

ALD # FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers

"More art, less toils..."



In the glow of the bulkhead fixture this issue:

Clay Paky 'Knight of Illumination' awards • Michael Northen Bursary winners • our PLASA Guy • AGM • Michael Coveney reviews Edinburgh lights ... and much more...

*This year's Michael Northen Bursary winner was Dan Hill, from The Central School of Speech and Drama, for his lighting design for 'Woyzeck'.
Photo: Patrick Baldwin.
More: page 16.*

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Rick's Recognitions

Autumn has started with a great deal of ALD activity! There's another meeting planned at the Wallace Collection in London, and we also hope to be announcing a meeting at *An Inspector Calls* which has returned to the West End 17 years after this production opened at the National Theatre.

The ALD is also hosting an interesting and instructive meeting that is *not* open to ALD members. This is the first workshop for the Critics' Circle, the "ALD" for national drama critics. They wanted to know more about what lighting designers do, and in October we're meeting to tell them. I hope this is the start of better understanding and recognition of our role in productions and I am grateful to Hansjorg Schmidt for helping us to organise this groundbreaking meeting.

But let me highlight some of the other activities the ALD has done that you can read about in this issue.

We were delighted at the number of applications for the Michael Northen Bursary – the largest ever. The judges had a hard time, and I'd like to add my congratulations to all three talented young designers.

Keeping with awards, the ALD has been involved in the second *Knights of Illumination Awards* that were presented at a gala dinner during PLASA09. These awards, generously sponsored by Clay Paky, are unique in recognising the work of lighting designers in the fields of Rock and TV as well as dance, opera, drama, and musicals. They have chosen to honour work produced in the UK because of the strong organisations such as the ALD and STLD and excellence of

the work created here.

The ALD is directly sponsoring the *2nd TMA award for Lighting Design*. The nominations are due to be announced any day now, celebrating work produced in non West-End theatres around the nation and this award only exists due to ALD lobbying.

As you will read in this issue, the AGM was held at PLASA09 and we devoted a lot of discussion to how to open up the ALD to more members of the lighting profession while still honouring our goal of supporting lighting designers. After much discussion at the AGM we agreed to create a new category of membership that reflects a situation where many are working in related fields to lighting design, but do not think themselves 'designers'.

The existing professional

members will become "Professional Designer" and we will create a new category "Professional Member" for those that are working in the lighting world as programmers, production electricians, those working in theatres or lighting companies, etc. This will extend the valuable networking resources of the ALD to colleagues that designers are working alongside every day of our careers. It is hoped that many of our current Associate Members will feel that this new category is appropriate for them and will banish some of the confusion of who qualifies to be a professional member of the ALD.

You can read more about this new development in the AGM report on pages 7, 8 and 13 - 15.

regards, Rick



Highlights

- 4 **Emergence of LDs in Britain since the 50s**
Kelli Zezulka and her MA.
- 7 **New Professional Membership Category**
Decisions made at the AGM.
- 9 **Knight of Illumination**
Well-fed award winners.
- 12 **Boring but important**
Office & AGM reports.
- 16 **Michael Northen Bursary**
Student winners.
- 21 **Festival of Scenic Arts**
Nick Moran reports.
- 23 **Francis Reid**
... Tharon's Hon. female LD
- 24 **Pro's Colour Supplement**
MJ takes on fringe vermin.
- 27 **Edinburgh Lights**
Michael Coveney reviews.
- 33 **PLASA 2009**
Guy Kornezki and Nigel Lawson Dick look back.

The emergence of the Lighting Designer in Britain since the 50s

Kelli Zezulka describes her research project

In January of this year, I started an MA degree by research at the University of Leeds. Broadly, my research proposal concerns the history of lighting design and the emergence of the lighting designer in Britain since the 1950s. I am currently studying part-time alongside my job as a production electrician at the West Yorkshire Playhouse.

My interest in the subject started when I was working in the lighting department at the Royal Court Theatre at the time of the English Stage Company's 50th anniversary in 2006. As part of a forum on the history of design at the Royal Court, I (along with my colleague Nicki Brown) researched, wrote, and delivered a short presentation on the history of lighting design. I am particularly interested in the work of Andy Phillips and the development of the "white

light" style that the Royal Court became known for.

My original research proposal was heavy on the hardware elements that have developed in the last 60 years – lanterns, dimmers, control systems and the like. Since I've started researching, my focus has shifted slightly to include the more interesting subject of the people behind these developments, starting with early innovators such as Fred Bentham, Michael Northen and Joe Davis. As I also want to focus particularly on Andy Phillips, I have decided to concentrate on the contributions of the Royal Court and to frame my research within this context.

Bentham's work is, I believe, key in understanding the emergence of the 'lighting specialist' in British theatre. Before this specialist post existed it was common practice for the producer to

be in charge of the lighting rehearsal. They would control the integration of the various visual elements and, having spent weeks in rehearsal, were more likely to know which areas needed to be lit and when. The former director of the Old Vic Theatre, Tyrone Guthrie, advised that *"a wise producer lights in collaboration with the designer. I do not see the need for a 'lighting expert,' though an expert electrician is, of course, vitally important."*

It was generally argued that the lighting was primarily an aesthetic issue, and one did not need any understanding of the technical issues to light a show well, *"usually due to a belief that anything technical is out of the artist's realm."*

This separation of the artistic, the craft and the technical was to change considerably as the need for a lighting designer was

recognised. As the capabilities and expectations of lighting increased, directors and producers became aware that the more complex scenarios they wished to achieve would be better implemented by a specialist – someone who was familiar with the equipment and the best way to use it to obtain the desired results.

Contemporary lighting designers must possess technical knowledge as well as creative expertise that is not just theoretical, but practically tested and executed. [As a side note, has technology now advanced beyond the expertise of the lighting designer? Is it ok for a lighting designer to not know how a VL3500 – for instance – works and is programmed, only that it will produce the desired effect?]

The reasons for the development of the specialist

post of 'lighting designer' are therefore obvious – the technology increased at a rate greater than any director or producer could, or wanted to, keep up with or had time to pursue.

So, other than the technology involved, how has the job itself changed in the past sixty years? I wrote a short paper in February that argued that the job description of the lighting designer is essentially the same as it was sixty years ago: to work with and for the director and/or producer in order to support the 'story' being told on stage.

Interestingly, the English Stage Company's first artistic director, George Devine, is also the first to be attributed with a programme credit for lighting: for Richard III at the Queen's Theatre in 1937 (as "Lighting arranged by George Devine"). He also



Kelli has a BA in Theatre from Mary Washington College in Virginia and graduated from the Stage Management and Technical Theatre course at LAMDA in 2004. Upon graduation, she worked in the lighting department at the Royal Court Theatre in London for three and a half years. After a short contract at the RSC, Kelli moved to Leeds, where she works as a Production Electrician at the West Yorkshire Playhouse.

taught courses, including lighting design, at the Old Vic Theatre School until 1948. It would be fair to assume that he lit most of his own productions, as there does not seem to be a lighting designer mentioned at the Royal Court until Eric Baker, Andy Phillips' predecessor. Phillips started at the Royal Court in 1965 under the artistic directorship of William Gaskill, first as chief electrician, then progressing to 'resident lighting designer', and lit more than 80 productions over his seven years there.

Although the Royal Court no longer employs a resident lighting designer, the ethos of the company remains the same, and the emphasis still lies with the playwright and new theatre text. It seems logical then, to chart the progress of the lighting designer with reference to the changes in artistic directorship, and examine how lighting design changed within this framework.

As you may imagine, there is little documented on this subject, and most of the information I am gathering is anecdotal. I have already contacted some of you with requests for help,

October / November 2009

and will certainly contact more of you as my research progresses over the next 18 months.

I would be particularly grateful if anyone who worked with Phillips, Bentham, Northen, Davis, Devine, Gaskill, or other Royal Court artistic directors since, would get in touch. (I'll only track you down eventually!) I am also happy to email copies of the paper I mentioned earlier in exchange for comments and feedback.

By the end of next year I should have a fairly comprehensive record of the history of the profession, within the context of the Royal Court, which will hopefully reflect the changes taking place generally throughout the country.

I can be reached via email at kellizezulka@yahoo.com. Feel free to email any thoughts you may have or stories you'd like to share. I look forward to hearing from as many of you as possible! #



*Robert Pickavance in 'Mela' at the West Yorkshire Playhouse Courtyard Theatre.
Lighting by Kelli Zezulka. Photo: Toby Farrow.*

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Revision of some ALD Membership Classes

Edited highlights of the proposal presented and ratified at the AGM.



The Executive proposed a change and clarification of the various membership categories of the Association. It began as a discussion about the uncertainty that some people have about whether or not they belonged in the *Professional Member* category and, with the growing use of the title of *Associate Lighting Designer* on larger productions, there was confusion with the current category of *Associate Membership* of the ALD. Also we work with many colleagues who are full-time professionally employed participants in the lighting design process and the lighting industry who are not necessarily full time designers but with whom designers share many issues, concerns and interests.

The ALD constitution

currently defines associate members as follows:

“Any individual who is interested in the design of lighting (for the theatre, live entertainment and associated industries) shall be qualified to be an associate of the Association”

That covers a wide territory indeed! But in these days where the ‘Associate Lighting Designer’ is a well recognised role in creating and delivering and recreating lighting designs, our member category becomes a little confusing. To be an Associate LD you need to be a fully fledged LD in your own right and, almost always, Associate LDs are already Professional Members (or should be!).

Equally, and more importantly, many professionals such as programmers, production electricians, hire company managers and the like might

not currently be designing, and therefore might not feel qualified for professional LD membership, but are nevertheless working actively in the industry and would like to be members. We have also received a few comments from those who only do relights: *is this true professional lighting design?* In the view of the Executive, it is. Are others, who as touring electricians are enthusiastic to be part of our association but feel inhibited to join? We should certainly include them. We want to banish this confusion and ensure we encourage ALD membership for the benefit of all professionals who support, supply and service the creation of lighting.

So, we wish to create a new category in the ALD for those actively and professionally working in the lighting world and we proposed this new

category would be simply called...“Member”.

After discussion, members voted unanimously for a new category and also for a suggested revision of name to ‘Professional Member’ with the existing ‘Professional’ category re-named to ‘Professional Designer’.

We will then have Professional Designers, Professional Members, and Associate Members, allowing the ALD to welcome, for example, production LX, programmers, projection designers and all those areas of the profession who we work alongside, who we wish to network with and who wish to network with us.

Along with the change of title we wish to bring further clarity to the constitution by redefining the membership definition somewhat.

To summarise, the existing constitution of the Association will change, as agreed at the AGM, by updating the existing ‘Professional’ category to ‘Professional Designer’; adding a new category of ‘Professional Member’ as follows, while other membership categories (e.g. Associate, Student, Corporate) or honorary (e.g. Fellow) remain unchanged:

Professional Designer

Annual Subscription £75

For those professionally and actively engaged in lighting design for the theatre, performing arts, associated industries and lighting design education who are contracted and earn fees from lighting design from all scales and types of project. This includes associate lighting designers and those who regularly undertake

Revision of some ALD Membership Classes

re-lighting on touring productions. Requirements for membership in this category are:

- Evidence of at least 2 years work as a professional lighting designer.
- Evidence of contracts/employment as a lighting designer to light a minimum of 6 productions or events in different venues within the last two years.
- Proposed by another Professional Member of the ALD.

Professional Member

Annual Subscription £75

This category is for those actively working in the theatre, live entertainment and associated industries professionally but not specifically as lighting designers. This includes for example programmers, production electricians, those working for lighting companies, freelance or

resident electrics theatre staff, theatre consultants and projection designers. Requirements for membership in this category are:

- To verify their experience and active engagement(s) in a suitable allied field of activity

In discussion

The new category is for those actively working in the theatre, live entertainment and associated industries professionally but not specifically as lighting designers. This new class of Professional Member would enjoy ALD benefits such as *Focus*, PLASA and ABTT free entry, free subscriptions to other lighting journals and, of course, ALD bulletins and meetings.

'Professional Member' might also be the appropriate category for ex-student members once they begin working in the lighting world

on their way to ultimately be lighting designers or wherever their path takes them in the industry.

The Executive envisages that there might be many sub-groups within the Professional Member category that are useful with the same targeted benefits that previous 'Professionals' have enjoyed such as meetings, email groups, job notifications, dedicated web site pages, and forums that are of real added value. That is for you, the members of the ALD, to decide and form. The Exec believes that being within ALD membership this can happen easier, more quickly and more efficiently.



Certainly it becomes appropriate for these various groups of Members who are not necessarily all lighting designers to have representatives come to Exec meetings when they want, and to contribute to the Exec to involve and inform the entire ALD.

The Executive proposed that the Professional Member category has a new level of annual subscription of £60, and unlike the current Associate category those wishing to be part of this new group would have to verify their experience and active professional engagement in the lighting Industry.

At present it is only



the existing 'Professional' members who have the right to vote. While we rarely vote on anything other than the Constitutional necessities of electing the Chairman and Treasurer and approving the annual accounts, it had to be decided whether or not this new category of 'Professional Member' should have a vote at the AGM and any other Extraordinary General Meeting we might need.

After discussion, a vote was taken and the majority agreed for voting rights to be given to the new 'Professional Member' category, and that the subscription fee shall be the same as that of 'Professional Designer' - £75pa #

Members discuss. Fellow Francis Reid (left) and 'Professional Designer' Simon Corder (right).

Clay Paky Knight of Illumination Awards 2009

"And the winners are..."

The highly successful and much anticipated second edition of the *Knight of Illumination Awards* closed with a thrilling ceremony. The awards are promoted and organized by Clay Paky in collaboration with the ALD and STLD. They are the only international awards designed to provide public recognition to the deserving work of lighting designers in the theatre, touring and television sectors.

The award-giving ceremony took place in the Enterprise Suite, Hotel Ibis, Earls Court, London on 13 September 2009. Clay Paky, along with the help of Hawthorn Theatrical and Richard Martin Lighting, set up an impressive lighting rig in the Suite, mainly using the new Alpha 700 Spot HPE, Wash and Beam lights.

Almost three hundred and fifty colleagues attended, including lighting designers, manufacturers, rental companies, dealers, trade associations and the specialist media. As Pio Nahum, Clay Paky's Sales and Marketing Manager, proudly stated, "We managed to bring the most eminent personalities in the professional entertainment sector together in one place for the whole evening, in the name of what we all have in common: a passion for light!" It was a great party that everyone appreciated.

Enrico Caironi, Clay Paky's Corporate Marketing Advisor and one of the main personalities behind the event, said, "We worked hard to achieve this goal. We knew we had a great chance, but also a great responsibility. I would like to thank publicly



"A panel of six critics judged the drama awards, and I had the privilege to advise them. Completely demolishing the idea that the best lighting goes unnoticed, the discussions were lively and wonderfully perceptive of the contribution that lighting made to performances the panel had seen in the last year. The critics are often frustrated that space limitations preclude them mentioning lighting and valued this opportunity to recognise lighting designers' contribution, and commented that judging the awards has encouraged them to be even more attentive to lighting. So I am personally grateful to Clay Paky in helping the ALD further its primary goal". Rick Fisher





Michael Hulls
Dance award winner for 'Eonnagata'



Adam Silverman
Opera award for 'Peter Grimes'



Jon Clark
Drama award winner for 'Three Days of Rain'



Alistair Grant accepts for **Kevin Adams**
Musical award winner for 'Spring Awakening'

everyone who contributed to the success of the event, especially the associations ALD and STLD, without whose support this event wouldn't have been the same."

The chairmen of the three award categories, Stuart Gain (TV), Durham Marengi (rock), Rick Fisher (theatre) and John Watt (who presented the coveted Lifetime Recognition Award), spoke of their appreciation for

the efficiency and standard of excellence with which Clay Paky organized the awards. They also underlined that the event was a unique occasion for various sectors of the world of lighting design and the lighting industry to meet and exchange ideas.

Among the distinguished guests were the Italian Consul General for London, Uberto Vanni D'Archirafi, the CEO of PLASA Matthew Griffiths, the CEO of ABTT Mark White,

the executive director of the Theatres Trust Miss Mhora Samuel and Hans-Joachim Schwabe, Deputy Chairman and CEO of OSRAM, the official sponsor of the evening.

The event opened with a welcome aperitif, followed by a dinner prepared by a team of gourmet chefs. There was live background music and a mix of special lighting effects and video, which entertained the guests and

created an exciting gala-style atmosphere for the evening.

The highlight was, needless to say, the announcement of the twelve award winning LDs: four from TV, four from theatre, three from rock, plus a special lifetime recognition award. The winners were chosen from thirty nominees by a panel of specialized judges, coordinated by the ALD and STLD. Each winner received a prestigious trophy: a real sword made in Toledo,

Spain. The sword is a highly prized copy of those used by medieval knights; it and symbolises the 'weapons' LDs use to defend their professional values. So, rather than an award, it was a true investiture!

"It was gratifying," concluded Nahum, "to note that the announcement of the winner was emotionally important for all the lighting designers there. This means the *Clay Paky Knight of*

Illumination Awards have become an authoritative prize desired by the whole sector, for which lighting designers are eager and proud to compete”.

After the awards were presented, there was a short ceremony during which a donation was made to Light Relief. Pasquale Quadri, the President of Clay Paky, presented the cheque to Matthew Griffiths, John Simpson, Rick Fisher and Lesley Harmer, joint trustees of Light Relief, who publicly expressed their appreciation for Clay Paky’s gesture of awareness towards the needy in our industry.

The winners in the various categories were as follows:

TELEVISION – Drama

John O’Brien for ‘The Bill’

TELEVISION – LE

Chris Kempton for ‘Jonathan Ross’

TELEVISION – Music

Will Charles for ‘The Album Chart Show’

TELEVISION – Events

Gurdip Mahal for ‘BBC Sports Personality’

ROCK – Stage

Rob Sinclair for Goldfrapp

This stood out as an integrated lighting & visuals design - combining lighting and video seamlessly and elegantly. Rob also evolved the set design after discussions with the artist, bringing a third dimension to the show’s visuality, which helped energise and bring the whole experience to life onstage.

ROCK – Arena

Davy Sherwin for Snow Patrol

Fabulous use of colour matching between lighting and video visuals. Davy and Robin Hadow worked as one in producing a coherent, beautiful, interesting and exciting visual design for the band. It seamlessly fused lighting, playback video/live visuals and moving (automated) elements, creating a show to articulate the performance dynamics - without being gimmicky or crass.

Rock – ‘Eco Friendly Tour’

Andi Watson for Radiohead

One blogger said about the show: “Over the years, their shows have increasingly used breathtaking state-of-the-art lighting to frame their performances. This year the

band employed dozens of LED lighting columns suspended from the ceiling. At times they would make the stage look like a cathedral. Sometimes they could make it appear as if the ceiling was melting (that’s right, druggies, you wasted your money, it did that for all of us).”

THEATRE – Dance

Michael Hulls for ‘Eonmagata’

The judges cited that the lighting was so integral to the performance it was impossible to imagine what the piece would have been like in just working light. The lighting was part-painterly, part-sculptural – even the shadows were a part of the performance. Here too was a piece that was deeply affected by and enhanced by the lighting design.

THEATRE – Opera

Adam Silverman for ‘Peter Grimes’

The critics said the Lighting was utterly integral to the expression of a bold interpretation of the opera, creating stark, spine-chilling moments. At times, the lighting enabled the audience to feel the salt spray and evoked the look of wet sunlight.

THEATRE – Drama

Jon Clark for

‘Three Days of Rain’

The panel singled out Jon’s use of side-lighting to lower and raise the

temperature, and not just in the effective rain-drenched sequences referred to in the title. The sunny warmth stealing over the second act was in powerful contrast to the atmospheric cheerlessness he cast over the initial proceedings.

THEATRE – Musical

Kevin Adams for

‘Spring Awakening’

Kevin’s lighting vividly expressed the emotional atmosphere of the show and created an aesthetic that made an immersive experience. Particularly noted was the bold use of light bulbs and fluorescent tubes.

LIFETIME RECOGNITION

Mark White

“What a splendid evening. Congratulations to all the nominees and winners. Thanks to the judges and most of all, ‘molto grazie’ to Clay Paky for their incredible generosity and foresight in encouraging our often poorly acknowledged work. I was so proud to be an ALD member.”

Mark Jonathan



Mark White

Office Oracle

Latest news from Ian's production desk



The ALD on Facebook

The phenomenon that is social networking has arrived at the ALD. We now have a Facebook group – Association of Lighting Designers – that currently has over 80 members. The group is open to anyone whether members of the ALD or not, but invites to events and meetings will still be subject to being a fully paid up member of the ALD.

It is a closed group meaning that you need to be approved by one of the administrators of the group to be a member, and we hope that it can become another way of our members to interact and network with each other and be able to attract new members to the fold. Please feel free to give us feedback on both the group and the Association as a whole. It is only by hearing from members that we can

hope to reflect what they want from the Association.

2010 ALD Members' Yearbook

It is also that time of year to ensure that your contact details and yearbook entry is up to date. The 2010 yearbook will be with you in early December, but the information gathering starts now!!

If you wish or require to update your details for inclusion into the new edition, please use the website or contact the office as soon as possible. Please note that the 'Yearbook entry', the short descriptive paragraph under the contact details, should no longer contain show credit information. With the improved website, we now feel that it is not necessary to list show credits, and would instead prefer an

outline of what you do or your past experience. Due to the increased size of the membership, these will be strictly limited to no more than 35 words.

Only members that have contributed subscription funds to the ALD coffers will be eligible to be included in the yearbook, so that is another reason for ensuring your subscriptions are paid up fully!!

Deadline for any changes to be received by the office is strictly 31st October 2009.

2009 / 2010 Subscriptions

At the time of writing, the Association still has over 225 members owing a total of approximately £9000. This is made up from those that have not updated their standing order to reflect the increase in fees and those who have just not paid!

All annual subscriptions are now overdue. If you are one of those members owing money then you should have received a letter or an email informing you of the fact. If you are in ANY doubt whether you are fully paid up for 2009/10 then please contact the office as soon as possible.

Sponsored Student Scheme 2010/11

This corporate members' funded scheme for students studying at Conference of Drama School Colleges will open again for applications at PLASA 09. The closing date for applications is Christmas 2009. This edition of the scheme gives membership from now until April 2011.

All current student members should have by now received a bulletin with the new application form

attached to it. If you are eligible to join the scheme, fill in the form, get your course tutor to countersign it and return it to the office complete with proof of your student status in order to maintain their current membership beyond April 2010.

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

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

Annual General Meeting 2009

Chairman's and Treasurer's Reports...

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This year has been a good one for the ALD and I believe that we have moved further to our goals of raising awareness of the great contribution lighting and lighting designers make to live performances and encouraging our employers and the general public to better value our role.

We have been involved in two major new awards for lighting designers. Firstly, after years of ALD lobbying the Theatrical Management Association (which is responsible for the producing houses through the UK and those in London not covered by the West End Olivier award), gave out their first lighting award last autumn. This award is directly sponsored by the ALD and I propose that we continue to do this for a second year. It has been a great way of

having the producers value lighting designers and celebrate excellent work, and it has firmly put the ALD in the minds of the TMA by supporting this award. Of the three ALD members nominated the award went to Mick Hughes, a Fellow of the ALD, for his work at the Royal Exchange in Manchester. This was an added bonus and I understand led to a great time at the awards ceremony with many producers welcoming the award as being long overdue.

The ALD is also involved in the Knights of Illumination awards, which were initially given out last June and have the second award ceremony this evening. These awards, which are generously sponsored by Clay Paky, are unique in that they cover dance, opera, as well as drama and musicals. When approached to choose the

nominees for these awards the ALD decided that we could further our own goal by having the awards decided on by a panel of nationally recognized critics (many of whom have written for *Focus* and who are regularly seeing performances throughout the year) as we felt it was essential that the lighting should be judged by at least one person who saw it in the context for which it was created, not just represented by photos or video. While this unfortunately rules out some of the excellent work done for one-off performances, it seemed not only the fairest way to judge, and has increased the critics perception of what lighting does in performance as they too rarely have the opportunity to mention it in their reviews as they are often working to tight word restrictions.

The ALD also welcomes the recently created Whatsonstage lighting award that has been generously sponsored by White Light and is voted on by theatre goers via the website.

Other ongoing work of the Association has been to gather members real experience of fees and creating a database so that members can find out what the actual going rates are when negotiating contracts either themselves or through their agents. We can always use more information to make this more complete, so do fill in the forms that you can find on the website. Please do support this very useful project so that you too can take advantage of the Fees Database.

The ALD also continues to offer a more discreet advice and support to members who have questions or problems. This core function is not always written about, but I think is one of the most valued (and envied by other scenic, costume, and sound designers). So please never hesitate to get in touch with the office or any member of the executive if you have some concerns.

The ALD is also becoming more involved in other





AGM2009

organisations and I hope that we can build stronger links with the architectural lighting world through better contacts and some shared meetings with PLDA and some other of the bewildering array of acronyms that this sector seems to create. We have had an interesting meeting this year with the Stage Management Association and the Production Managers Association, and I hope we can continue this dialogue.

Later in the meeting we will hear about the plans for the UK entry for the Prague Quadrennial and I urge as many members as possible to participate either as

individuals or as part of your creative teams. It is really important for lighting to be at the heart of this worldwide celebration of stage design.

Another highlight of the last year was another Quadrennial event – *Showlight*. The event in Glasgow was up to its amazingly high standard, bringing together all areas of lighting folk for discussion, inspiration, and socializing. Once again the ALD was well represented by members and students and I am pleased that we were able to help four professional members attend and write up their experience for *Focus*.

Focus continues to be the most interesting magazine about lighting design around, and we owe a huge debt of thanks to Andy Collier for twisting the arms of so many people to contribute. It continues to be exciting to look at and read and brings huge credit to the ALD and really represents what the organisation is all about.

An interesting development from the critics column in *Focus* will be a workshop with the Critics Circle in October when the ALD and the critics will come together to explain more about what we do and how.

Last year at the AGM the Executive committee proposed some options about the direction the ALD should be going for the future. While these were long range goals I hope you feel that even though we all want to do more that our achievements are not inconsiderable. On reviewing this strategy document, we still have more to do to support the lighting designer and help us all be

more valued. One of the areas we are going to explore is whether some type of membership of the PLASA organisation will bring added business support and services for designers who need them. This is something the TV lighting designers have just started and it seems worth exploring if it has value for ALD.

I am pleased that some people have come forward recently to offer to be more involved in the ALD and we are always open to more help even if it is dedicated to a specific issue.

Speaking of specific issues, I particularly want to thank those who sit on the Designers' Committee of Equity. We are trying to arrange a meeting with Equity and the ALD membership and I hope that this can happen before the next millennium! We proposed a Saturday meeting as this can be a good time for members to attend but, of course, Equity does not work weekends unlike its members!

I also want to mention *Light Relief*, which has benefited from many members supporting Light Relief Day and other fundraising activities throughout the year. Please remember Light Relief and if you hear of anyone who needs assistance please do get in touch with them via the website or contact me.

This year we mourn the loss of two great friends of the ALD, Robert Ornbo one of our joint presidents and Robert Camac who was Michael Northen's partner of over 50 years and who was instrumental in setting up the Michael Northen bursary which will be presented on Tuesday along with two bursaries provided by ETC and the ALD.

I want to personally thank all the members of the Executive who really keep that ALD going particularly as I have been away a great deal in the last year. I tend to get the credit for what the organisation does but it really is a collaborative effort.

But I need to single out

Ian Saunders who holds it all together as Treasurer and Administrator of the ALD. He keeps reminding us of what we need to do and is the direct conduit for all the information reaches members. I also want to congratulate him on the birth of his second son Lucas a few days ago! Perhaps the best way to thank Ian is to make sure that your standing orders for your membership subs are up to date. The tedious reminding and tracking down of subs is one of the more thankless tasks.

One of the major items we will discuss later is the Exec's proposal of a new category of membership. This is in response to many different concerns that have been raised throughout recent years and I hope it can make the categories of membership clearer and allow other people to join in with the ALD to make the organisation stronger and more relevant to the entire Lighting community without losing our main interest in promoting

Lighting Designers interests. I think one of the reasons the ALD is getting stronger and earning more respect for the organisation and Lighting Designers is that most working Lighting Designers are members and though this we talk and listen to each other. Please keep up this dialogue with the ALD and each other.#

Rick Fisher, Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT



The financial year of 2008/9 has seen the Association achieve a surplus of just over £4,000. As was reported last year however we are becoming more and more reliant on non-subscription income to maintain this

surplus. Last year was the first since I became treasurer 5 years ago that we spent more than we brought in through subscriptions, in this case by £5000. It was for this reason that the Executive sought to lift the annual fees at last year's AGM.

However, we still need members to actually pay these increased fees, and we currently have £10,000 outstanding on the 2009/2010 subscriptions. Much of this is due to members not updating their standing orders to reflect the increase, or keeping their contact details current so that we can chase up payments. Once again I urge members to ensure that they are paid up to date fully with their subscription payments.

We have seen subscription income grow by a further 3% this year, and 50% of the non subscription income was from the advertising in FOCUS, which stayed at the same level as last year at £5000. We would like to thank ETC and Clay Paky in particular for their continued

support in this area with booking regular pages throughout the year.

In this credit crunch & banking crisis world of the last year, we have seen our income from bank interest drop by two thirds to £900. It is expected that this will be even lower for year 2009/2010 as interest rates stay at rock bottom levels.

In terms of expenditure, production costs for Focus continue to be our single biggest outlay, but did drop this year to be under budget at £13,000. The average print cost per issue dropped by 20 pence to approximately £2.20 and we calculate that including all its expenses, it still accounts for just under £20 of each member subscription.

The members' yearbook made a return last winter with a new layout. This of course has contributed to the increase in expenditure as it was the first full edition of the produced for a couple of years. It cost 10% more than we had budgeted for at £5,500.

Secretarial and office costs were on budget for the year and the other sizeable outgoings were for our legal expenses such as accountants and insurance and the cost of representing the ALD at a number of trade shows around the country.

Another large expense which was new last year was the ALD's sponsorship of the Best Lighting Design Award category at the TMA Awards. This is essentially a marketing cost to increase our profile among both the public and the more importantly the managements of organisations that employ our members!

So the current financial position of the Association can be described as stable. We are keeping our heads above the water while continuing to improve and add to the activities and range of services for our members.

As ever, there is an overview of last year's finances available if anyone wishes to look at them. #

Ian Saunders, Treasurer

Michael Northen Bursary 2009

The ALD's Student Rep and MNB award organiser, Jack Knowles, narrates a remarkable year's competition.



This year represents the 10th Michael Northen Bursary. The bursary is awarded every year to a student for the lighting design of a production within the last academic year. It recognizes imagination and creativity within lighting design.

This year saw the highest number of entries in the history of the bursary, combined with an extremely high standard. Finding the three winners was not an easy task for the judges, and despite several standing out, there was a lot of discussion about the merits of the other applications.

My thanks go to this year's judges: Natasha Chivers, Phil Gladwell, David Howe, Tony Simpson, Anna Watson and Mark White (who was also representing ETC), as well as ETC for providing facilities

for the judges, a PA for the awards presentation, and for keeping the judges fed and watered.

The Winner

This year's winner was Dan Hill from The Central School of Speech and Drama, for his lighting design for *Woyzeck*, a

devised adaptation of George Buchner's play, performed at the Embassy Theatre.

The judges felt that Dan's design had an '*incredibly strong and bold visual style – with very impressive images of exciting and well thought out concepts that had been effectively achieved.*'

Presenting Dan his award (right),

David Howe commented that '*the photos captured the production well, and made us wish we had seen it in real life. The lighting is atmospheric and has clean shafts of light, beautifully positioned to create mood and atmosphere.*'

As well as submitting images of their work,



candidates also have to complete a detailed written account of their process, which takes the judges through the designer's process from initial concepts and discussions with the creative team through to what they feel could have been improved.

David Howe commented on how Dan's submission '*details one of the most collaborative processes we all would wish for. Ideas are openly discussed, worked on and realized so effortlessly.*'

Dan explained how he '*was in a fortunate position where I was working with a director who had a lot of time and appreciation towards lighting design and would suggest lighting possibilities openly, all the while valuing my opinion about the overall lighting aesthetic of the production. Having the time,*

equipment and most of all the enthusiasm of the rest of the creative team I have previously found all too hard to come by, meant that I was able to make the most of having lights in rehearsals. I feel I could engage with the actors in rehearsal sessions and helping them understand what it was I was trying to achieve, and together we could work with the director to produce moments that worked as one performance entity – and not leave lighting to merely be added on top of someone else's work, a vitally important factor in this piece considering how collaborative the production was.'

At the presentation on the 15th of September at PLASA, Dan received a cheque for £500 and a copy of Michael Northen's biography, *Northen Lights*.



'Woyzeck' at The Embassy Theatre London, lit by Michael Northen Bursary winner Dan Hill, directed by Geoff Coleman, designed by Simon Kenny. Photo: Patrick Baldwin.



Above and below: 'Woyzeck' at The Embassy Theatre London, lit by 'Dan Hill, directed by Geoff Coleman, and designed by Simon Kenny. Photo top: Nick Moran, others: Patrick Baldwin.



MNB2009: ALD award

As well as organizing the awards on behalf of the Michael Northen Bursary, the ALD awards £250 to one of two runner-ups.

Mark Jonathan, the ALD's Professional rep presented the ALD runner-up award to David Alcorta, who has recently graduated from The Central School of Speech and Drama for his lighting of *The Runners*, a devised piece performed at the Shunt Vaults. David demonstrated a high level of understanding and sensitivity to the piece, as well as the surroundings it was performed in, an arch under London Bridge Station.

He also showed a clear passion for both the piece and for lighting and was prepared to push that extra bit further, as opposed to taking an easier option. Faced with time pressures, David realized how the time constraints mean business and was able to effectively adapt to work in the time frame available without compromising the design.

David's images showed how he had produced an effectively and boldly lit piece that encompassed the nature of the site-specific elements of the performance, and was effectively able to use shadows and darkness as a dramatic element and effectively using them as tools within the design.



'The Runners' at the Shunt Vaults, London, lit by ALD runner-up David Alcorta. Photo below by Kate Orton, photos left and above by David Alcorta.





'The Runners': Lighting: David Alcorta. Directed by Andrei Biziorek. Designed by Katie Orton. Photo: Nick Moran.

MNB2009: ETC award

The ETC runner up was Fridthjofur Thorsteinsson (better known as Fiffi) and by coincidence another recent graduate of The Central School of Speech and Drama, for his lighting design for *Godfather Death* at the New Wimbledon Studio.

Using just 16 fixtures, Fiffi showed how he was effectively able to use the resources available to him to their utter limits, resulting every element of the design being strong and heavily justified to it's place within the design.

Fiffi was aware of how important lighting was to the production and the role it was going to have to play from an early stage, without letting the constraints and restrictions he had get in the way of producing an effective design.

Fred Foster, CEO of ETC presenting the award commented on how through looking at Fiffi's submission he was aware of the thought and process that had gone into designing the piece and how Fiffi was able to create a visually interesting piece solely with a small number of conventional fixtures.#



*'Godfather Death' at the New Wimbledon Studio. Lighting: Fridthjofur Thorsteinsson.
Director: Benjamin Webb. Costume Designer: Bek Palmer.*



International Festival of Scenic Arts

First Event, Victoria & Albert Museum 23.9.09

The *ifs ARTS* is an ambitious project. Sponsors include three prestigious Italian universities, several multinational film and theatre supply companies, Italian and British guilds of film designers and the hyper-glossy *Scenographer* magazine. The day at the V&A is only the beginning of a series of events leading to a programme of lectures workshops and discussions at the SIB International in Rimini this April. (SIB is, we were assured by our sponsors, the biggest and best exhibition of all things of interest to scenographers.)

It has to be said that the Festival did not get off to the best start. Delegates were left unsure of how to get into the V&A in time for the beginning of the event (the museum does not open till 10am, when we were all supposed to be in our seats in the lecture theatre) every

session over-ran its time slot, and one translator had to work on the hoof for over two hours translating Italian into English – a job she did with remarkable sensitivity in the circumstances. We must hope things will get better at future events in Rome and Milan.

Having said that, there were several excellent presentations. In my experience, for many mainland Europeans, “the scenographer” is the set designer and other designers work to him (and it usually is a him). So it was satisfying to have the first session dominated by talk of lighting. Chairman Fisher spoke with humour and intelligence, exhorting set designers to leave space for lighting, and then demonstrating for them what can happen when they do, with examples from *Billy Elliot*. Mark White explained how white light

is made on stage, with the help of the latest LED product from his company ETC. Set designers and students I talked to in the brief coffee break were impressed and had clearly learnt from both ALD members.

The rest of the morning was bi-lingual, focussing on the work of Ezio Frigerio and his wife Franca Squarciapino. Ezio reminded us that he is in his eighties, and the body of work shown to us – designs for opera, drama dance and film spanning nearly 60 years – is certainly impressive. He spoke (in Italian) about the need for the set to be a “container of poetic emotion”, for the need to move beyond pictorial settings, and the apparent lack of poetry on the English stage.

Later in the day we heard Adam Pollock’s tribute to Maria Bjornson. Supported by Jonathan Kent, David Pountney and William Dudley, Adam outlined the life and work of one of the great names in theatre design of the Twentieth Century, who only became financially

secure with the royalties from Phantom, towards the end of her life.

As well as reflection on past practice, we had two presentations on integrating video into stage design. Bill Dudley rounded off the day with a quick canter through virtual scenography in practice. Earlier in the day, Italian stage and video director Sergio Metalli took us through his four steps to integrating virtual and real set on stage. His aim is to make indistinguishable “the top step of the real set and the first step of the virtual stage.” At times this ambition seemed achievable on stage; he certainly had some impressive video footage of large scale stage work where this had been achieved.

As well as hearing from Rick, current practice was represented by John Pascoe – who has a well deserved world-wide reputation as both a director and designer of opera. He talked us through from design inspiration right through to the show on stage, using his production

of *Lucrezia Borgia* at the Washington National Opera. This was a real privilege to see and hear. A master theatre maker explaining something about how he does it with humility and humour.

An unexpected highlight of the day was the presentation to Adam Pollock of an award from the Young Vic. David Lan, the Young Vic’s artistic director explained that this award is given annually to a theatre professional who, through their life’s work, has encouraged and inspired a younger generation of theatre people. There were plenty of young theatre people present at the event, and plenty of potential inspiration on offer, from past and present generations of theatre makers.

In spite of its shortcomings, the event succeeded in celebrating design for the theatre and in raising its profile. Long live the International Festival of Scenic Arts! You can find out more at www.scenic-fest.com/introduction.html

Nick Moran#

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

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

New Members

welcome to...

Professional

Graham McLusky[†], Lincoln

Tom Dexter Scott*, Manchester

Paul Gould*, Romford

Tim Lutkin*, London

Student

Sam Smallman, Matlock,
Derbyshire

Corporate

MattLX, London
020 8301 8692
www.mattlx.com

[†] re-joining the Association

* from Associate

Dates for your diaries

30th October

Wallace Collection members' meeting.

31st October

Deadline for updating Yearbook entries

10-12th November

Art.Theatre.Museum Exhibition
St. Petersburg [www.lenexpo.ru]

17-18th November

Event-Tech Ireland*, Industries Hall, Dublin

25th December

Application deadline for Sponsored
Student Scheme

2010

10-11th February

Event-Tech Scotland*, Thistle Glasgow

1st April

ALD Subscription Payments due

27-28th April

PLASA Focus 2009, Leeds *

13-15th June

Theatre Engineering and Architecture
Conference, London

16-17th June

ABTT Theatre Show*

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



Francis (not Frances) Reid's support for women lighting designers goes back a long, long way...

At the 1974 USITT annual conference in New York, Tharon Musser chaired a discussion on *Careers for Women in Theatre Production*. With the aid of an Arts Council bursary (happy days!) I had accepted an invitation to join a panel on *Training Future Theatre Technicians* and so, as the only British designer of any gender signed up for the conference, I was accorded honorary female status (no, they did not spell me as Frances) for the afternoon and co-opted to offer some appraisal of the current UK position.

October / November 2009

Tharon's "Token Male"

Introduced by Tharon as 'Our Token Male,' I reported that the vast majority of prompt corners were established female territory, and that women made a greater impact on set and costume design than their numbers might suggest, but lighting design remained a male preserve awaiting the equivalent of the successful assault that Peggy Clark and Jean Rosenthal had led on Broadway.

The 1973 Handbook of The Society of British Theatre Lighting Designers listed 29 members of whom the only woman was Molly Friedel – and she was American, as was Honorary Member Tharon Musser. I suggested, not wholly tongue in cheek, that this might perhaps result from feminine commonsense in staying clear of a profession

requiring maximum adrenalin without offering adequate financial reward.

Nevertheless the number of women in lighting crews, if still disappointingly small, was increasing and included many of our finest board and follow spot operators. Attempting to burnish my own credentials in the matter, I pointed out that I had broken the male elix taboo at Glyndebourne by hiring an Australian girl in 1961.

There has been a lot of progress in the thirty five years since that conference but equality remains elusive. So I am delighted that the ALD (Rick's Report in Focus, August/September 2009) welcomes the initiative by Paule Constable and Sarah Rushton-Reid (no relation) to develop more support for women working in technical

theatre. As a lighting designer, Paule understands the crucial importance of balance so I am confident that there is no imminent danger of us chaps being relegated to token status. #



2:00 - 3:30 PM

Astor Gallery

CAREERS FOR WOMEN IN THEATRE PRODUCTION

Chairwoman: *Tharon Musser*, Lighting Designer, New York City.

Panelists:

Patricia MacKay, Managing Editor, THEATRE CRAFTS Magazine, New York City

Patricia Zipprodt, Costume Designer, Member Local 829, U.S.A., New York City.

Gail Fuller, Scenic Artist, Member Local 829, U.S.A., New York City.

Joan Olsson, Technical Director/Lighting Designer, Queens College, New York (former member Local 909, I.A.T.S.E.)

Marsha Eck, Set Designer, Member Local 829, U.S.A., New York City.

Claire St. Jacques, Director, Wolf Trap Farm Park for the Performing Arts, Vienna, Virginia

Francis Reid, Lighting Designer, Editor TABS, Lecturer, Association of British Theatre Technicians Technical Training Program; Faculty, Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London.

Helene Head, Stage Manager

Professionals' Colour Supplement



“Stop screaming!” as the Actress said to the Bishop when an uninvited audience member goes nuts over Mark Jonathan’s lighting on the Fringe...



A squirrel's eye view of 'A British Subject'. Lit by 'MJ'. Photo: Jaimie Gramston

I often wonder about how to give lighting students a good opportunity to gain experience. In many of the comparatively well-funded companies the 'opportunity' may be to observe but without much active participation. I worry that this may be frustrating for the student. This time, an opportunity came along that was going to be very 'hands-on'...

My longstanding friend Nichola McAuliffe called me

to say she'd written another play and that she would be in it and would I light it at the Edinburgh Fringe? "I know you're never available" she said... In the 'post-apocalyptic credit crunch' I stared at an empty diary and thought "Well, why not?" I hadn't been to the Edinburgh Festival for many years and indeed, last year, when my show had transferred from the Royal Court I was already booked elsewhere.

I didn't really know what

to expect – I knew we'd have no time and very limited resources. Clearly, the script called for a lot of 'lighting punctuation' and changes of location. I knew we would have our work cut out. It was a great advantage that I met with the director well ahead of the rehearsals and we came up with a theory that allowed for smaller or bigger areas of the stage to be used through 9 interlocking specials. We decided not to 'bog' the cast down with too

much detail but in our minds the whole show would be blocked precisely and this would make it possible to pre-programme what was going to be about 85 cues on an 85 minute piece. In fact, we could see that while there was a long soliloquy in the middle of the play, the rest of the script was made up of scenes of half a page or at most a few pages long. At the same time, I started to think about needing an assistant. Could we pre-programme

the lighting? Would this be a good training opportunity for a student? Clearly, the fee offered wasn't big enough to fund an assistant nor was the budget but how about the producer paying for travel and accommodation for the student?

I emailed Nick Moran at Central School of Speech and Drama. Did he think it would be a suitable project? The email that came back by return was short: 'George Bishop' and a phone number.

I rang the number. George sounded keen. We met and the deal was clinched. The producer did come up with travel and accommodation and we'd make sure George didn't starve. Meanwhile, I told the production manager I thought we could achieve the show with a minimum of 6 specials, but 9 would be better and 11 would be perfect. Word came back that we could afford the 9 lamp option. The rig also had a FOH cover, a blue backlight (Lee 195) and a warm Lee 108(!) back light. These wouldn't be my choice of colours but we'd make them work. There were 2 Mac 300s and these would be our 'get of Jail' lights. If Mozart could do chamber music so we should do chamber lighting.

I was certain that the secret of our success (if there was to be any success) would be our ability to pre-programme on an identical desk. George set about tracking down a Zero 88 'Leapfrog' lighting desk. Not easy, they were all in

Edinburgh. God bless Stage Electrics who still had one south of the border. Thank you Mark Burnett and Chris Patton. I know from my own experience that one isn't always lucky enough to have a director who completely tuned into our needs but Hannah Eidinow did. Run-thru's were scheduled before our pre-programming day. The cues were placed in the prompt copy and George and I left rehearsals to pre-programme on a desk neither of us had ever seen before. George is the sort of guy you'd want on your sinking ship. He'd know what to do.... when we got stuck 'we phoned a friend'. A pleasant day was spent creating art in the comfort of my own home. Lunch was served once Act one was in the desk. Act 2 followed.

Nichola collected me on a sunny Sunday. We'd allowed plenty of time to get to Kings Cross. Relaxation turns to mild panic when you are pre-booked first class and there's

a danger of missing the train. The whole of London seemed to be having street festivals that day. We jumped out of the car and ran up Grays Inn Road, hauling our suitcases, rucksacks and cool bags. "Don't shake that bag up it's got the champers in it" said the leading lady. Have you tried running full tilt, slaloming round slow moving pedestrians while trying to maintain a perfect cruising altitude for the champagne? Maybe all those seasons at Glyndebourne had stood me in good stead. We made it. George appeared as cool as James Bond but did admit that he nearly missed the train but he had a friend standing by, who had a had a helicopter...

What better than a train journey, first class, with some cool champagne and a banquet? Nichola had managed to close her last show in Bath the day previously, rehearse the new show in London and get to Waitrose. The journey raced

out to sea along the North East coast. Of course, you do have to be careful when pre-booking your train trip weeks ahead so that you can take advantage of the cheaper fare. You can bet that having checked the schedule, booked the tickets, the schedule will change. We were given a couple of extra hours on Sunday evening but we wouldn't get there until halfway through the call, well the designer could get on without us. Not any designer, but the very famous founder of the Pleasance, Christopher Richardson. We pointed a few lights and then went to our digs for more wine and supper.

The curious thing about the Edinburgh Fringe is that you will have no time to put your show on but plenty of time to drink coffee, go shopping, cook dinner for hard-working actors who have to rehearse while we just wait for our slot 'on stage'. We'd traded less time



during the day for more time overnight. I hadn't done an 'all-nighter' for decades. I thought the working time directive had put a stop to that....Not at the Edinburgh Festival. We were going to start work at 10pm and could work through to our first performance at 2.20 the next day.

Not many staff around but George and I were self-sufficient. Focus the lamps, drop the show in the desk, meet Peter Kirkup, who designed the Leapfrog who would pop in to see if we

Mark Jonathan on the Fringe...

needed to know how to put a delay on the down and a link on the follow on. Like all these things, the reality is, it takes longer... "What am I doing here... in this church hall?" I thought as I pushed *Programmer* George on through the night.

Less than 2 hours sleep and we were in a tech trying to coax the actors into the finely honed areas we'd agreed on. We did it. I love the idea of doing a show at 2.20 that's down by 4pm. Party time... Later that evening, I got politely told off by the bar staff for falling asleep on a sofa. I don't think I was dribbling but I probably looked like I had nowhere to go. These long hours were ok for George who was playing pool with cast but obviously this schedule wasn't designed for an LD of my maturity. Our show was first on so we were allowed in at midday to tinker through the previews, a luxury denied the shows that followed ours.

We finally made it to our

'press' perf. The show hadn't been going for long when there was this high pitched screaming noise. The director glared at me and I glared at the loudspeakers...the sound had obviously crashed. The scream came again and again. The director pointed to a small animal running around in a distressed state,

the actors battled on over the screams. Feed it, I thought, maybe that'll quieten it down. "George," I whispered,

"Pop over there and feed that squirrel some of the stage manager's croissant. We've got to quieten it down before the big soliloquy." George, the SAS commando of the programmer/Prod LX/assistant division, crept forward; he had a better idea... eat the croissant and grab the squirrel. One, quick

deft move and the screaming rodent was in his manly grip! Squirrel Nutkin was carried outside, taken to the park and placed in a tree*. What a hero. The show was saved.

I mentioned the partying, well thanks must go to Hartley TA Kemp for laying on an 'ALD members drinks-do' with thanks also to sponsors

HSL, Rosco, Sparks and Stage Electrics. Hartley tells me more sponsorship was drunk this year than in previous years... I know nothing! It

was great to meet up with lighting colleagues. In the end, I staggered back to my digs. George and I met at Edinburgh Waverly the next morning. George had done another all nighter partying and had already decided to come straight back up to Edinburgh the next day. We were a week older and

a lot wiser. In retrospect, I wondered if it was really necessary to cram so many shows on in so little time... Why not have one or two more dark nights? Wouldn't standards be higher? And what made me think I wouldn't need an umbrella in Edinburgh in August?

A few days later I found myself in sunny Lugano, Switzerland, meeting a German designer and an American Director about operas in Italy and Russia. I wondered if Opera companies that book so far ahead could be the first sign that the recession is receding. Then it was Fly-B from Milan to Manchester for rehearsals at the Royal Exchange where I definitely needed an umbrella.

And now a few important points that have come up through LDs contacting us:

Make sure you have a contract and that you sign and return it.

Normally, you should receive a first payment before

starting work.

Make sure you have a clear billing clause. Your name should follow immediately after the set and costume designers and be of the same size and be credited whenever the set and costume designer are, on all publicity and merchandising. I believe choreographers, MDs etc should either go *above* or *below* the design team but not between!

Finally, my gripe of the week: *Why do hotels make ridiculous charges for Internet access?* Try and get it included in your contract#

"...a squirrel in the hand..."



EDINBURGH NIGHTS AND LIGHTS...

Focus is delighted to welcome back Michael Coveney with his view of the Edinburgh fringe

In the mayhem of the Edinburgh Festival fringe, the niceties of technical presentation are swamped by the logistical demands of turning round each venue for the next show: almost all of the major fringe houses – the Assembly Rooms, the Gilded Balloon, the Pleasance and the wonderfully atmospheric Underbelly on Cowgate – are in constant change-over turmoil.

But we forget (or rather, I do) that lighting plots can be stored on the boards and re-booted at the flick of a switch. Still, it's unusual to find a production where the lighting input is given much house-room. Muriel Romanes' production of Muriel Spark's *The Girls of Slender Means* at the Assembly was a notable exception, with shifting locations and indeed mental states indicated by a design of translucent screens, and

*'The Girls of Slender Means' at the Assembly.
Lighting by Natasha Chivers.
Photo: Marc Marnie.*





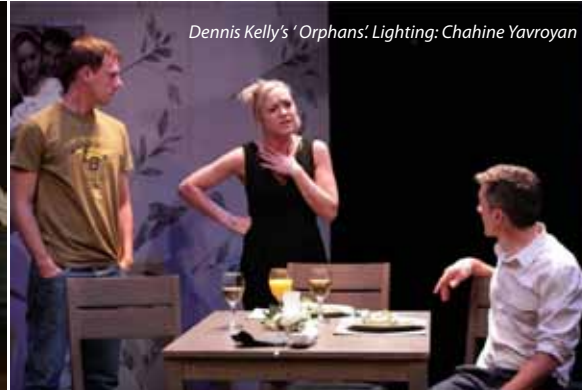
Grid Iron's 'Barflies', lit by Paul Claydon. Photo: Douglas Jones



Ontroerend Goed provided one of the festival's highlights: 'Internal'.



Martin Lynch's *Chronicles of Long Kesh*.
Lighting: Conleth White.



Dennis Kelly's 'Orphans'. Lighting: Chahine Yavroyan



a smoky lighting plot by Natasha Chivers that must have been a nightmare to make work as effectively as she did on the Assembly's big open Music Hall stage.

Chivers was more conventionally represented, perhaps, at the Traverse, the hub of new writing as usual on the fringe, where she provided a steady grey nimbus for Andrew Scott's remarkable performance as a bereaved father in Simon Stephens's *Sea Wall*. Technical and design standards are always high at the Traverse; this year the theatre went slightly off piste in presenting work in a famous pub and a nearby hotel conference room.

Site-specific group Grid Iron's *Barflies*, lit by Paul Claydon, Head of Lighting at the National Theatre of Scotland, was a raucous staging in one of Edinburgh's most atmospheric bars, the Barony on Broughton Street, of some interlinked stories

by the American cult drunk writer Charles Bukowski. Claydon had a field day making the old mahogany glisten, the beer pumps sparkle and the various surfaces of bar and table tops come alive as the two actors enacted scenes of lust and degradation.

Claydon's job here was the enhancement of a gift of a "found" design in a space shared by the audience who were implicit in the action as a crowd of silent drinkers (a beverage comes with your ticket); so he didn't have to worry about pin-pointing the actors, Keith Fleming and the formidably versatile Gail Watson (as well as barman/pianist David Paul Jones), in separate pools, or even silhouette. He carefully re-lit the space with judiciously placed lamps and two blue lights on the bar itself.

At the Mercure Point Hotel, the Belgian group Ontroerend Goed provided one of the festival's highlights

in their one-on-one speed-dating half-hour show, *Internal*, involving just five actors who each select a client from the line-up of just five customers. There's no credit for the lighting, but a large conference room had been darkened, small booths created where the five couples retreated to talk, caress, sip liqueurs and stumble towards some sort of instant relationship. Although fake and somehow absurd, the show hit a chord, and the lighting enclosed the action – the cubicle scenes were followed with an encounter group, dancing, more intimate chat – making escape both impossible and probably undesirable.

No lighting credit, either, for Guy Masterson's production of *Morecambe*, a solo play, performed by Vic Reeves lookalike Bob Golding. Because there was no credit, I appreciated all the more the way in which a difficult, non-theatrical space

– a council room high in the Assembly Hall on the Mound – had been commandeered. Detail of performance and stage properties had to be projected a long way back; and the lighting had to suggest a pier-end jollity that the script didn't always bolster. The famous yellow curtain of *The Morecambe and Wise Show* positively rippled with showbiz promise.

Interestingly, the same venue was home to the outstanding political drama on the fringe, Martin Lynch's *Chronicles of Long Kesh* produced by the Belfast-based Green Shoots company and directed by Lynch himself with Lisa May. Conleth White, one of Ireland's leading lights men, provided a much harsher illumination than that of *Morecambe*. The IRA prisoners moved around a set of rostra swapping jokes and anger, baiting the prison officer, breaking out into full-bloodedly harmonized concert versions of hits by

Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, and other Motown favourites.

The show went down a bomb, so to speak, and White subtly adjusted his lighting to accommodate both the grim realities of the political infighting, hunger strikes and domestic heartbreak, and the euphoric interludes where the five prisoners are transformed into shaven-haired, muscular versions of the Jersey Boys. Without any crashing of gears, the sad face of the broken prison officer, brilliantly played by Billy Clarke, was picked out in a whiter shade of pale, every wrinkled feature fully visible at the back of the hall.

Thinking more strenuously about theatre lighting, I stumbled on the no doubt bleedin' obvious in realizing that the "colour" of the stage sets the mood and probably the tone of the piece. Back at the Traverse, Dennis Kelly's brilliant but grim play *Orphans* – incipient incest,

EDINBURGH NIGHTS AND LIGHTS... Michael Coveney


offstage violent mayhem, responses to racism – is bathed in Chahine Yavroyan in an eerie green grey wash invaded slowly by clouds of smoke from outside.

There's nothing emphatic about this, but it defines the whole experience of the play, which was co-produced by the Traverse, the Birmingham Rep and Paines Plough. I remember Yavroyan's work with the People Show, always the most extravagant and cinematic of fringe groups, masters of jazz atmospheres and noirish hinterlands. Yavroyan is a good example of an ingenious electrician who became a musicianly designer of the first rank.

The opening production of the international festival, *St Kilda: Island of Birdmen*, was a multi-media opera fusing archive film, new video footage, choral singing, dance, acrobatics and a text delivered in Gaelic, French and English. You don't get much more "festival" than that,

but the ninety-minute show erred on the gloomy side, even though the subject matter – the evacuation in 1930 of the last few inhabitants on the most westerly of the Scottish islands, now the UK's only dual World Heritage site – was much more than just interesting.

Canadian lighting designer Guy Simard – who has worked in opera all over the world – had to create with his director, Thierry Poquet, and choreographer, Juha-Pekka Marsalo, a stage where actors and aerial artists could meld with filmed scenery, a line of singers, the sound of the waves and the birds; it was a fantastic technical challenge and they all managed to convey bleakness and loneliness – and bird sound! – in shadows and silhouette, blues and dull browns, the odd flash of fishermen's orange clothing...for once the old cliché of a genuine creative collaboration was absolutely spot (sic) on. #



*'St Kilda: Island of Birdmen'. Lighting: Guy Simard.
Photo: Christian Mathieu*



*'St Kilda: Island of Birdmen'. Lighting: Guy Simard.
Photo: Christian Mathieu*



digiled's digiFLEX. It's thin and curvy and bright, which is nothing new, but look - it's made of rubber!

Watch out... Our PLASA Guy's about! As we whiz through PLASA with Guy Kornetzki



The Amusement's Factory's 'scary stand'

During the Jewish holiday of Passover, there is a traditional song called "What Has Changed" (roughly translated), which is sung by the youngest member of the family. So, feel free to join in the chorus as we whiz through my highlights of PLASA 2009.

Attitude

Entering Earl's Court it seems I had finally accepted the market trends we had seen in the last 2-3 years at PLASA: innovation and adventure seemingly replaced by the safety of tried-and-tested product lines and riding existing trends.

For example, the former including the ever expanding ranges from giants like *Martin Professional* and *SGM*. I appreciate the usefulness of having such a complete arsenal to choose from, from 150W to 1500W, but do we really need everything in between? How about diverting some of the finances towards creating something new??

As for riding an existing trend, LEDs are still dominant by far. But this year the focus seems to have shifted almost entirely to displays.

The ones that caught my eye had a good balance between high resolution and ease of setup. But what made me stop and stare was *digiLED's* digiFLEX (see photo). It's thin and curvy and bright, which is nothing new, but look - it's made of rubber! The curve it therefore offers, together with the high resolution, is remarkable. And it's mounted using nothing more than small magnet points.

Lateral thinking

It's great to have all these amazing tools at our disposal; each eager to please in whatever task we need fulfilling. However, perhaps not enough thought is put into how to best bring all these complex pieces to work together.

So I was glad to see the understated stand by PLASA and ESTA announcing the important work being

done on developing ACN (Architecture Control Networks) and RDM (Remote Device Management). Two protocols aimed at providing us with better configuration and control of our ever increasing stock of tools.

Make a stand

This year I'd like to present an award for the *worst* stand. It was the Joan Rivers of stand design - utterly garish yet amusing. *The Amusement's Factory* from Italy occupied a small corner that meant to look magical but was actually scary (see photo).

Times are a-changin'?

It was a double edged sword for me to finally see *Vari*Lite's* VLX fixture. On the one hand I was impressed: the LED output was bright, the colour range looked great from the saturated to the pastels and the beam seemed agreeably homogeneous. However, I couldn't help thinking whether this was a 'band wagon' ride or a genuine environmental concern? Interestingly, according to

George E. Masek, Product Marketing Manager it's both. He confessed he would personally prefer to continue using Tungsten and Arc sources but claimed *Vari*Lite* were pressed by rental companies to produce fixtures that would cut down running costs (lamp changes being one of the major ones).

It wasn't LDs driving R&D based on artistic requirements but the 'number crunchers' getting a further foothold. I know driving down costs will always play a major part in any business, especially during a downturn, but I guess I hoped it wouldn't be so...intrusive?

Quiet streets

Maybe the same downturn was also responsible for a seemingly quiet Wednesday afternoon at Earl's Court. I spoke to Ron Knell from Rosco who had confirmed this, but he also said that previous days were better for attendance. I wonder if our corporate members felt the same. Having said that I



did notice the ALD stand was busy with inquirers.

Lift the spirits

The prize for the giggle of the show goes to the lovely German audio engineer who invented Mic-Lift for German company *Oplogate*. A tiny motor with equally tiny servo-driven wheels mounted onto a standard mic stand, remotely raising and lowering the height of the stand. And at 4:45pm the sight of this stand sliding smoothly up and down whilst its inventor looked on proudly was all this weary traveller needed to end another PLASA...

See you in 2010 #

ALD @ PLASA 2009

Wow! What a show for the ALD stand! ... reports Nigel Lawson Dick



Although we were right at the 'back' of the show (for those struggling up from the Underground) we were in a prime position once you got there. Our neighbours, White Light, kept us supplied with coffee – for which many thanks – and they had furnished a very comfortable lounge space in front of their stand (well, in front of ours, really!). So the ALD stand could be seen far and wide and very inviting it looked too.

It started busy, it went on being busy and it was only in the dying embers of the show that things went quiet. Lots of members visiting, quite a number of past members rejoining (so welcome back), quite a

handful (at least half dozen) of new Professional Designer members, lots of Associates and of course the Students – 'My college says I have to join the ALD! I like it – I can run the spiel each time but if someone has done the work for me then that's just fab!

So in addition to measuring success with applications – surely the most satisfying of measures – we were



One intrepid ALD volunteer checks out White Light's 'very comfortable lounge space' after a light lunch with Bob Bryan.

almost cleaned out of our 'Joining the ALD' booklet and some of the well over 300 lanyards that were picked up are now prized exhibits in the collections of lanyard collectors.

And it was really good to have so many members dropping by to say hello – not just on Sunday (AGM) and on Tuesday (Michael Northen awards) but throughout the show. It makes for a real sense of community to see so many of you – I do try to keep a note of who comes by and I have a little list – but I have to admit that I cannot quite keep up with Koko and some of you are missed! But even so I know that something like 50 of you came to see us.

As ever my thanks to Andy who was around for all of the show – he just couldn't keep away! – and to Richard Thompson who travelled all the way down from Bingley for the show and then spent much of his time gathering in converts. Our other neighbours next door were giving hints on how to do that too. It seems that the secret of a successful preacher is to have a really big AV setup, not too many messages and lots of whizzy lanterns. Maybe we are missing something – but I am not sure where the Patt 23 fits in?

Off to Dublin next in November – so we should be able to report on the Guinness.....#



The Michael Northen Bursary judges and winners.

Above, L-R: Tony Simpson, Fred Foster, David Alcorta (ALD runner-up), David Howe, Dan Hill (winner), Fridthjofur Thorsteinsson (ETC runner-up), Mark White, Jack Knowles, Mark Jonathan.
 Photos: Nick Moran and friend.



Below: ALD President Richard Pilbrow visited the ALD stand and met with Richard Brett of Theatreplan.





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