay by standing order.

To help speed up the assigning of payments to members we ask that you include your membership number as a payment reference. We have received one payment this year from a "Mr. Williams", but have 14 people on the database to which it could be assigned. Your membership number is unique to you and numbers are never re-used once people leave the Association.

Please note that a standing order is an arrangement between you and your bank, the ALD cannot change the details of such an arrangement for you. Those members who did not update their standing order ahead of the payment date will be contacted separately in due

course to be informed of the remainder owing.

For those members that do not pay by standing order, please note that this is the last edition of *Focus* you will receive if we have not had a payment from you by the **1st July 2009**. If you are in any doubt whether you owe any money, please contact the office as soon as possible.

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

<b>Professional</b>	<b>£75</b>
<b>Associate</b>	<b>£40</b>
<b>Student</b>	<b>£25</b>
<b>Non Profit Org</b>	<b>£20</b>

### Awards Season

Congratulations to ALD Chairman Rick Fisher who has won the *Outer Circle Critics' Award* in New York for the 'Outstanding Lighting



Design in a Musical' for Billy Elliot. Also nominated in that category was ALD President Richard Pilbrow for *A Tale of Two Cities*. ALD Fellow David Hersey won the award for 'Outstanding Lighting Design in a Play' for *Equus*. Other ALD members nominated in this category were Paul Pyant for *The Winter's Tale* and Hugh Vanstone for *Mary Stuart*. Huge congratulations all round.

It is also the time for the 2009 Tony Awards nominations and we are delighted that the following ALD members have been nominated: Best Lighting Design of a Play – David Hersey, *Equus* and Hugh

Vanstone, *Mary Stuart*. Best Lighting Design of a Musical – Rick Fisher, *Billy Elliot, The Musical*

The Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland 2008-09 Shortlist for Best Design included Simon Wilkinson for lighting *Slick*, Vox Motus/Tron Theatre, and Chris Davey for *Beauty and the Beast* at the Dundee Rep

#### **Michael Northen Bursary 2009**

As previously announced, we are currently receiving submissions for this year's Michael Northen Bursary. The deadline for submissions is **31st July 2009** and the winners will be announced at PLASA09 at Earls Court in mid September.

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 to apply.

The award 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 ALD administers 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 judging will take place by a panel of industry professionals. Previous judges have included Rick Fisher, Howard Harrison, Mark Jonathan and Paul Pyant.

Full details and the submission form can be found on the ALD website at [www.ald.org.uk/students](http://www.ald.org.uk/students)

## Letters

Dear ALD,

### **Sharing Thoughts and Knowledge about LED and innovative Light Sources.**

#### **Why?**

Now we all have to get used to the forthcoming new regulations about energy efficiency, lumens-per-Watt and more, it is important to move the discussion away from commercial areas and into the reality of humanity.

#### **How?**

By starting a general discussion in order to get rid of the crap and see the facts in relation to the well-being of us all, and the development of lighting design and lighting techniques.

#### **Who?**

Everybody interested in lighting design and lighting techniques in theatre, television, events, urban environment and architecture. That means we need a platform open to designers and product-manufacturers related to these areas.

If you are interested in sharing ideas, please contact me directly.

JanChris Duijvendak, LD  
[janchris@ldd.nl](mailto:janchris@ldd.nl)

# Letters

Dear ALD,

*Job: lighting designer, St. Mary's Showcase London Unpaid (Expenses Paid) Part time Artform: theatre*

*Committed, reliable lighting designer wanted for the forthcoming production of Attempts on her life by Martin Crimp. The play will take place at BAC from 19th/20th of June as part of St. Mary's MA Directors Showcase. This is non-pay position. If you are interested please send your CV until the 21st of May.*

I seem to recall sending my CV for a similar position recently. (I think it was this job.)

This strikes me as exploitation of the worst sort on the part of an establishment of higher education. If they need a designer, they should surely

offer a suitable fee as they would to any other member of staff that they hire to teach a class.

It is also of concern that they should fail to give their students experience with professional designers (whether they are professional members of the ALD or not). While it is true that directors will find themselves, as we all do, working for nothing on a shoestring budget in tiny theatres, and part of the course should probably reflect this, they could perfectly well engage a designer to do this as well at a suitable fee.

The end-of-year showcase is hardly the place to risk the graduates' work being ruined by someone who cannot devote sufficient time and concentration to its lighting because they are struggling

to pay the rent. That is not to say that the lighting will necessarily be badly done by whoever is engaged at a rate of £0; there is much lighting in fringe theatre that is very good. (I do some of it, if that doesn't sound too arrogant.)

This probably sounds very much in the vein of 'grumpy old man', but does the Executive know of any more of this sort of instance? It should be nipped in the bud as soon as possible.

Many thanks.

Edmund Sutton (#1480)

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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...

### Professional

**Alexander Allen** †, Kent

**Jonny Milmer**, London

**David Phillips**, Chesterfield

### Associate

**Kevin Allen**, Chepstow

**Jonnie Clough**, Edinburgh

**Jon Winn**, London

† from Associate

## Dates for your diaries

**10-11th June**

ABTT Show 2009\*

**1st July**

Deadline: ALD subscription payments

**15th July**

Deadline: *Focus* August/September issue.

**31st July**

Deadline: Michael Northen Bursary Submissions

**13-16th September**

PLASA09, Earls Court, London\*

**15th September**

Deadline: *Focus* Oct/November issue.

**31st October**

Deadline for updating Yearbook entries

**15th November**

Deadline: *Focus* Nov/December issue.

**17-18th November**

Event-Tech Ireland, Industries Hall, Dublin

**2010**

**10-11 February**

Event-Tech Scotland, Thistle Glasgow

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

# Dreams and Sprites

## *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the University of Leeds by Scott Palmer

Following a presentation at the Barbican Theatre for the Projection in Performance symposium, which he co-presented with Dr Sita Popat, we asked Scott Palmer to give us an insight into work taking place at the University of Leeds and specifically the use of projected light in an experimental performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

This production was staged for a public audience in 2007 at the University of Leeds. It provided a unique opportunity to develop research in projected light, and to incorporate this research within final year undergraduate teaching. Furthermore, it demonstrates an interesting model of how Universities can work with external industry partners for mutual benefit.

The original idea for this production stemmed from research undertaken exploring aspects associated with projection in performance with industry partners KMA Creative Technology Ltd. Some of this work has already been documented in *Focus*, notably the *Dancing in the Streets* interactive kinetic

light installation in the city streets in York in 2005 and Phoenix Dance's production of *Eng-er-land*. This research partnership between education and an industry partner led to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded Projecting Performance project, in which the team explore relationships between digital projected image, the performer and the technical operator.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* was therefore conceived as a vehicle to enable opportunities for further research, dissemination to a wider audience through knowledge transfer, and as a unique learning experience for final year undergraduate students. KMA were keen to use this experience as R&D

time, Tom Wexler having also secured a regional NESTA grant for his own professional development. These interlocking aspects therefore (teaching, research and enterprise and knowledge transfer) – the three principal areas of university activity in the UK – were neatly brought together in this one project.

My vision of the play stemmed from imagining the forest world as a venue for a rave – a place of escape from the authoritarian restrictions of a commercially-driven city – a world of youthful escape to which the lovers run away and which is inhabited by virtual fairies, created through operator-controlled digital projections. Shakespeare's magical world was therefore transformed into a contemporary

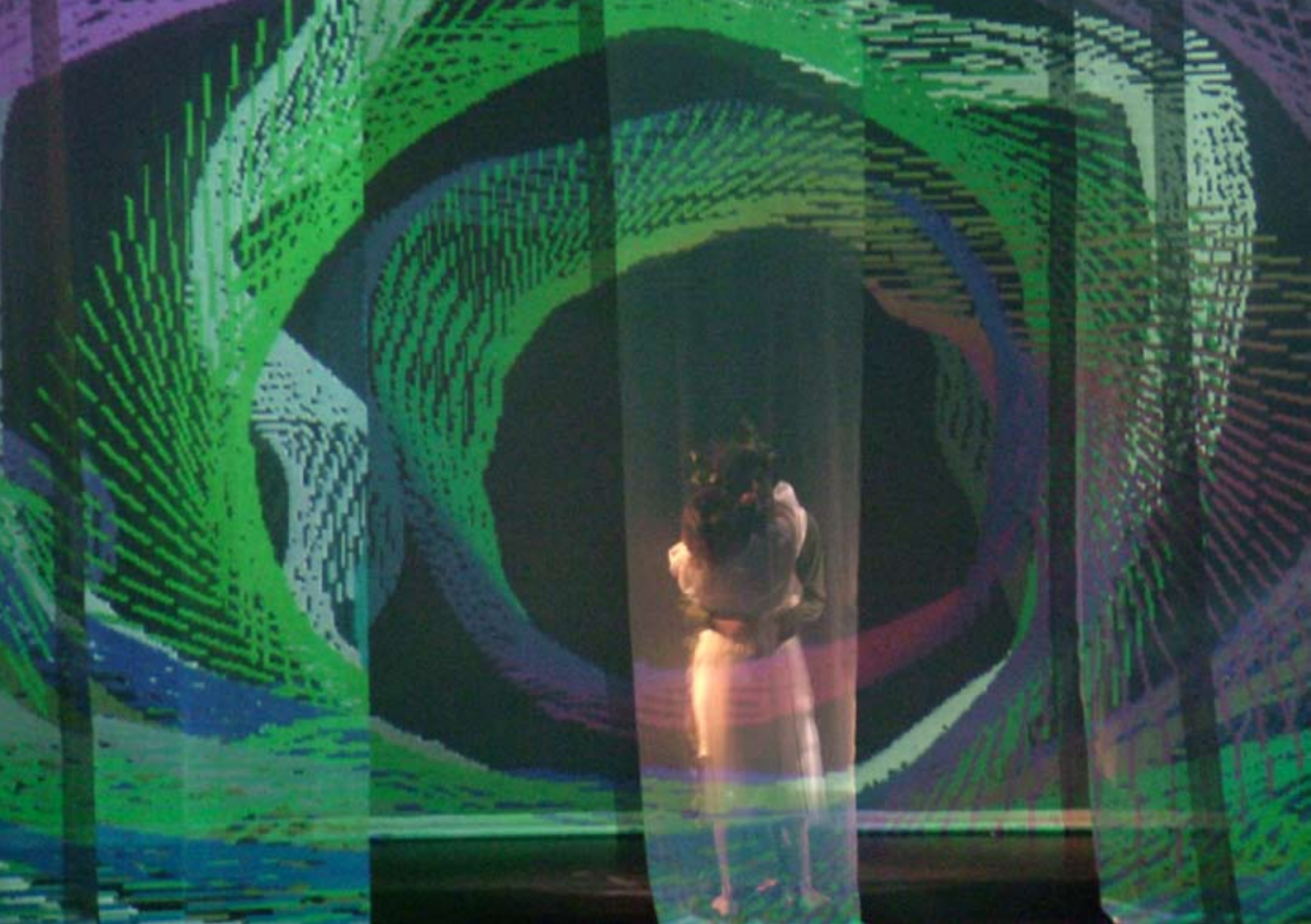
Right: Opening sequence to Act 2 was an extended dance and projection sequence set to N-Trance's 'Set You Free'. It used a combination of stage lighting, manually operated sprites and thermal imaging to create the rave environment.

Photo: Georges Bacoust

environment infused with bass beats, early 90's dance music and popular culture. The young city-traders are joined in this world by the mechanicals who as members of the Territorial Army are undertaking night-time exercises in the wood.

The live projected light-forms, or 'sprites' were created mainly through Macromedia Director, operated through the use of Wacom graphics tablets and pens, and were projected into the stage space onto a number of strips of gauze. We used two relatively powerful data projectors to each cover the whole stage space, which allowed the digital animations to interact directly with the performers and to appear as 'live' participants in the world of the play.

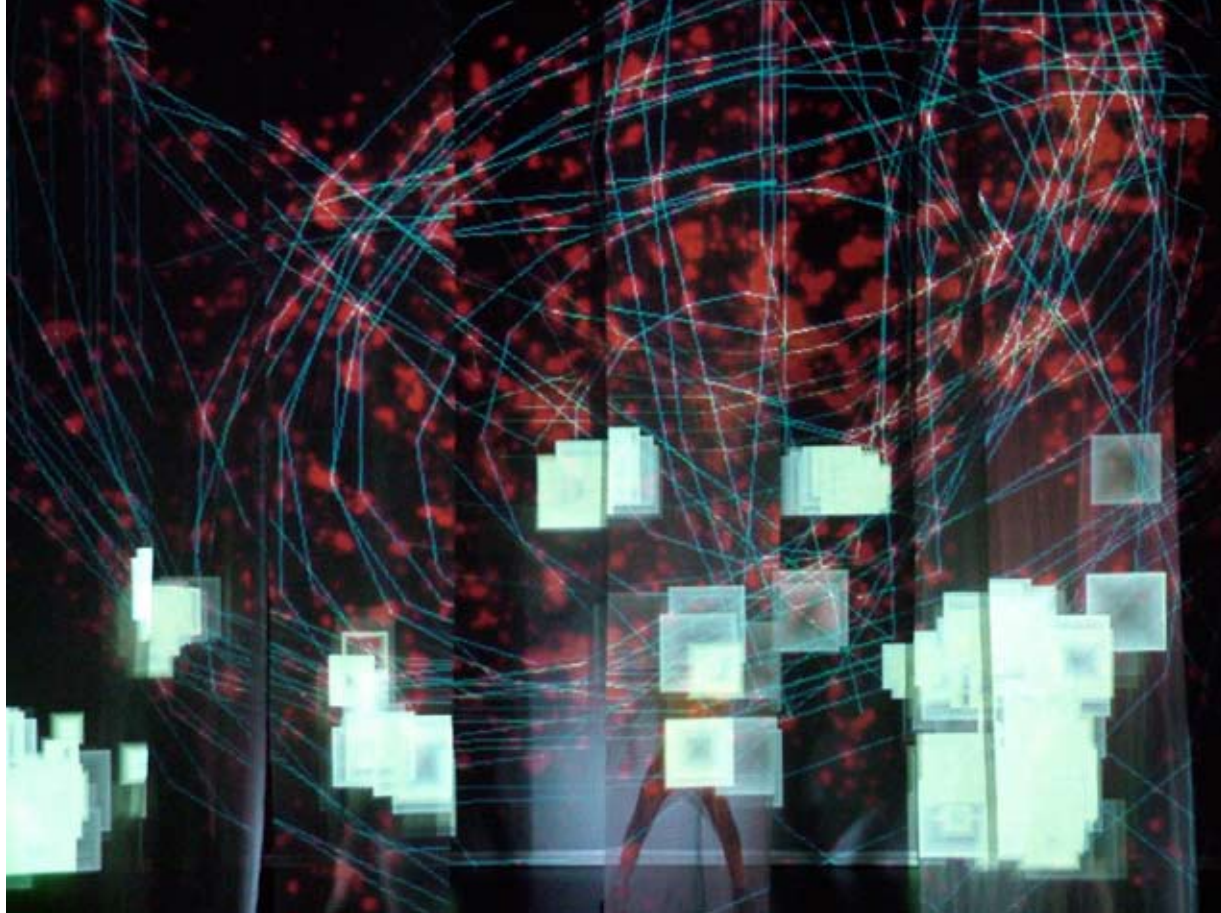




*Left: Titania's bower. A sprite is drawn in the stage space to create Titania's bower - a tunnel-like spiral effect created live during the scene.*  
*Photo: Georges Bacoust*

The real-time manipulation of the 'sprites' by the offstage operators therefore also enabled them to perform on stage through the technology. This experience was a heightened version of using a manual lighting board, except that the complexity of the digital light forms and the freedom of the graphics tablet allowed for a really expressive use of light and for sophisticated interactions between bodies and projected light in the stage environment.

We introduced voice-reactive sprites to accompany the initial appearances of Titania and Oberon and these projections were therefore able to pulse in relation to the lines spoken and also able to flit around the stage and on and off the actors themselves as the operators manipulated the pens on the tablets. Larger, more abstract projections were also used to create key moments such



*A later sequence within 'Set you Free' with mutating squares responding to the movements of each dancer and providing a 'trippy' feel.*  
*Photo: Georges Bacoust*

as Titania's bower (previous page) which was drawn live and appeared gradually in the stage space as the scene progressed.

Stage lighting played an important part in working with the digital projections, especially in establishing the rave space in the forest – an extended movement sequence set to N-Trance's *Set You Free*.

On other occasions in the play, the performers were only lit through the projection of the sprites themselves. In the final scene when Oberon and the fairies re-emerge, the stage was lit entirely by one data projector, each performer being lit by their own full-body follow spot effect which was created through the use of a separate input device – a thermal imaging camera more usually found on aircraft for identifying military targets!

The combination of projected imagery, lighting, loud dance music and physical performances gave the production a highly visual flavour. The use of graphics



*Titania and Bottom: Voice reactive sprites created 'sparkling air' fairies and were moved on and around the performers in the stage space. Photo: Georges Bacoust*

tablets as the control interface enabled the operators to embody the sprites on stage through movement gestures, and allowed us the opportunity in the final act of the play to poke fun at ourselves during the Pyramus and Thisbe scene. Here we deliberately chose to draw live, naïve projected scenery, to match the action and to

offer a running commentary on the mechanicals' farcical attempts at the play within the play. This sequence developed each night as the operator responded to the audience reactions and played with the possibilities of creating another level of humour through projected words and images behind the performers on stage.

Our *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offered an important opportunity for KMA to expand their own creative practice in terms of technical interfaces, programming and visual aesthetics for performance. Early collaborative performance research workshops revealed the need for live, fine control of the parameters for each

of the digital sprites to be operated intuitively by the performer-operator. In response to this request a midi-controlled interface (with faders!) was developed allowing live colour changes of the sprites and crucially for the operators to be able to fade them out to black when needed!

To meet the research and knowledge transfer goals of this project, academics and professional practitioners were invited to a preview performance. Lloyd Newson, Director of DV8 Physical Theatre, attended and commented afterwards that the production had "sparked further ideas" for his next project. A consequence of the innovative nature of this production was that the team subsequently embarked upon a series of workshops in conjunction with Newson and DV8 Physical Theatre and led directly to the projected imagery used in their recent production of *To Be Straight With You*.#

[www.leeds.ac.uk/paci/projectingperformance/home.html](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/paci/projectingperformance/home.html)

# Software for Lighting Designers

The ALD is currently undertaking a survey by David Ripley of the software that is used for lighting design

We are interested in all programs that people use to help realise their productions. The expectation is that the majority will be the 'usual suspects'. The results of the survey will be published in *Focus* and following on from that will be further articles looking at the programs.

My intention is that I act as 'editor' for these articles outlining the technical requirements for the software, its cost etc, whilst leaving the commentary, good or bad, to the users who have created the survey. I also hope to include the software makers or their vendors to address any issues that may arise from the user's comments. In this way I hope we will have an interesting, informative and unbiased series of articles that may help those of you

about to step into software based design make the right choice of platform for you. If you are an existing user you may perhaps wish to reconsider your choices!

**CAD stands for  
Computer Aided  
Draughting  
*not*  
Computer Aided  
Design.**

The software available in our industry is quite broad, considering the specialised nature of the work. I broadly break down the types of program into these areas. Some programs cover some or all of these definitions in

their packages, others part of them, whilst some have 'stepped' their program so that more of the features are available for purchase over and above the basic model.

## CAD packages for lighting

And now I drag out my soap box. CAD stands for Computer Aided Draughting not Design. All CAD programs of whatever discipline are good at recording a designers intentions so that these can be handed on to someone who will implement those intentions.

As a result of their engineering backgrounds CAD programs need information, usually numerical to be inputted to create the plans, and symbolically (meaning you have to make lantern choices)

for the Lighting Plan. This is counter intuitive to the act of design which is a fluid and creative task requiring a flexible and easily editable interface which can work with generalities, ie a piece of paper and a pencil.

That is not to say that people do not design in the software but even then they are translating the design (which they have created between their ears) into something more tangible. Draughting is an enabling function that allows the designer to make clear his intentions to those that must implement or create that reality.

CAD programs that are specifically lighting oriented also have paperwork generation capabilities for colour calls, hook ups etc.



**David Ripley**

*David Ripley runs cad4theatre, providing draughting services, training and consultancy to the industry in all things CAD. He is the author of 'AutoCAD – A Handbook for Theatre users' and runs the ABTT's AutoCAD distance learning course as well as teaching at several drama schools. He is based in the Campsie Fells above Glasgow (In a house – obviously!)*

# Software for Lighting Designers

David Ripley introduces a survey of the software that is used for lighting design

## Visualisation or Realisation packages.

These are programs that attempt to show the visual effect of the lighting plan onscreen. Some of these can provide moving images whilst others can only provide still renders.

Whilst these are often useful in pitching to clients, the danger is that the render cannot then be reproduced in the venue. Certainly in theatre this could be a real problem given the need to respond to the directors, scenic designers and performer's whims in staging once in the venue! However in the corporate and rock and roll world they are used widely, perhaps because of the commercial necessity of having to pitch for jobs using design concepts at a far earlier stage than in theatre.

## Pre Programming

The final step is to take your visualisation and plug it into a lighting console. Many of the packages have the facilities to link to consoles allowing programming to occur off site and in advance. Ideally this means that from a plan the rig can be hung and focussed and once the console is plugged in and the show loaded rehearsals can start with the performers.

As with rendering this is very useful in the rock and roll world but of limited use in theatrical presentations and so is often not purchased in a stepped product, or if included remains unused.

## Intuitive Software?

Everybody has their favourite lantern or console and software is the same,

starting with the Operating Systems available and then the programs themselves. Claims are made about various programs being more intuitive to use or easier for new users to master but the truth is that all of these programs require us to learn routines of clicks or data entry to achieve our drawings. The question really is which system suits you? This can only be found by trying the product and most manufacturers offer trial versions, although for obvious reasons they are usually limited in operational time or features.

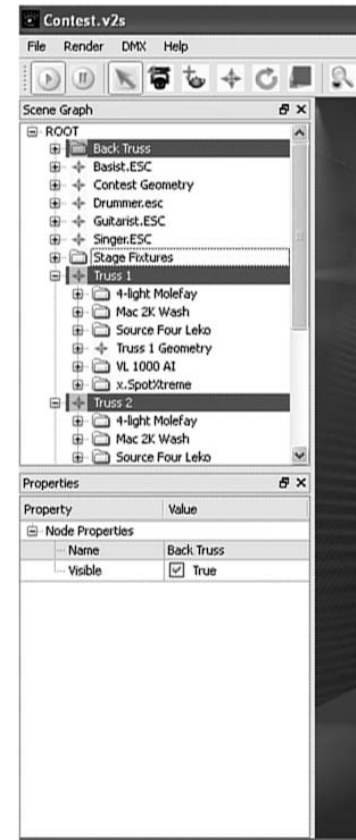
## So why use CAD?

Why not? Here are the basic arguments both for and against:

*It's more accurate than by hand* – Not necessarily. 'Rubbish In, Rubbish Out' applies even more so in CAD. The trap is that the drawings always look lovely when printed. They should be treated as you would any drawing and checked.

*It's quicker than drawing by hand* – True. Once you have learnt the program. In that time you will experience the bottom of the learning curve until you have our 'A ha!' moment – or don't as the case may be.

*It's easier to exchange information with people* – Again, not necessarily true. And do you really want all your intellectual property out there in an editable form? As for common file formats – see box.#





### What next?

In the next edition of *Focus* we shall look at the results of the survey, so if you want to take part and need a copy of the survey please email David at:

[david@cad4theatre.org.uk](mailto:david@cad4theatre.org.uk)

June / July 2009

### It's an Autodesk world folks!

*One of the major problems in this area is exchanging files with each other, especially across programmes.*

*Within a sole programme it will need to be established what is the oldest version of software being used as older versions won't be able to read the new drawings. This can cause problems if certain new (and useful) features are unusable to some in the project but is surmountable.*

*It is more difficult when trying to share a project across different platforms. Because of their dominance in the market place the Autodesk (makers of AutoCAD) .dwg format is often used where drawings need to be exchanged. As a result of this although non Autodesk programmes have their own file format they must all also be able to save to dwg. The alternative .dxf standard is too unwieldy and inaccurate and so rarely used. This is where the problems start.*

*Autodesk have decided to retain the dwg file format as proprietary code. It is therefore not available to other vendors, putting them at a disadvantage. Autodesk also change the format quite frequently, adding compression and security measures to make the files smaller and more secure.*

*The other vendors are usually all members of the Open Drawing Alliance <http://www.opendwg.org/> which in essence reverse engineers the dwg code then releases it to their members to use in their programs as OpenDWG. Despite many requests Autodesk refuses to join the organisation, taking them to court on occasion but on minor issues rather than the reverse engineering of their product.*

*As a result of this and despite the best efforts of ODA transferred drawings will still sometimes have glitches and inaccuracies in files and until Autodesk choose to make the dwg code open – which doesn't seem likely in the near future non Autodesk vendors will have to play catch up each time the dwg format is changed. The latest version of AutoCAD (2010) introduces another new version of dwg, meaning that there will be some latency for other programmes.*

*This adds another layer of complexity to the issue and although we will not necessarily be testing file exchange it is something to be aware of when choosing software or undertaking a project in a 'mixed market' of drawing packages.*

# Compact Fluorescent Lamps as GLS Replacements

In the last two years we have seen a dramatic series of legislation and industry agreements across the world to get rid of the incandescent lamp as an energy wasteful light-source and replace it with the Compact Fluorescent Ballast Integrated Lamp (CFLi). This activity stems from the publication in 2006 of *Light's Labour's Lost* by the International Energy Agency, an international QUANGO. This book sets out frameworks for the legislation that we are seeing enacted by governments all over the world.

## Introduction of CFLi

When introduced in the late 1980's the CFLi was seen as a transitional technology between the incandescent lamp and a compact


fluorescent solution for use in the domestic environment in fittings specifically designed for fluorescent lamps containing integral ballasts. This has not happened. the CFLi is now seen as a permanent member of the family of available light-sources.

## So where are the problems?

Granted, since its introduction the CFLi has seen substantial improvements in line with fluorescent lamps in general. Colour rendering has improved and the manufacturers are selling warm lamps more akin to the colour of incandescent lamps that we are familiar with. Gear has improved in that it is now high frequency so there is reduced flicker, faster starting


**FREE SALON CUT FOR EVERY READER** DETAILS PAGE 42

**We'll pay for your family's holiday AND YOUR SPENDING MONEY!** PAGES 30-31



# THE GREAT LIGHT BULB REVOLT

**Robbed of the right to buy traditional light bulbs, millions are clearing shelves of the last supplies**



**MILLIONS of Britons are finally waking up to the fact that their beloved light bulb will disappear for good after 120 years.**

Traditional 100-watt bulbs are vanishing from the High Street because of a controversial European Union decision.

Yesterday panic buyers were snapping up

**By David Derbyshire**  
Environment Editor

the remaining bulbs in a last-ditch attempt to stockpile the final supplies. Hundreds of leading supermarkets and DIY chains - including Sainsbury's, Asda and Homebase - have already sold their last remaining bulbs after a surge in panic buying.

Other stores say they have enough stocks to last until the end of next week. The supplies are running out after the

Government signed up to an EU decision to replace conventional 100w light bulbs with supposedly greener low energy alternatives.

Ministers say the switch will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by around five million tons each year.

But experts have questioned whether the new bulbs, far from being environmentally friendly, are actually harmful. It is claimed the low-energy fluorescent bulbs can trigger

Turn to Page 6

## 40 killed sheltering in Gaza school

ISRAELI shells killed at least 40 Palestinians sheltering in a UN school yesterday.

Many children were among the dead in what Gordon Brown called the 'darkest moment yet' in the Gaza crisis.

At least 25 civilians were killed as Israel's air attacks intensified and there was fierce fighting between its troops and Hamas militants.

Last night Israel appeared to bow to international pressure by agreeing to set up a humanitarian corridor to allow aid to reach the Palestinian territory.

Pages 10 & 11

## An epidemic of diabetes

THE number of people diagnosed with diabetes has soared by 50 per cent in a year.

An analysis of official figures shows at least 150,000 new cases last year - up from 100,000 in 2007. It represents one new sufferer every three minutes.

The vast majority were middle-aged people with type two diabetes, which is linked to being overweight. The condition raises the risk of heart attack, stroke and blindness.

Page 4

## 72,000 shops 'will be lost'

A HIGH street bloodbath could see 72,000 stores putting up the shutters this year - almost 200 a day.

The number of vacant shops is expected to more than double from 63,000 in December to 125,000 by the end of 2009.

Some market towns are predicted to feel the worst effects as they are deserted by both major chains and independents. Some analysts are suggesting that as many as 135,000 shop workers will join the rising unemployment total.

Page 2

## There has been considerable discussion in lighting journals and national press recently about the demise of the incandescent lamp. We asked ALD member and energy expert Kevan Shaw for an update...

and warm up times though these are much slower than any incandescent source. The colour rendering has not improved significantly nor can it improve and give the promised energy savings.

Light output is less, due to the persuasion of the manufacturers they sell lamps as equivalents of the familiar wattages of incandescent lamps that have about 90% of the light output when new and deteriorate to about 70% after 2000 hours, roughly 2 years in domestic use. These lamps do not work on dimmers nor on the majority of time switches, presence detectors and similar devices that we have introduced to our homes to reduce energy use.

Leaving aside the poor experience in use of these

lamps, there are some bigger issues that require consideration. According to the European Lamp Consortium, a body that represents the major lamp manufacturers in Europe, they currently sell 2.1 Billion incandescent lamps each year in the 27 members of the European Community. Taking at face value the manufacturers' claim of 6000 hour life for CFLi that means, each year, 3.6 million CFLi will be thrown away. OK, so at the moment 2.1 billion incandescent lamps are thrown away. Unfortunately the typical CFLi contains between 3mg and 5mg of Mercury. If this ends up in landfill it is converted by microbes to Methyl Mercury that is water soluble and 20 times more poisonous to

higher life forms. This enters the food chain through fish.

### Recycling

Those few lamps that do get recycled do not produce much by way of re-useable material. The glass is too contaminated for re-use except in low grade applications like road paint. Some of the mercury is recovered but the majority of the lamp by weight, the plastics, electronics for the ballast etc. is ground and burnt to recover any lead, tin, gold and silver that may be present in the electronics. This does assume that the lamps have been collected and have been processed by recyclers.

Sweden has the highest rate of recycling in Europe collecting something approaching 70% of all

lamps. Despite having a major manufacturer of lamp recycling machinery they export the waste lamps to Norway or Denmark to get recycled. Either they know something we don't about the safety or economics of lamp recycling or this is a massive business opportunity for someone!

### Manufacturing comparison

It is also obvious that the complexity of the CFLi as a product in comparison with the humble incandescent lamp must have some environmental impact in manufacture. It has been convenient for lamp manufacturers to say that the inputs for a CFLi are about 6 times those for an incandescent lamp. As they tell us the CFLi has 6 times



**Kevan Shaw**

*Kevan has practised in lighting for over thirty years. During this time he has worked in almost every area of lighting design. Following a BSc(Hons) in Economic and Technological History and Social Psychology he took up a career in lighting - initially as a lighting designer for rock bands such as Jethro Tull, Ultravox, XTC and Steve Hackett but he forsake life on the road to realise some long standing ideas in lighting effects equipment, developing a theatrical lighting effects system for DHA Lighting alongside design work in TV and video. In 1989 he returned to Edinburgh to establish Kevan Shaw Lighting Design.*

[www.kevan-shaw.com](http://www.kevan-shaw.com)

## Kevan Shaw on Compact Fluorescent Lamps as GLS Replacements



the life the problem neatly cancels out and goes away.

Unfortunately the research undertaken for the European legislative process has produced some quite different figures. Incandescent lamps take around 0.28 kWh to produce and the CFLi around 3.3kWh; that is a factor of 12. More alarming is the waste produced by each process, in the case of the incandescent 5 grams and the CFLi 128 grams of which 78 grams is hazardous! Given a typical CFLi weighs around 80 grams this is a shocking waste of resources and increase in hazardous emissions. I suppose the legislators are happy to ignore this as around 80% of the world CFLi production is in China so as far as they are concerned this is "Someone Else's Problem"

and they are very happy to criticise China for pollution, creating lots of CO<sub>2</sub> from coal-fired power stations while encouraging purchase of the products that give rise to these problems! A recent article in the *Sunday Times* has highlighted the plight of workers in CFLi factories in China and the devastation to whole regions caused by mining Mercury ore.

### **So will this initiative actually deliver massive energy savings...**

... and reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions? I don't believe so. First there is Power Factor. This is a difficult and technical subject. Making it as simple as possible the ballast in a CFLi is made as cheaply as possible. They generally have a power factor of 0.5 compared to

good quality fluorescent ballasts that have a power factor greater than 0.9 or our old favourite incandescent with a power factor of 1. Rather simplistically this means it requires twice as much energy to be generated to achieve the same wattage output in a CFLi than is required for an incandescent. Additionally, the ballast of a CFLi does nasty things to the power distribution network called harmonics; one way and another a massive and sudden change will have implications to the generating companies.

This has been recognised in New Zealand, a country blessed with ample natural resources and nearly 80% of electricity generated by renewable energy in the form of hydroelectric schemes.

Quite typically this generation is in the South Island and the majority of demand is in the North Island so they have a major issue with long distance electricity transmission. As this is particularly sensitive to power factor and harmonics they are trying to mandate high power factor CFLi. These do exist and are manufactured by major players. They are being supplied to New Zealand so why not the rest of the world?

The figures being used by Governments and NGOs such as Greenpeace for the potential energy and greenhouse emission savings are also badly flawed. Reading through the available data reveals that there is little hard

evidence for the actual amount of power used by typical households for lighting. A lot of the numbers are based on assumptions for the number of lights in each house rather than a coherent study of power used for actual lighting. Where studies have been done lighting is frequently added to "appliances" that I take to mean everything plugged in to sockets. Even if you look at the numbers given for lighting, typically around 10% of domestic energy, this is an insignificant amount of the total energy consumption of a country like the UK or any other post industrial or developed industrial country for that matter.

### The importance of how energy saving is achieved

I am not saying that energy saving, no matter how slight, is not important in the current environment, it is. How it is achieved is, however, equally important. I don't believe that energy saving can be taken if the implications are equally, or potentially, more damaging to the environment particularly when it is possible to achieve significant energy savings in other ways.

Recently Osram have introduced a mains voltage tungsten halogen lamp range followed by Philips. These are directly compatible with existing incandescent lamps in the standard and candle shapes and provide an energy saving of 30% with no additional hazardous material, a power factor of

1, light quality equal to incandescent and a life of 2000 hours, twice that of the typical incandescent. In the market they are a lot cheaper than CFLi that has not been subsidised. These lamps should be given the promotion and support that has hitherto been given to the CFLi and provide a good honest energy saving without the risks associated with CFLi.

### Effect in theatres

In theatre, I can see some future problems in providing lamps for practicals, particularly when trying to evoke a period theme. In the bigger picture the demon of incandescence will be chased into our area.

What do we do when the EU legislate against high

wattage tungsten halogen theatre lamps? As in the area of domestic general lighting and now the reflector lamps (bye, bye MR16?) there is little logic and few people who know and understand lighting involved in the legislative process.

If you want to get involved register on the website **eup4light.net** and write some comments on the reports there; the more people who are professionally involved as users of lighting who comment the better are chances of stopping or at least slowing down this insanity!#

*Further information on this subject can be found at [www.savethebulb.org](http://www.savethebulb.org)*





**“Mark Henderson’s excellent design for JB Priestley’s *Time and the Conways* at the Lyttelton has a different function: to denote temporal difference.”**



*TIME AND THE CONWAYS* by JB Priestley  
National Theatre – Lyttelton. Directed  
by Rupert Goold. Opened 5 May 2009.  
Production photographer Manuel Harlan



# Michael Billington on Lighting

We are delighted to welcome Michael Billington - the Guardian's theatre critic

What do critics know about lighting? In all honesty, very little. We can appreciate its aesthetic impact without understanding how that is achieved: something that has always troubled me. 50 years ago, as a student, I toyed briefly with the idea of becoming a director because I enjoyed wrestling with texts and working with actors. One of the many things that stopped me was my ignorance about lighting. Some time later I mentioned this to Bill Gaskill who said I shouldn't have worried. "Most of us," he said, "rely on experts to make our productions look good."

I realised the truth of his remark only last year. I was generously invited by LAMDA to direct a Pinter triple-bill comprising *Party Time*,

*Celebration* and a staged reading of the Nobel Lecture. The last two were relatively straightforward to stage. But *Party Time*, since it consists of fragmented conversations at a social gathering, was a bit of a bugger for an inexperienced director. I knew roughly how I wanted it to look: spotlights on whoever was speaking with the rest of the partygoers glimpsed in semi-darkness. Also, at the end, the room had to be in shadow while all the focus was on a political prisoner who emerged into a central pool of light. Luckily I had at my side an excellent student lighting designer, Ben Crawford. I explained what I wanted and he produced it with magical fidelity. If the production looked good - and Pinter seemed very pleased with it - it was entirely due

to Ben and the set designer, Richard Bullwinkle.

What little I know about lighting has come from a lifetime's aisle-squatting. I've always been struck by Terry Hands who, breaking the Gaskill rule, lights his own productions often with sensational results. I recall his *Henry VI* trilogy at Stratford where he reinforced his theory about the characters' animalistic hunger for territory by focusing the light on warring factions. In *Richard III* imprisonment was also indicated by a seemingly impenetrable wall of perpendicular light. As I said at the time, "many lights make Hands's work". I also learned a lot from watching continental theatre. The great Giorgio Strehler broke the once golden British

rule that you must always be able to see the actors' faces by using chiaroscuro effects in *The Servant of Two Masters*. And one of the most durable images of modern theatre was provided by Peter Stein's production of Gorki's *Summerfolk*. At the end of a day's picnic, the feckless Russian estate-dwellers processed from a brightly-lit upstage into downstage darkness: it perfectly captured the idea of transient, unsustainable happiness.

The great thing about lighting design today, however, is that it transcends national frontiers. The best British practitioners traverse the globe. Famous European designers come here. A notable example is Wolfgang Goppel who has worked in all

the major opera houses and who has currently lit, quite beautifully, Michael Boyd's RSC Stratford *As You Like It*. Boyd is keen to show that Shakespeare's comedy leads us from a display of tyranny to declarations of love. What hit me was the economy with which Goppel conveyed the distinct nastiness of Duke Frederick's court without resorting to penumbral darkness. A diagonal strip of light across the stage floor told us exactly when we were at court and the black-clad Duke emerged through a well-lit tunnel like Alex Ferguson on one of his more sombre days. If anything, it was the forest of Arden that seemed a place of woodland shadows.

Goppel's design demonstrated just how

# Michael Billington on Lighting

crucial lighting is in conveying distinctions of place. Mark Henderson's excellent design for JB Priestley's *Time and the Conways* at the Lyttelton has a different function: to denote temporal difference. Acts One and Three of Priestley's play are set in 1919; Act Two in 1938. All three Acts take place in the same domestic interior but Henderson's lighting, like Rupert Goold's production, sharply differentiates the periods. In the central Act Henderson uses a deliberately flat, neutral light- with, as far as I could see, little extravagant colour- to depict the family's deflated hopes. Only at the end of the Act does he let rip as we see multiple images of Hattie Morahan's disillusioned Kay: in fact, seven different Kays gaze at themselves in seven

different mirrors. Henderson does this brilliantly with subtle tonal shifts between each version of the character, implying that the line could stretch out to the crack of doom.

But I never cease to be amazed at the versatility of lighting designers. Even when I don't much like a production, I often find consolation in the way it is lit. A case in point is Trevor Nunn's revival of *Cyrano de Bergerac* at Chichester Festival Theatre which strikes me as rather heavy-footed. But Tim Mitchell's lighting pulls off some magical effects. The third Act, set in a little square outside Roxane's house, casts greenish shadows over the ivy-coloured walls. And in the final Act, set in a convent garden, Mitchell allows the

soft, autumnal, russet-coloured light to filter through a slatted roof. Each Act, in Mitchell's expert hands, has its own distinct mood and ideally I'd have liked more reliance on his lighting and rather less on the oppressive sets.

In opera, just as much as drama, lighting plays a creative role. And my final tribute would be to Adam Silverman's lighting for ENO's new *Peter Grimes*. Opinions differ about David Alden's production. In highlighting the weirdness of the Borough's inhabitants, it undermines the delicate balance of sympathy between the tragic fisherman and the surrounding community.



But Silverman's work is a constant joy: one particular scene, set on the quayside while a Sunday morning service happens offstage, has the sharpness and clarity of outline not just of the Suffolk coast but of one of Gretchen Dow Simpson's classic New Yorker covers.

As is all too apparent, I am a technical innocent when it comes to lighting design. I do, however, appreciate its vital importance; and, if I rarely pay tribute to it in overnight reviews, it is largely

because of the limitations of my allocated 420-word slot. I'm glad to make amends here by crediting just a few of the lighting artists whose work I genuinely admire. But I wonder what can be done to overcome prevailing critical ignorance. Maybe a half-day lighting workshop for invited members of the Critics' Circle explaining the basics of lighting design? It might be impossibly hard to organise but it would certainly shed some much-needed light on dark places. Any takers?#



*Right top and bottom: Adam Silverman's lighting for ENO's new **Peter Grimes**.  
Photos: Clive Barda*



*Left, above and opposite: Trevor Nunn's revival of **Cyrano de Bergerac** at Chichester Festival Theatre.  
Photos: Catherine Ashmore.*



# Movers and Shakers at the Central School

The world of moving head automated luminaries has changed radically over the last decade or two. In the early days of moving lights the LD had to hire one brand of luminaire and also the technicians to make them work. Today, all the automated

lighting manufacturers have expanded their product ranges, the control firms provide the means to program any of them and the major hire companies have invested in a wide range of types of moving lights. The LD now has a free choice of

many types of movers to fit their lighting design needs and have vastly more options, to mix and match lights to their requirements. But with choice comes the need to have the knowledge of each model and to know which to select.



So demonstrations of equipment and a chance to put different units through their paces are very welcome. It was just such an opportunity for a 'Moving Light Shoot-Out' that greeted my eyes as I walked through the padded doors of the Embassy Theatre in the Central School of Speech and Drama on a sunny afternoon on May the 6th.

For this event we have to thank the initiative and co-ordination of Nick Moran, Senior Lecturer in Lighting Design at the school, LD David Howe and Dave Isherwood of White Light, who added the generous support of White Light and also City Theatrical and GLP, to deliver a bewildering variety of about 70 luminaries, control gear and effects which were

## “More Art... Tools all the way!” reports John Leventhall from the moving light shoot-out



rigged and on display. Nick, never one to miss a good educational opportunity, had used this substantial rig as a project for his students - 15 of them - led by Dan Bunn, a second year BA Hons. Theatre Practice student, specialising in Production Lighting and Embassy Theatre chief electrician for this term. Dan and the crew had worked for about 20 hours in the previous day and a half to rig the luminaries and set up the five desks to operate them. Despite the tight get-in, a calm competence pervaded the well-hazed interior of the 250 seat theatre, as the finishing touches and final tweaks were being completed.

It's a fabulous opportunity", remarked Nick Moran, "to give the students the chance to rig and operate a big batch of movers which always

presents problems, whether mechanical, organisational, operational, programming or networking the units. The students can test out the limits of their capabilities and of the equipment. They can find out, in real practice against a deadline, how accurate the manufacturers' manuals and the internet forums are to give them the information to do the job." Nick enthused about the dual role of the event to give lighting professional practitioners and students (the practitioners of the future) an opportunity to meet the industry people and to give the students a valuable task in their journey towards becoming 'informed and competent practitioners' as he aptly put it.

Just after 2pm visitors began to arrive and the event got going. It was simply

an unstructured afternoon to examine, operate, test and generally 'play' with 20 different varieties of Profiles, Washlights, Beam fixtures, LED heads, Generics and a variety of other products (of which more below). After an hour or so the throng had grown to about 40 or 50 people who were either creating waggles, gobo chases, testing the illumination properties, having a jolly good delve into the mechanics of the kit or enthusiastically engaging in discussion, networking and sharing views. This was a valuable and rare occasion to compare all this expensive and complex equipment in a relaxed environment with no pressure to buy or sell or decide. Talking to directors of White Light, Dave Isherwood and Richard Wilson, they appreciated the valuable opportunity

to gather honest opinions from their potential clients – the LDs and Production Electricians – of what those users want from their equipment. They were very definitely keeping away from the hard sell on this occasion preferring the benefits of the brand reinforcement that this sort of event offers to the exhibitors. I was impressed that they wanted to show us that there is a less pushy, human side to the business of supplying large quantities of lighting gear, even in a fiercely competitive market. "Nowadays, only one hire firm tends to be commissioned onto a big show" remarked Richard. "Because we now are able to invest in and cover all the technologies, it is the likes of White Light that can service the LDs particular requirements for different automated luminaries

depending on the particular attributes that they need." Dave added; "These events allow the LD or production LX, who perhaps are not working with all types of fixtures on a daily basis, to collect the knowledge they need in the future to make good decisions under the heat of production pressures to get the best result in performance. Production schedules rarely if ever allow the LD to play with new techniques. Showcasing our products in this informal way is a very effective way of ensuring the LD knows what the equipment they specify will do on stage."

As I circulated round the people and equipment, I encountered LD Jo Town who was being favourably amazed by the very new JB Vary LED A7 Zoom washlight.

## “More Art... Tools all the way!” reports John Leventhall

I think I too glimpsed the future! “Here, at last, is an LED washlight” Jo opined, “that would seem to compete properly with the good old fresnel spot and vastly exceeds the performance of some of the existing automated washlight products.” Intense, smooth-beamed, simple in construction and mechanism, this compact unit looks to me as though it might become something of a workhorse of illumination across the theatre spectrum. “Looking at this bit of kit, you get the feeling” speculated Jake Brain and Scott Richardson of the RSC (who had travelled from Stratford) “that LED units are beginning to come of age. As long as there is smooth dimming, good intensity and colour control, why wouldn’t you then actively seek to be environmentally friendly with lower power consumption by using units such as these?”

The same could be said for the Martin Even LED flat panel LED units. Throughout the event, behind the cyc, over about a 4 metre square, these panels of 16 LEDs rippled with digitally generated, smooth washes of colour patterns using just 192 individual LEDs over the whole area and held their own in competing in intensity against the profusion of onstage illumination.

It was a pleasure to attend this laid-back event and it certainly advanced my woefully inadequate command of the world of automation and moving lights! Perhaps the afternoon could have been seasoned with a demonstration session of what the equipment could do? It would have been fun to see a rock-and-rolling choreographed, coruscating, chromatic coordination of movement, gobos and beams...but this is perhaps

being a bit picky. Perhaps also it is harsh to mention that amongst the 50 or so visitors there were less than a handful of LDs. I hope this poor attendance was as a result of pressure of work rather than apathy. If you were in the apathy group, dear reader, then you missed a rare, fun and terrifically useful session.

As I left the event, my thoughts turned to the tag line of *Focus* magazine - “More Art...Less Tools”. But this event was “Tools All The Way”. Oh, all-powerful Editor of *Focus*, stay your blue pen! If the creative lighting artist is not well informed and in command of his equipment then he is not in command of his art.

So, now and again, a brief immersion in technology, nuts, volts, lenses and dmx-ification is surely the right thing to focus on.#

### Equipment on display

#### Profiles

MACIII  
VL3500 Profile  
MAC 700 Profile  
VL1000TS/AS  
Revolution

#### Washlights

Alpha Wash 1200 (Arc)  
VL2500Wash  
VL3000Wash  
MAC700Wash  
Pirouette  
MACTW1  
VL500D

#### Beam Fixtures

Alpha Beam 300  
Alpha Beam 1500

#### LED Heads

JB Vary LED A7 Zoom  
GLP Impression

#### Other products

Martin Even LED  
Coemar Stagelitel  
Fusion 762  
Liteware Battery Uplight

and while we are on the subject...

...the Techie Talk web site has been re-launched


*Techie Talk* ([www.techietalk.co.uk](http://www.techietalk.co.uk)) has announced the re-launch of its brand new website – news and information relating to their jobs and industry for anyone working in technical theatre. It has undergone a major overhaul from the ground up and the new site has been designed with improved accessibility to articles as a key aim.

You'll find reviews for the *Moiré Gobo Library* and *Gel Swatch Library* both released by Wybron for the iPhone and iPod Touch – just two of several reviews already available with more on the way. All the major trade shows will be covered including t PLASA Focus in Leeds and the ABTT.

The latest in web innovations including RSS feeds to articles and the opportunity for you to add your own opinions to the site via the forum.#

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A silhouette of a knight in full plate armor, holding a sword aloft. The knight is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing right. The background is a dark, atmospheric landscape with a body of water and a distant horizon under a twilight sky. The sword is held high, and its blade is illuminated from above, creating a bright glow that fades into the background.

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