

April / May 2008

Ecology Special

ALD #

FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers
"More art, less energy ..."

Oliver Award winner for best lighting: Howard Harrison's 'Macbeth' at Chichester Festival Theatre. Photo: Manuel Harlan. See page 5

In the glimmer of a LED batten this issue:

Sustainable Lighting • Sixty seconds with Neil and Johanna • 'We Will Rock You' and the art of CAD • Chilly followspotting • Reviews by Lyn Gardner • Traditional lighting effects... and much more!

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Rick's Remedy

The Exec has been discussing how the organisation can be more effective in raising the profile of lighting designers and helping us to get better recognition and conditions. This will be aired in more detail at the AGM as announced on page 12. We hope that as the AGM is separated from a trade show environment we can have a less pressured chance to understand what the membership needs and wants. Also it will be possible to follow on at the very pleasant Young Vic Bar! Please try to attend.

One new initiative that started well, but has quietened down recently is the submissions of the **Fee Feedback** forms. This is a very useful way the ALD can help members who contribute to this database know what is the going rate for work. One of the most frequent questions I get asked is about what sort of fee can we expect at all differing scales. Often when we or our agents are expected to suggest a fee,

we have little idea of where to start. Your contributions are essential and the form is very easy to fill in (details on page 12).

A new development that I am thrilled about is that after a few years of lobbying by the ALD, the TMA (which represents regional and some of the non West End producing theatres in London) has agreed to start honouring lighting design with a new TMA award in October. This is being sponsored by the ALD and I am delighted that it will focus long overdue attention to the excellent work done throughout the country. Designs are often created under challenging constraints and limited budgets. I also sincerely hope that it will encourage the managements to better appreciate what we are adding to their productions and perhaps this will eventually make them increase the mean fees that seem a relic from another era. Well it is worth a shot!

Speaking of awards, the ALD wants to congratulate Howard Harrison whose excellent work on *Macbeth* was recently recognized with this year's Olivier Award. This show, which started out in the studio theatre in Chichester and has moved through the West End to off Broadway, is now on Broadway. This amply demonstrates how the good work that ALD members are doing in all sorts of spaces add lustre and value to productions and helps make them important cultural exports.

I am also pleased to briefly announce a new award that is a welcome import. The "Knights of Illumination" are generously underwritten by Clay Paky and are to be given out at the ABTT dinner this year. They will be recognizing lighting designs by UK based lighting designers in four categories; plays, musicals, dance and opera. (More about this and the ALD's involvement in the next *Focus* along with an

announcement of the nominees).

The second annual Light Relief Day is April 24th. Last year's inaugural effort raised over £5000 and I hope that we can top that this year and support the charity that is there for us in case of emergency. All contributions can attract gift aid. In addition to designers contributing a day's royalties to Light Relief day, it gives Light Relief a great press story every year, by listing the shows and designers (if desired) contributing to the cause. We are also approaching other lighting related people and companies to join in supporting the day. A big thank you to ETC, they have already committed to an annual contribution for the next five years. I hope all ALD members including the other corporate members can join in supporting this event. If you have any questions about Light Relief day please contact me. #

Regards, Rick



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Professional's Colour Supplement

It's snowing heavily outside so it feels like the beginning of winter again, but in fact it's Easter Sunday and the Editor is trying to coax the next Pro's article out of me. You know, one of the reasons I do lightin' is coz I don't like doin' writin'... complains Mark Jonathan

Undervalued LDs?

The more I light, the more I wonder how we can raise the financial value placed on lighting design. Look at what Lyn Gardner has to say about lighting design on page 16 and how it can go unnoticed, like breathing.

When the washing machine breaks down or the drains get blocked we call out the engineer or the plumber and I gasp at the price we pay without argument; in fact, I realise that all the people who work for me are probably on a higher hourly rate than I am. Is it also the case at the theatres you work in?

I'm sorry if I'm going on about this but I think many producing managements and our agents don't really want to know how hard we have to work for the 'buy-out' fee we get paid. Is it

because we appear to roll-up as the fit-up is starting and that our discrete forays into the rehearsal room are not counted? Nor, I suspect, is the preparation work pre-fit-up: the reading of the script, research, thinking time, discussion with director and designers, model meetings, production meetings, plan drawing, experimenting with equipment, emailing to blag equipment, etc. Our fee also has to cover provision for all things that employed staff get included that we provide ourselves.

Fee structures

Clearly, fees for LDs (in many sectors) are under-par when you compare them with other workers. Now, we have a background of Arts Council cuts and funding being siphoned off for the

Olympics. So, no doubt, producers are already under financial pressure.

When we and theatre managers look at the agreed Equity/TMA minimum LD fees it may appear that we are well paid as the actual fees paid are usually well above the agreed minimum rates. Simon Corder, Jo Town and I have spent some time discussing this at Equity. Are the rates misleading? Would it better if there wasn't a minimum rate? Should a minimum rate be accompanied by a minimum amount of work?

When you add up all the hours or days you spend putting a show on does the fee represent a fair payment? If it does- well done but I suspect you are in the minority.

Collecting the info

A couple of AGMs ago

Richard Pilbrow told us we need to be armed with facts. At the professionals' meeting we held at the Young Vic last year all the LDs present agreed that we would share fee information with the ALD office and that if you feed fee data in, you can have access to fee information on 'a needs to know basis'.

What about action?

Recently, I was asked if I thought LDs would band together and be prepared to refuse work if it wasn't being paid at an appropriate rate. I said that there were a limited number of 'high profile' producing theatres and that I was fairly confident any one of us would say, "Yes" to an offer regardless of their fee which is usually too low. I'm not suggesting we should go on strike but I am suggesting

that we analyse how long a job takes to do and see what that works out as a daily rate. If we share the information with each other we could all urge our agents to question the managements as to whether a fee is appropriate. Somehow, I think we need to try and keep cordial relations with producing managements but also get a fairer deal.

The next pro's meeting

I hope we will have a professionals' meeting to discuss this in more detail as there are things going on 'behind the scenes' that are, probably, better not put into print at this stage. In the meantime, please download the *Fees Database Feedback Form* (available to download from the ALD filing cabinet section in the members' section of the web



site) and email your fee info to the office. In this way, we can discreetly monitor that fees are increasing and not simply staying the same (e.g.: ROH Linbury, 6 years) and whether they are in the 'too-low' category.

Professional LDs – are you missing out?

This does bring me on to the subject of those of you who are in the ALD *Associate* membership category, but are working as LDs in the professional sectors.

As associate members, you will be missing out on our regular Professional members' e-mail bulletins which are distributed in tandem with the regular member bulletins. Along with discussions regarding fees

and working practices, these bulletins also invite you to the exclusive professional members' meetings. In the past these have been open forums to discuss specific issues related to working issues or, as the last meeting in March, a joint meeting with other professional organisations (in this case the Stage Managers' Association).

You should upgrade so you can be involved in these initiatives. I understand some LDs have been moved into the Associate category because you haven't changed your standing order to the current professional rates. We have been working on making the requirements for qualifying for new professional membership clearer. I hope that prospective professional members will be able to self-assess whether they are 'ready' for this category. I want to stress that one of the best ways to be part of improving the lot of the professional Lighting Designer is to be a *Professional* member of the ALD.

Back on the piste...

So, I'll sign off from the Swiss Alps and hope to catch up with some of you very soon either by email or face to face at a Professionals' meeting. #

'Macbeth' at Chichester Festival Theatre. Lighting, Howard Harrison. Photo: Manuel Harlan.

Seventh time lucky for Howard Harrison at the Oliviers

Hearty congratulations to Howard Harrison for winning the Lawrence Olivier Award 2008 for Best Lighting Design. This is the seventh time his lighting has been nominated for this award.

Rupert Goold's production of *Macbeth* at The Chichester Festival Theatre was

nominated for no fewer than five awards this year, and Howard's lighting was applauded for creating the atmosphere of a dingy Eastern bloc bunker, 'at times bathing the walls in blood and creating an electric other worldliness for the weird sisters.' Well done Howard. #



'The Steward of Christendom', Lighting by Johanna Town



“Sixty seconds with ...” Johanna Town

Sum up your career to date. My career has always been one of a lighting designer and Head of Lighting. Putting me in the enviable position of being able to pursue my own creative theatrical career as well as helping to fulfil the creative aspirations of other lighting designers.

What are the three favourite shows you have lit? *The Steward of Christendom* – where actor, script and lighting worked as one. *The Kitchen* – for transforming an old Victorian theatre into a real live kitchen. *Shopping & Fucking* – for taking me all over the world.

Where are you now? Right now I am on the very top of a mountain preparing to fly.

What were the worst and best moments of your career? My worst moment was turning down the job of Chief Electrician at the Royal Court Theatre. And the best moment was when the

Court’s production manager, Bo Barton, refused to take my “No” for an answer.

What is your favourite theatre/space?

I have two theatres I really love. The first has to be the Royal Court for all the fantastic people I have met. From directors to designers and actors, all the staff who work tirelessly for the company, and all the plays that have never been dull which have left me with some very interesting memories!

The second theatre space has to be the Royal Exchange Theatre; its unique space made me enjoy going to theatre. It was the theatre that gave me an interest in lighting - when there was no scenery the lighting formed the scenery. Also, it was the theatre that gave me my very first job.

Where/what would you most like to light? This is such a difficult question. I enjoy anything and everything

and so I have no real passion for any particular space or event. I suppose if I was pushed I would most enjoy lighting a huge outdoor garden event with theatre as its main theme.

If you weren’t a lighting designer what would you be? I would be an organic farmer.

Where would you rather be right now? Nowhere – life is just perfect.

What is your favourite colour? My favourite gel colour is L777 (Rust), not that I have much opportunity to use it. When I can sneak it into a show I really love its dirtiness when it dims down.

If you were a colour what would it be? I would have to be blue. As cheerful as a blue sky, as deep as the ocean and as reliable as a good pair of blue jeans.

If you could scrap one

piece of kit or one tradition or part of the job from every theatre in the world what would it be?

Changing the light bulbs.

Which part of the job do you enjoy most?

Working with different people all the time.

Which part of the job do you enjoy least?

Changing the light bulbs.

If you were going to light a show on a desert island, what three things would you take with you?

I would just take one thing with me – my trusted production electrician, Tim Bray. I try not to go anywhere without him.

What keeps you awake at night? Not much, I love to sleep on my problems. My

most used phrase is, “In my sleep I worked out we could.....”

What common piece of kit would you be least likely to



find in one of your rigs? A followspot.

What/who have been the major influences on your work? I use a lot of artwork to express my self. Hopper has been the most inspirational of all the artists.

What’s the most useful thing you have learnt as a lighting designer? Be truthful to the work you are involved in and have fun even when everything around you is falling apart.

How would you like to be remembered?

As a teacher. #

Sustainable Light

Our own carbon neutral man, Nick Moran, visits the Arcola Theatre in East London



In a crowded market in East London, The Arcola Theatre has been raising its profile in recent years. Recently, not content with winning arts awards for its productions and for the venue itself, the Arcola has been promoting itself as “the world’s first carbon neutral venue”.

Aspiring to zero emissions

It’s a big claim, and if you read the small print in the most recent press release you would discover a few caveats: Firstly, the status of world’s first carbon neutral theatre is an aspiration, not an assertion of its present position, and secondly, difficulties securing the freehold of the building have put some of their plans on hold.

However, Dr. Ben Todd, the Arcola’s executive director and the man behind the aspiration, is not one to be deterred by mere present circumstances. Ben is an engineer with enormous

personal energy, and a fascination for the way theatre can make things happen. For Ben the ability of theatre to enable change goes way beyond the usual aspiration of getting the audience to think differently about x or y.

“Theatre people make things happen - often with very few resources. And they have an enthusiasm that makes others want to get involved.” Ben Todd

At the Arcola, the involvement ranges from youth and community outreach projects, engaging local trades-people, performance classes and technical training, and encouraging volunteers – like many arts venues, the place relies on volunteers.

The mission

Now Ben has a mission that includes changing people’s minds about what it is possible

to do right now to slow down the rate of climate change. He has ideas, and the Mayor of London is interested in them. The most recent one to be tried out, in collaboration with Simple8 and Strawberry Vale Productions, is the “Sustainable Production”. *The Living Unknown Soldier* (abbreviated to LUS), is a play based on a story by Jean Yves-Le Naour, adapted by its director Sebastian Armesto. It is a first attempt at mounting a production with the intention of leaving as little environmental damage in its wake as possible.

A sustainable production

The route to a sustainable production starts with small things, using re-cycled pulp for scripts and programmes, and counting staples. (According to Wasteonline; “if everyone in UK offices used one less staple a day we would save 72 tonnes of metal each year.”) LUS’s

production team aimed for “zero waste to landfill”. This puts some constraints on set and costume design, and choice of props; sustainably produced timber from local sources for example, and making use of re-cycled material where ever possible (not that this is ever off the agenda for costume designers and / or supervisors on fringe shows).

Stage management and cast were asked to look at how they could reduce their environmental impact too – walking or cycling whenever possible and cutting down on water and energy consumption in the rehearsal room for example.

For the most part, the members of the company and production team didn’t have to do too much different to substantially reduce the company’s carbon footprint. Global Action Plan worked with the company to produce a carbon audit of the

production and it is hoped that this will help the next production team to take a step closer to the first truly carbon neutral production. However for Lighting Designer Andy Downie the demands of striving for sustainability had a much bigger impact. Dr Todd has secured a hydrogen fuel cell for the theatre – and that powers lighting for the show and the bar. OK, so what does this mean to Andy? It’s a 5kW fuel cell, and as if that was not enough, at least 500W has been earmarked for the brand-new LED lighting system in the foyer and bar area.

Minimal power

I met Andy and Writer/ Director Sebastian Armesto with the Arcola’s Technical Manager David Salter at the theatre in January. I asked

Andy, how he intended to go about lighting a show in the 150 seat studio theatre with a maximum available power load of only 4500 Watts? This is less than would be available from two 13A sockets. Any other show in the Arcola's Studio 1 would be able to access almost 10 times more power than this.

Because of their low energy consumption, LEDs were high on the agenda – Ben already planned to use them in the bar and foyer, and had strongly hinted that they could make a big contribution to the production too. Andy had reservations, both because of their colour temperature and their poor dimming.

Alphabet soup?

We discussed the need to keep a proportion of the load available for tungsten incandescent lanterns for faces. LEDs might work on the set – most of which is a flat “wall of remembrance”. Low Voltage 50W Birdies would have a place in the rig – but then they do in most studio theatre rigs,

and we discussed dimmable fluorescents and other low energy sources. We spoke too about Colour Rendition Index or CRI. This is a measure of how well healthy human eyes are able to differentiate between colours illuminated by a particular light source. A score of 100 means the light source is as good as sunlight, and even subtly different shades can be distinguished throughout the spectrum. “Studio” lamps are usually quoted to have a CRI around 95, while the cheapest fluorescent lamps can have a CRI as low as 60. The often quoted minimum for human comfort is 70*. As some of us are only too aware, there are light sources that have such a low CRI that faces look unnatural and the subtlety of the scenic artist is completely wasted – and nobody wanted that.

Bryan Raven at White Light subsequently set up a demo for Andy of a range of LED and other low energy products. For the show, White Light provided 375W lamps for ETC Source

Four profiles. These lanterns usually have 575W or 750W lamps. Andy used three per side to provide the main face lighting. Also in the rig were LED Color-Bars, used to illuminate the set, some Robert-Juliat dimmable fluorescents, used at top light and fill, six 375W Source Four pars, used as back light for one scene when the face light was off, and a selection of Birdies. White Light also made available some larger LED fixtures, including three GLP moving wash lights, which Andy used to produce a spectacular battle field scene, commented on by Radio 4's Front Row. The other large LED fixtures did get rigged, but were not used in the eventual design.

Post mortem time

After the press night Andy and I talked again about the experience. He had been very glad of his Source Fours – Andy's background is in dance and he is very comfortable handling the quality of light produced by these lanterns at this

relatively shallow angle. They never ran at more than 60%, and at this throw, (less than 6m) the 375W lamp clearly provides plenty of intensity. The other success was the Color-Bars. Even their slight imperfections worked well in the context of their job on this show – though it is questionable how happy any LD would be with these units lighting a traditional white cyc (see pictures over page).

LED Color-Block units were used to transform the back wall of the set

What Andy felt didn't work for him were the larger LED fixtures – and for me his

reason was slightly surprising. His main objection was not colour temperature or CRI, it was that they were distracting. Since the audience are on three sides, at least some of the audience can see the face of these units where ever they are rigged. As they execute a cue, either dimming or changing colour, they become a little light show all of their own. The thing that makes these units a “must have” for certain TV shows makes them unsuitable for the intimate setting of a studio theatre. I wonder if “top hats” of some kind might solve this particular issue?



Dynamic Ben Todd.

Arcola Theatre in East London

Quality of light

As we played with the new toys during the fit-up, I found the quality of light from the GLP units very usable on faces – but they probably were set up with too narrow a beam to be much use at such a low trim height (around 3m).

Design-limiting issues

Another interesting comment illustrates that it is not just our practice that will need to change to accommodate low energy rigs. On several occasions, Andy had wanted to use specials to isolate a single actor on stage. With access to so few lanterns his choices were clearly limited. However the short time available for technical and dress rehearsals, and a wider failure to engage with a need for accurate and repeatable blocking meant he had to abandon these design ideas. There is something about modern acting technique on stage that resists “hitting a mark”. While this is common

in film, and on a dance stage, actors on a live stage (often encouraged by their directors) prefer the freedom of responding in the moment to their space, and feel over constrained when “forced” to say particular lines from the same definitive marks each performance. While we can just about get away with this if we have access follow spots (or to a high tech moving light rig?) an LD with a low-energy rig is going to find it harder. As Andy said; “one of the actors had three specials through the piece, and on the final preview didn’t hit any of them”. When that happens, the LD has little option but to re-think and go back to areas rather than specials.

Results

Overall, Andy was reasonably pleased with the results of his work. The reaction of informed audience members was positive too. Anna Beech, who was at the press night representing the team working on the Mayor of

London Greening London’s Theatres Action Plan was very positive. She agreed that the show achieves its aim of making a step towards a sustainable production “without compromising on the artistic integrity of the piece.”

Cost factors

Sustainable does not necessarily mean cheaper – at least not in the short term. Savings can come in various areas:

1. Reducing transport costs (e.g. cast and crew walking or cycling whenever practicable and using local suppliers should mean less money spent on long distance transport)
2. Reduced cost of disposing of set etc. at the end of the run (councils generally pick up compostable material free rather than charging to collect material that will go to land-fill)
3. Reduced electricity bills (the primary motivation behind the move to low energy lighting for every part of the building apart from



The Living Unknown Soldier

Above: Trailing the Color-Blocks on the show’s back wall (the units were eventually rigged above the flatage).

Below: Small changes in values on the desk produce big changes in colour with these fixtures. The unevenness of the colour worked well on this set, but would not be to all tastes in other situations.



the stages at the National Theatre is reducing their mammoth electricity bill)

However, there are capital start-up costs to consider too:

1. Buying all those low energy lamps for toilets, back-stage, work-rooms etc. and the control gear to go with them, including movement sensors and potentially power-factor correction

2. Sustainable and recyclable materials are rarely the cheapest option, even taking into account that you are not paying the increasing cost of disposing of them to land-fill

3. Low-energy production lighting can't yet be bought for a snip second-hand on e-bay and restored by enthusiastic volunteers.

There is another cost – less obvious perhaps, but which also needs to be factored in; the cost, in preproduction time and production time, of learning to work with new kit in new ways. Getting to know how to light stages with a new set of tools takes time

– time to understand how the new tools work individually, in showrooms, and time to learn how they work together, in the performance space. As lighting professionals we need to make sure this is factored into schedules, and fee structures.

One important point Ben is keen to make is that this sustainable production could not have happened without generous support from many sponsors. The fuel cell came from Idatech, via the London Hydrogen Partnership. It also attracted funding from DCMS, ACE, the London Mayor and Hackney Council. Lighting equipment came from White Light hire and James Thomas Engineering (PixelRange), with the desk being supplied by ETC. (The Arcola's house desk is not able to drive the LED fixtures supplied by White Light. ETC also provided Adam Bennette to help Andy programme the desk, a SmartFade ML)

Adam and Andy using a lap top to interrogate the SmartFade ML lighting desk.

So what happens next?

As power becomes more expensive, and regulations limit its use, we will need to ensure that we use the most energy efficient equipment available for each job. For LDs this might mean LEDs or fluorescents in some instances. In other instances it might mean the 120Volt Source Fours specified by Huge Vanstone recently – in order to get the most light on stage for every Watt used. It probably means changing the almost automatic assumption that tungsten is best almost everywhere and fighting to keep our familiar inefficient incandescent lanterns for those special roles where nothing else will do (yet). It certainly means coming to terms with and learning how to use different sources, but as LDs we have done this before – in my own working life T-class lamps gave way to tungsten-halogen and then on some stages to discharge lamped moving lights. On some European stages incandescent lamps

are already being phased out, more for aesthetic reasons than environmental ones. The introduction of focusable spot lights at the beginning of the Twentieth Century enabled new practices throughout theatre to largely abandon sets made of painted cloths lit by batons, where the performer had to move down stage towards the footlight to be clearly seen. The “new lights” encouraged three dimensional scenery and gave actors the freedom to move and speak from anywhere on stage. Perhaps environmentally aware lighting practice could enable a similar revolution in theatre making?

Many low energy sources are OK at short throw, but unsuitable for distance work. Generally speaking, to make efficient use of a reflector and lens system you need to start with an intense and compact light source. Most low energy lamps – LEDs included, don't fit that bill. In a studio theatre getting the

kit close to the performers is not too much of a problem. Andy used Robert Juliat fluorescents over the stage, less than 1m above the taller performers. On larger stages we may have to get used to light sources cunningly concealed to be closer to the performers – built into the set perhaps or a return to banks of footlight. An alternative could be costume that lights up. Fashion designers are already working on clothes that generate power from the movement of the wearer and use that power to glow. If the LD could control that glow, and work with a choreographer and the costume designer...

It doesn't all have to be negative – accepting the challenge of the new and moulding it to our purpose is what theatre people have always done – now who can we persuade to sponsor a new set of awards for sustainable shows with artistic integrity? #

Office Oracle

Latest news from Ian's production desk

2008 Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Association of Lighting Designers will take place at 11.30am on Saturday 31st May 2008 at the Young Vic Theatre in London.

Due to the limited availability of members of the Executive during this year's ABTT show, it has been necessary to move the AGM away from its traditional slot in June. However, we will still be pleased to see you attend and your input is required more than previously. We are hoping to be able to have a social meeting during the 2008 ABTT show.

The last nine months has seen the executive working on a new strategy to take the Association forward over the next five years, and now they need your input. Be among the first to hear of the plans and discuss them further both within the meeting and after at the bar.

If you are able to attend, please email meetings@ald.

org.uk so we can assess how many chairs we will require on the day. We will be meeting from 11am in the Young Vic bar for a coffee, before getting down to business at 11.30. It is intended to keep the formal business part of the meeting as short as possible to enable us to discuss what the ALD is and should be doing for its members.

The information will also appear in the June/July edition of *Focus*, with a full report and feedback from the AGM appearing in the August /September edition.

2008/09 Subscriptions

By now all members who do not pay by standing order should have received a statement of how much they owe the ALD for the next year, together with a 'Details Held' form to confirm their current information on the office database. Please remember that the deadline for payment of your fees is 1st July 2008.

Payment can be by cheque, sent to the office, by credit card via the website (please note that we charge an admin fee to cover any charges we incur from Paypal), or you can download a standing order form from the website and send it either to your bank or the office.

Those members that pay by standing order will receive their new membership card sticker and the 'Details Held' form once we have confirmed your payment has been received by our bank.

Website Updated

If you log into your profile page of the ALD website, you will now be see a new option in the menu list in the left hand column entitled 'Members Page'. Here you will find a new range of information and forms to be able to download or reference, as well as a link to the online payments page and to the Charities Buying Group and other members'

benefits as they come online. We are also looking into the logistics of how to be able to offer back copies of *Focus* to view online in this area, and we'll let you know more as and when we know more!

The ALD Filing Cabinet contains the standing order form, a guide to payments, the fees database feedback form for professionals, the ALD Contract rider and suggested fees document, and we hope to add more in the future.

We are also trying out a new Jobs page. So whether you are looking for a full time job, part time job or some casual work or looking for someone to fill a position within your company, then drop the office a line with the relevant details and we'll see what we can do to get people in touch.

So log into the site, update your details direct to the database, utilise the facility to upload your pictures to



support your show credits and renew your membership in one easy on-line session.

And don't forget to give us your feedback or suggestions for other features, and we'll see what we can do!

Fees Database Feedback Form

The ALD has started to create and maintain a database of current fees being paid throughout the industry. This will help the Association to assess the trends and fee levels to assist future lobbying campaigns, as well as creating a resource that members can call upon to request up to date information. Please note that only contributing professional members will be able to call upon the database for reference.

A form was sent out to professional members via email in October. If you are a professional member not registered to receive ALD news by email and wish to receive a copy of the feedback form, please contact the office.

The more extensive and accurate the submission, the more useful it will be in the future. Submitted information will be treated in strictest confidence and no attributable reference will be made to an individual's return.

You are welcome to submit any information relating to shows you have worked on during 2007 retrospectively, and in the near future we hope to be able to offer the feedback form as a download from the website should you have misplaced the original file.

SBTD Collaborators at the V&A

A brief reminder that the V&A Museum continues to present the Society of

British Theatre Designers' Collaborators Exhibition in Galleries 103 to 106. The ALD joint exhibit is present showing the work of a dozen members from various scales and projects from 2003 to 2007, as well as a handful of lighting designer exhibiting in their own right. The exhibition is open until the end of the year and shows a wide diversity of designs from UK designers on shows both here and abroad. #



Dates for your diaries

12th May
29-30th April
28-29th May
11th & 12th June
1st July
1st July
7th – 10th September
May 2009

Deadline for Focus Copy
AC Lighting North Trade Show *
PerformTech Trade Show, RSAMD, Glasgow *
ABTT Show 2008 *
Deadline for subscription payment
Deadline for *Michael Northen Bursary* entries
PLASA 08 *
Showlight 09 – Glasgow

*the ALD will have a presence at these events

New Members

Professional

David Eversfield, New Zealand. **Elizabeth A Powell**, West Dumbartonshire.
Anna Watson, London. **James Farncombe**, London

From associate

Peter Harrison, Faversham. **Richard Howell**, London. **Steve Lowe**, London.
Andy Webb, Cirencester

Associate

Ian McCarthy, Teddington. **Paul Pilkington**, Southport. **Chris Sayce**, Fareham

Students

Johnnie Blows, London. **Josh Pharo**, Shrewsbury. **Michael Smith**, London.
Jim Bristow, Petersfield

Corporate

Nick Cooke, UK Project Manager. Schnick Schnack Systems GmbH, UK Office,
8-11 Willow Walk, Orpington, Kent, BR6 7AA

“Am I Lit HERE?”

No, this isn't a rip-off of Francis Reid's article in *Tabs* March 1973, even though that still makes *Jim Woodley* chuckle. This is his version of it though...

Back in 1979, I had taken on a short contract to work at the renowned Half Moon Theatre in London's East End. The interview for the job took place on the pavement outside the old Half Moon theatre premises in Alie Street on a hot, late summer, afternoon. Rob Walker (artistic director), Mick Bearwish (designer) and I were sprawled on the pavement with several vats of ale (well, it was a hot afternoon) discussing The Job. We were also questioning the meaning of life and the upcoming production of *Hamlet* which was to be performed in the newly acquired premises on the Mile End road, starring Frances de la Tour as Hamlet.

I can't recall exactly how or why I had got the job – it could've been the amount of ale consumed, or just that I was unphased about the

project. The new premises only had a mains intake, so not only would I be designing the lighting, but also the installation proper. Both Rob and Mick might have been swayed by my idea of having Frances in a permanent followspot throughout the play, but to be honest, I was more interested in working at the Half Moon. It had a formidable reputation for the quality of its productions and for that reason alone, I wasn't interested in large amounts of money. The Half Moon, at that time, had a basic wage structure, meaning that all staff and performers were paid the same; and it wasn't a large sum either.

Lets get back to that follow spot, which is the reason for both the title and content of this article. Mick had decided that the production was to be in a promenade-style, possibly because there was no

seating in the new venue, and 'promenade' would eliminate the need for seats. This can always throw up problems with regard to lighting, hence my thoughts of followspotting.

“This is ridiculous - is there any light on me here at all, because if there is - I can't f***ing find it!”

I can't remember exactly where or when I had seen this device used, I have a sneaky feeling it had been in a recent production of *King Lear* with Paul Schofield, but I wouldn't stake money on that fact! Rob Walker was initially horrified at the prospect, but he assumed I was going for the variety/music hall style of big and unsubtle. This was probably as a result of research into female actors playing Hamlet – they all seemed to have opted for the

principal boy approach. After explaining that mine was to be a subtle, soft focused, pin spot, he warmed a little, and even Mick began to get enthused too.

Jump forward to the technical week, and the follow spot has now acquired a break-up gobo. My reason for that was to uphold the idea that Hamlet carried the ghost of his father with him at all times. It would be the same style gobo that was used on the actor playing his father when we, the audience, saw him and, yes, I have to admit that was a bit of LD spin... but it worked. The promenade set had three main elements and one smaller one - the set that is the scene for this anecdote is a large slatted, wooden, throne for Frances to sit in and emote. We're halfway through one of these scenes when Frances stops 'emoting' and starts

chuntering. It soon becomes apparent that she is feeling very underlit in this scene, but as LD/operator I developed sudden deafness at this point (as one often does). However, the chuntering becomes a bit more verbose to the point of bloody mindedness. I have to admit that at this point, the similarities to Francis's previous article are alarming. Very quickly a mild sotto-voce “*I don't think I can be seen very well here..*” soon escalated into “*Look, how can I be expected to act with no light to speak of?*” followed by “*This is ridiculous – is there any light on me here at all, because if there is – I can't f***ing find it!*” I was never one to take such scathing comment without riposte, however, before I could swing into high dudgeon, Rob Walker decided to intervene and pour oil on troubled waters.

It was always one of his policies to throw problems into an open forum, and so we had a major discussion between everyone on the subject, with me extolling the virtues of the followspot enabling more subtle lighting of areas to concentrate the audience's attention on Frances. More 'spin' from me, but it has to be done at times like this. I have to say here that Frances is still the finest Hamlet I've lit so far (this was the first of four Hamlets for me) and there had been no previous animosity or problems at all with the production on any level. We were helped by the delicious Maggie Steed as Gertrude, who can always be relied on for a merry quip and flare of nostrils, to deflate a situation – even on a cold morning in October, dressed by Iona Macleish in a 'costume idea' exposing her breasts. The venue was SO cold at the time that Maggie was heard to exclaim, "*F**k, me nips are freezing!*"

There was only one recourse open to me – swap places with Frances to let

her see for herself what the lighting was like, and how the followspot actually worked in my scheme of things. I had suggested using a member of stage management for this, but sadly they were all on the short side in comparison to Frances. So it was down to me by default, mind you, at 6' 5" I was, perhaps, a tad taller than Ms. de la Tour, and my acting skills made it all too obvious as to why I was an LD rather than a performer. Twenty minutes later (yes 20!) Frances was suitably satisfied, if stifling a chuckle or two, and we changed back. Before you think that twenty minutes on one area of set is a trifle OTT, let me explain that she insisted on seeing me on the other acting areas, and in as many of the lighting states as she could.

It was terrifying to find one's lighting so exposed, but it was also very satisfying to show a performer that you are right. Although perhaps 'right' is the wrong word here – but it is always a bonus when a member of the acting company takes an interest in

the technical side of things. Mind you, it only works if your LD ideas and waffle are proven, and so a side order of humble pie is always waiting in these situations. It has to be said that, over the years, many actors have sidled up to me at various points of a production week and whispered in my ear that they enjoy being in a production that is lit by me, because

they know that they'll always be lit wherever they are on the stage. They hasten to add that they don't mean in a bright OTT way, but that they know they can be seen, whatever the light levels! Although on one production an actor collared me in the green room to say that he intended staying out in the garden for Act Two as it was so nicely lit, warm and

sunny....and he often felt like a doze... That evening, he duly went for his sojourn into the garden, and sat in his chair as normal. About five or so minutes later a member of stage management had to persuade another actor to exit through the garden on some pretext or other, in order to wake said other actor up as his snoring was upsetting the star of the production. #

*Maggie was heard to exclaim, "F**k, me nips are freezing!"*



LIGHTING DRAMA

We are very pleased to welcome *The Guardian's* drama critic Lyn Gardner, with her thoughts about recent lighting designs.

Some years ago BAC programmed a season of theatre completely in the dark. Unable to see the work, audiences were forced to fall back on their other senses. Touch, sound and even smell all became infinitely more important. The lack of visuals made the audience work harder. We had to concentrate really intently, lean forward in our seats to make sure we didn't miss a word, a sound, any clue that we might grasp onto rather like shipwreck survivors clinging to a perilous life raft. It was hugely disorientating.

Lighting can point the way

It made me think how much in the theatre we rely on the visual and – in particular – on the lighting to signpost us along the way in the journey of a play, to tell us what to

think and feel. The big West End musicals are shameless about it: at the end of the first Act One of *Jersey Boys*, the reprise of 'Walk Like a Man' is staged with the full glare of lights in the audience's face in the final moments. Lighting designer Howard Binkley sends us out to the interval – and our first opportunity to voice our opinion of the show – on an energy high that is quite literary dazzling. Cunning stuff.

It seems to me that we are as much in thrall to clever and effective lighting as we are to the director's notes in the programme or a piece of dialogue or action underscored by an evocative piece of music. The difference is that we often notice the director's notes or the underscoring, and yet in many cases the lighting

remains all but invisible to us. Lighting strikes me as being a bit like breathing, as soon as you start noticing it becomes difficult and noisy, sometimes a little laboured.

It is this invisibility, our failure to notice it even when it is staring us in the face that makes lighting one of the most powerful tools in the theatre. The fact that it is often – perhaps even at its best – when inconspicuous may be an eternal sorrow to lighting designers who so seldom get the importance of their work acknowledged, but it makes it all the more mysterious and potent. As soon as it's not there we notice its absence, but when it is, we are seduced and let it put its spell on us. I always love that moment when you come back after the interval at the Open Air theatre and darkness and

fallen and suddenly the light becomes obvious.

Lighting in the past...

It must be similar to what a 17th century theatre goer must have felt moving from the well-worn of afternoon performances in day light that were the fashion of the day to the indoor performances that demanded illumination by candlelight. Or the same wonder that 19th century audiences must have felt on the introduction of limelight. Limelight, of course, seems absurdly unsophisticated to us today, but at one time it was a new technology. It is worth remembering that in an age in which we constantly demand what we can do with technology, but too seldom ask what technology is doing to us. The influence of limelight is clear to see on

the form and content of 19th century theatre.

...and lighting in the present

But back to the present. Light doesn't just guide the eye to one particular place, it provides a unity for a production. Take *The Harder They Come*, Theatre Royal Stratford East's transfer of its stage version of the 1972 cult movie, currently at the Barbican. It is a sweetly shambolic affair. Kerry Michael and Dawn Reid's production generally ignores all the traditions of the West End musical and the references of the show are all too Jamaican popular culture not Broadway's teeth and smiles showstoppers. There is no breaking into the next big number, everything seems to grow organically. But in a show that is constantly

Joanna Francis and Rolan Bell in *The Harder They Come*, Theatre Royal Stratford East's transfer of its stage version of the 1972 cult movie, currently at the Barbican. Lighting by Jo Joelson. Photo: Robert Day





*Ian McDiarmid as Otto Bannister (left) and Andrew Sheridan as Jonah Teale in *Jonah and Otto* by Robert Holman at the Royal Exchange, Manchester. Lighting by Richard Owen. All photos by Jonathan Keenan.*



“Owen’s lighting lets the audience know precisely what time it is”



bleeding around the edges, and which parades a deliberate and often startling disconnect between action and sound and also pays few concessions to the ear unfamiliar with Jamaican patois and folklore, there is one thing that holds it all together: the lighting. With its shades of red and white interplayed with green this is hardly lighting at its most subtle, but in an evening that might otherwise create confusions about exactly where to look, where the sound originates, what is being said and sung, the lighting offers the audience some pointers.

A play with no words

It is not alone. How would we cope with the 1 hour and 45 minutes of *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* at the National without the luminous intensity of Jean Kalman's exquisite lighting? There are no words here to help us on our way, but Kalman's lighting not only supplies the time frame of the play but in its sweet,

subtle glow seems acutely attuned to the rhythm and structure of Handke's day in the life of a town square so that the lighting seems like a character in itself hanging around on the periphery and only coming to the fore in the final climatic moments.

Adding subtext to the drama

Up in Manchester at the Royal Exchange something similar goes on with Richard Owen's lighting for *Jonah and Otto*, Robert Holman's two hander set on the Sussex coast. Holman's wonderful, humane play is set precisely over 22 hours beginning at midnight in a walled garden and finishing around 10pm the next day and Owen's lighting lets the audience know precisely what time it is. But the signposting is about much more than the passing of the hours, it follows the emotional arc of the play and underpins the changing and changeable relationship between the elderly Otto and the young Jonah. This is not just about evoking mood—although it

does so very well. It is about something more, as if Owen's lighting adds a subtext to the drama, something playing not over but underneath the written text.

Lighting's ability to conceal

But lighting has another job too in the theatre. Sometimes it is not there to illuminate but to hide and that's very much the case in Matt Prentice's superb lighting for Punchdrunk's *The Masque of the Red Death* that has been packing them in at BAC since last October.

Prentice's job has been as much about hiding things as illuminating them, about guiding the audience where not to look rather than where to look, and always helping to create the illusion that we have left 2007 and Lavender Hill

and stumbled into a parallel universe of Victorian insane asylums and music halls, mouldering morgues and grand ballrooms. There is a perfumery where the bottles seem to be aglow like bright jewels; a sudden shaft of slatted light in the morgue that makes you jump with its unexpected purity amongst so much decay; and gloomy corridors stuffed full of Gothic horrors and where the lighting plays such tricks that you think you've seen ghosts. What's interesting about a

great deal of this lighting is that it is the opposite of the high tech lighting of the modern theatre. The majority of what you see, is seen with minimal light, the lowest wattage light bulb; a guttering candle. It's a show that proves that sometimes in the theatre less can be a great deal more. #

"How would we cope with the 1 hour and 45 minutes of 'The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other' at the National without the luminous intensity of Jean Kalman's exquisite lighting?" Photo: Neil Libbert.



It's a Linnebach Moon

To begin our new mini-series on traditional lighting design tricks, James Laws explains one of the fundamentals of lighting effects which, coincidentally, he just happened to be using in a recent show...

Earlier this year I was asked to light *Cyrano De Bergerac* at the Haymarket Theatre Basingstoke, for Anvil Arts. This production was directed by Guy Slater, for whom I had worked as resident lighting designer when he ran the Horseshoe Theatre Company from the Haymarket in the 1970s. The designer was Becs Andrews, who had won the 2005 Linbury Prize and

managed to keep a lot of Basingstoke scene shifters very busy in 2008.

Lunatics

Cyrano is a play of five scenes, three in the first half, two in the second. As *Cyrano*, the central male character, has a lunar affinity, the moon featured in all five scenes, gaining progressive importance through the course of the play.

It was a decorative flown piece in scene 1, a 17th century theatre. It became a discreet marker of time of night in scene 2 which was a pastrycook's at dawn, and scene 3, it was in seen from a Paris square at night. By scene 4, a barricade at the siege of Arras, the moon became an intrusive reminder of the start of a day of fighting against impossible odds. Scene 5 was a convent's



The 7" moon



7" moon at 6 foot throw



Cyrano scene 3 Linnebach moon

garden at dusk, and the moon arrived to claim *Cyrano*.

Many moons, which technique?

So, scene 1 had a flown scenic moon. Scenes 4 and 5 could have a projected gobo from a 5-degree Source 4 FOH, but what of scenes 2 and 3? There was the added complication that the cyc was only 6 ft upstage of the false proscenium and there was no flying space between them and no room behind. There was also scenery across the false proscenium, a bakery window and some metal-clad

screens. This dictated that the moon, however arranged, had to be projected from a source on a stand just upstage of the proscenium but from that point any image risked gross distortion as it was projected onstage.

Enter Adolph...

A crescent moon is a simple shape and, being a simple soul, I elected to use a Linnebach projection, named after Adolph Linnebach, who took out patents in 1927. In its simplest form, this means projecting a silhouette shape

via a spot bulb in a blackened box with no lens or reflector. A suitably doctored Pattern 743, 8" Fresnel is ideal. However, there are certain rules, some of which are illustrated.

Rule 1: Use the most compact filament lamp possible, so a biplane T/19 is better than a monoplane T/11. This because the smallest detail that can be shown is approximately the size of the light source.

Rule 2: The best detail will be shown when the lamp is as far from the cut-out as possible, so fitting it to the outer edge of the barndoors is a start. As the Linnebach system is a wide angle one, putting the lantern into spot focus is no problem. The size of the cutout can easily be worked out by trial & error with cardboard. As they say on *Blue Peter*, "Ask your



mum for an old cornflake packet and some blunt-nosed scissors..."

Rule 3: If an angled projection is required, an undistorted cut-out (which is easiest to make) is quite usable, providing the cut-out is parallel with the cyc in both planes and the surrounds are masked by blackwrap.

In production

We were soon in lunar orbit, with lithoplate used in place of cardboard, as the technical rehearsal began. In stark contrast to our *Blue Peter* approach to effects, the sound designer was profiling every cue on a laptop, a process that probably added a working day to the tech but presumably meant that one electrician could press a button for lights and a button for sound and not worry about fading either by eye or by ear. When we reached scene 4, both the sound designer and my assistant were sitting in the stalls, trawling the web for plaintive but martial 17th century French bagpipes. Quite extraordinary. #



Vertical projection angle (top) creates distortion of the image (below).



With the cutout parallel to the cyc (top) the image is undistorted (below).



Pro's Platform

Guy Kornetzki steps onto our soapbox to ask: Is the Gherkin afraid of the pinspot?



Earlier this month I read an article that seemed to emanate fear. Fear of me. And you.

It featured in one of the leading professional architecture lighting magazines, Mondo*Arc, and was written, surprisingly, by a lighting designer. And one that started, some 20 years ago, as a performance LD no less.

Sharon Stammers, who incidentally also heads the UK office of the Professional Lighting Design Association (PLDA), wrote about light festivals as temporary, theatrical(!) events in cities, and their influence on architecture lighting design.

Naturally I was intrigued, as an LD who walks the line between architecture and performance/installation lighting, to read how architecture LDs view our

contribution to their industry. It was frankly rather socking!

As a result I felt the need to 'defend' the honour of performance LDs everywhere, but more importantly to correct some fundamental misconceptions which are at the heart of our profession.

Ms Stammers claimed that although festivals of light offer great social and cultural merits in the community, ultimately they are mainly aimed at the advancement of creators and the sponsoring manufacturers.

Though we may like to think we are household names, in truth hardly anyone attending these art events would know the manufacturers or creators of light installations.

Besides, I don't think these events should promote individuals. They are about the celebration of Light, art and the community.

Ms Stammers was asking the reader to consider whether such light installations were in fact detrimental to the architecture lighting design profession. Amongst other reasons, she noted that light artists will not have the technical and legislative knowledge needed, to produce a light installation in the public domain.

Firstly, with regards to H&S: it is essential of course, in the interest of public safety, to follow the relevant guidelines. But I believe it is equally important to preserve the free creative spirit. The artist's expression is and must remain at the heart of such installations. After all, light festivals are foremost art events not mathematical equations.

Secondly, are architecture LDs so insecure about their creative work that they

would consider another use of Light, for artistic expression, "detrimental" to their profession?

Ms Stammers noted that all such festivals of light inject such events with a sense of theatricality(!) and she feared this came at the unjustified expense of architecture and the nature of space.

Firstly, why is theatricality referred to as a negative influence in architecture lighting?!

Secondly, we all know this claim is utter nonsense! One of the fundamental aspects of any dramatic project is the answer to the question 'where are we' in its widest sense. Unlike architecture that has to deal with only a single space, the creative team has several types of space to consider at once: from the stage and auditorium as architectural spaces, to the numerous

fictional spaces described in the source material. So in fact, in the 'made-up' world of performance lighting design, it is arguably more important to address the subject of space then it is in architectural lighting design.

Ms Stammers claimed that temporary light installations make it harder for architecture lighting designers to justify their work. Mainly the extensive preparations and fees being charged. I guess this is because temporary light installations are perceived as much easier to install and take down, yet produce maximum impact on the spectator.

Another puzzling statement! We all know that a temporary installation is actually harder to put on because of its temporary



nature. A lot more planning and coordination takes place in order to compensate for lack of permanent elements like power, rigging and crowd control.

Mrs Stammers claimed that if funds are available, they would be better spent on

a permanent lighting scheme rather than on a temporary installation.

Each type of installation answers a different set of objectives and therefore should not be pitted against each other. A light installation is essentially experienced

as a conceptual statement by an artist. It is provoking yet entertaining, but must be practical in order to be realised. A permanent light scheme on the other hand is mainly practical, it provides illumination, albeit in an aesthetic form.

And this is a point worth emphasising: it should be clear that for either discipline to produce successful results, both should combine aesthetics and practicality in some measure.

Ms Stammers suggested that temporary light installations can actually confuse the spectators with regards to what is 'good' and 'bad' lighting.

I can't see how a light installation, good or bad (and these are problematic terms anyway), can influence a spectator's view on the use of light. Certainly not more than an architecture light scheme would. In fact, I would suggest that temporary light installations would only excite and open spectators' minds to the varied uses of light, thus encouraging permanent

light schemes to follow suit.

And finally on the subject of good lighting, Ms Stammers is clearly a talented designer because she seemed concerned someone will steal her design ideas if presented in an event like a festival of light.

We are all concerned with copyright issues and protecting our designs, but I don't see how a temporary light installation poses any more risk of copycats than a similarly public architecture light scheme. In fact, a permanent installation will only give a copycat more time to steal every last detail properly...

I don't think temporary light installations come at the expense of permanent lighting schemes. In the same way, a performance LD/light artist should not replace a competent, creative architecture LD. Each practitioner provides a different vision by working to a different brief, as is fitting from their respected qualifications and approach.

How will a potential client

know which one to use? Simply put, in the same way that we would discourage an architecture LD from designing a performance, I would like to think we would refer a permanent light scheme to an architecture LD.

Conclusion

This apparent fear of theatricality in the architecture lighting industry worries me. And sadly, Ms Stammers is not the only professional LD in that industry expressing these views.

Yet something else is worrying me even more: it seems we are to blame for this. LDs like me, who have branched out from performance into architecture lighting design, are said to be the source of this negative influence in architecture lighting.

I will be keeping a very close, and pro-active, eye on this and report back. #

Devoted and Disgruntled?

D&D: a forum for debate and most importantly a place to start action. Nick Moran explains...

“Devoted and Disgruntled” has been the cry from Phelim McDermott and Julian Crouch of Improbable Theatre every January for the last few years. Like most of us who have anything to do with the smaller subsidised theatre companies and “Fringe”, I have been in pub discussions that started at previous D&Ds. Increasingly, I realised that I was not as informed as I thought I was on a range of interesting subjects. I’d read articles from previous events that raised important, amusing, silly and challenging issues and this year I decided to see what it was like to be part of the event.

The headline idea is simple – gather a bunch of theatre people in a large space and see what concerns them most. Get them to set the agenda themselves, using a format called Open Space (details at www.openspaceuk.com). Each session nominally lasts 90 minutes, and there are up

to 20 sessions happening at any one time. The “kick off” presided over by Phelim, invites anyone present to raise an issue for a session, then choose a time to run it. No subject is off limits. The session leader is the only one obliged to stay to the end of the discussion, everyone else is invited to use “the law of two feet” – if you are not contributing to or learning from a session, leave it! Phelim explains that this prevents sessions becoming a platform for one or two strident opinions, and keeps everyone focused on the task in hand.

The alternative title is “What are we going to do about theatre”, and perhaps that is what makes this lively event more than just a talking shop. Part of the responsibility of session leader is to write up notes on the session, including resolutions and proposed actions. These documents were printed and

posted on a wall for others to add comments. On the Monday they were compiled into a single document and made available to delegates. The document is also published on Improbable’s web site www.improbable.co.uk/show_channel.asp – What are we going to do about theatre?)

Some of the most heated debate was about funding and the Arts Council – not surprising given their recent actions. But even these discussions retained a “so what are we going to do?” approach. Other sessions were light hearted (“I’m a juggler- will you ever respect me?” – answers on a postcard please). There were debates which sometimes revealed just how little we know of the way others in our business think and work. A session I kicked off around “planning vs. devising” ran into several brick walls as performers and designers failed to see

the pressures and difficulties each has, while one on “where to find design and production support people for devised work” revealed that devising companies are very reluctant to employ anyone they don’t know really well, which explains why they constantly have a shortage of staff.

Another debate asked “what ever happened to the lighting session?” which continued the debate started in *Focus* by Jo Town. We (Tony Simpson, Malcolm Ripeth and I) made several producers and directors aware of what they might be missing by agreeing to losing the lighting session. This was one of several sessions that will continue at follow-up events at Shunt Vaults from 7pm on the first Wednesday of every month.

For me, much of the most interesting debate was in the tea queue, between sessions or, inevitably, in the pub.

Initiatives to pool knowledge and resources did come out of the debates but they also came from notices on the wall and random groupings of interested and interesting people - just having this eclectic bunch of people together for a weekend produced much more than any public enquiry or set of focus groups. I hope those few brave members of the Arts Council who attended were taking notes – and those that did not attend, along with all sorts of other people involved in arts policy, funding, production, administration and performing will take time to look at some of the discussion documents that came out of the weekend.

Congratulations to Improbable and their helpers. It is a really simple idea that could be reproduced all over the country to great effect. Meanwhile make a note to book your place for D&D 2009! #

Meetings in Review

Philip Norfolk: Professional development - Selling Yourself

A well attended meeting room at PRG Europe in Greenford was presented with an overview of how lighting designers can assist their hunt for work by adopting basic techniques used by corporate sales departments in companies across the world.

From presentation of yourself through your appearance, CV, portfolio or interaction with potential clients via the process of setting expectations, to the key ingredient of attracting repeat work and therefore more money, ALD members from across all membership categories were scribbling frantically to ensure the key points were recorded. Some ideas were already used by people in the room either subtly or sub-consciously, but it was great to re-affirm that your intuition was correct.

“Identify the MAN” (the person who has the

Motivation, Authority and Need to employ you), “90% of people say no on first approach”, “don’t be afraid to ask for more especially if it is linked to value” and “get feedback in the cold light of day” were points I brought away highlighted, but others would have taken different points that were more personally related to their circumstances.

So whether you were interested in how to ‘cold call’ a potential employer, methods of networking, getting people to say yes to you, setting the expectations of people you are working for at a level you are comfortable to be able to deliver, or the importance of invoicing on time, there was something for everyone to take away and think about implementing in their working practices.

The meeting was well received and the post session feedback was positive. Many thanks to Philip and PRG for hosting this event. We are

hoping to run this meeting again during 2008. Please watch *Focus* or your email bulletins for further details.#

Joint ALD / Production Managers' Forum

Professional members of the ALD were invited to a joint meeting with the Production Managers' Forum to discuss what production managers and lighting designers wanted from each other. ALD Professional Rep Mark Jonathan was in the red corner, while the blue one was filled by Matt Noddings, production manager of the Soho Theatre. Ken Bennett-Hunter was the referee.

Issues discussed included the scheduling of lighting time and production periods in general, preview periods, the use of new technology, drawing standards, contractual issues, the general working relationship between PMs and LDs, working at height and other health and safety issues.

A wide range of topics, but one thing was clear; producers and managements

had to share the burden of the problems. Whilst LDs are not usually contracted early enough (or paid enough) to be involved in early discussions about the design and how it affects them, it also impacts on the budget available and potential scheduling issues. For instance, will a show with minimal set and therefore more reliant on lighting to establish location have more lighting time than a box set and a handful of states? If the designer has included a large number of practicals on the set, does that restrict the LDs lighting budget?

How can production periods allow for the complexity of the individual show when the producer has advertised the opening night ahead of the design being known? There are only so many hours to get the set up and the technical rehearsal completed. Have the resources available to the production been taken into account when the schedule was decided upon?

In terms of actually getting a show on stage, is a lighting session necessary these

days when LDs often light over the technical rehearsal? Perhaps there should there be periods of time to catch up with notes or to ensure that the cues in the desk stay ahead of the action on stage without the acting company present? Masking should be present before lighting starts, but the LD and PM should talk to ensure that they are both aware of each others' problems in the downstage right corner.

A dialogue was started. The issues affecting the relationship between PMs and LDs were discussed and debated, and while none could be solved on the spot, a few interesting points of view were aired to a mixed audience. Hopefully these will be discussed and debated again so that both sides can bring their experience and skills together for the benefit of the production at hand. #

We Will Rock You... Visualised

Christchurch Theatre Club, based in Shepshed, Leicestershire, decided to produce ‘We Will Rock You’, the very popular schools’ version which had been released to produce funds for the Freddie Mercury Phoenix Trust. Paul Boneham joined the production team on lighting and set layout armed with his visualisation software....

The plot
Christchurch invited me to see the London production at the Dominion Theatre which gave us all a fantastic insight into the show. My preconception

was a rock musical where songs by Queen were dropped in at appropriate gaps in the dialogue. I soon realised that the show was a complete, if very “tongue in

cheek”, snapshot of British rock music culture. The story line revolves around ‘Globalsofts’ domination of the world consumer markets and the abolition of live rock and roll music. The Bohemians however, wanted their Rhapsody and fight to get live music back. After watching the show, we discussed which elements we would incorporate into Christchurch’s production. We needed a set with different levels, scenery that allowed quick changes and also a downstage area suitable in size for the big choreography numbers.

The design begins

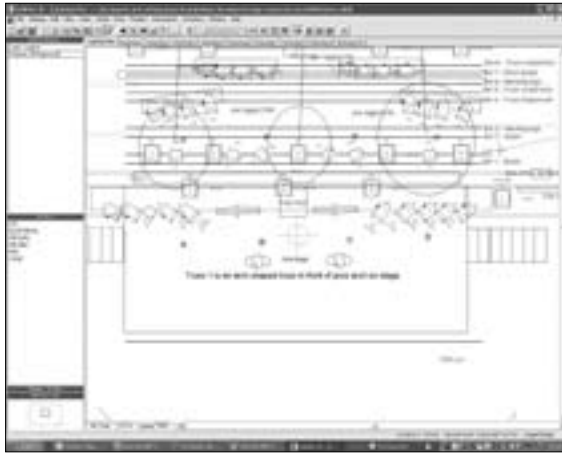
I researched the origins of the show and watched archive material of the early Queen

concerts. At that time, the main lighting effect comprised walls of pars supported on rafts of truss. Moving lights were very much in their infancy. However, I did want pars as the main design theme so fired up the laptop in earnest to start getting a few ideas down on screen.

For my design I generated basic 2-D plans, light levels, plan channels assignments, checked rough beam angles, as well as visualised in 3-D using SoftPlot3D from Crescit Software. I also produced hire and rigging lists as the design progressed. I am not one for creating mountains of paperwork, as I try to work as much as possible in electronic format and email PDF files everywhere. I also used a Sunlite 3-D visualiser from

Nicolaudie to plot lighting cues. Although Softplot3D includes visualiser, I prefer the realistic rendering that Sunlite 3-D provides which enables me to judge gobo covers and light/colour interaction more easily.

Over the next few months, while other shows came and went, I kept tweaking the design. I then received an email from the director - he had the scenery details from Scenic Projects. The scenery was based around a five step rostrum in the upstage area. On this rostrum were four 3-sided columns. The columns could be rotated to represent one of three scenes in the show. A projection screen was flown behind the rostrum and Scenic Projects provided static jpeg images



The stage plot



The truss arch

which were projected onto the screen. There were two 2-sided trucks which could be moved around the stage to create a wasteland scene on one side and the scene for Wembley Stadium on the other. Various other practicals, such as tables and chairs, were provided. My 3-D model of the scenery on the lighting plan confirmed everything fitted on the available stage area. The basic lighting plan fitted perfectly around the scenery. Things were starting to come together.

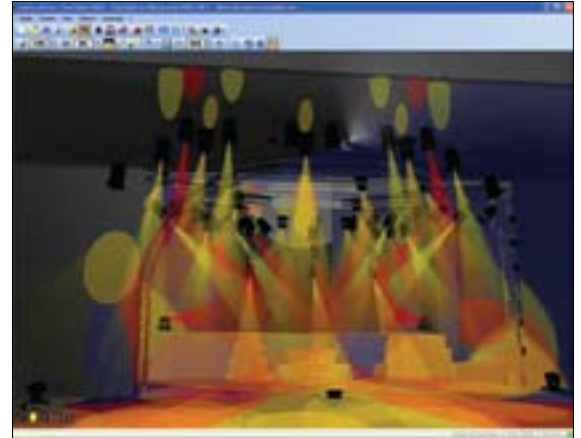
Designing in 3-D

With the scenery in place, I started splitting the stage into basic acting areas; four in the downstage area, four midstage and three in the upstage area incorporating the rostrum. I decided the

pars would provide the main backlight with a four-colour basic wash. I wanted a cool front light colour with a choice of warm and cool side lighting. Front lighting was coloured with Lee 117, sidelighting was Lee 118 and 152. Main backlight colours in the pars were Lee 106, 119, 102, and 118. Floor mounted cyc lights were added behind the rostrum for uplighting and had a two-colour scheme of Lee 119 and 106. The pars were fanned out in stage left and stage right groups and positioned so they were not obscured by lights downstage. I chose medium flood lamps in the pars as I wanted a contrast to the beamy effects of the MAC 500s.

With the scenery and basic lighting scheme in place, I looked at what was needed to give the visual punch this show deserved. Towards the end of the show, the story line revolves around the flight back to Wembley Stadium, so an impression of the stadium was the aim. I looked at having a semicircular truss arch that was could be

mounted in front of the pros arch. With the pros width being 7.2m, I needed an arch ideally 8m in diameter. Having not had much experience of truss previously, I contacted Hawthorn Theatrical at Old Dalby in Leicestershire for some advice. Hawthorns have provided a number of hires for me now and I always appreciate their professional help and service and they suggested a Prolyte X30V square truss. This proved an ideal solution and also sparked the idea of having all the pars in chrome to give an industrial, yet light reflective appearance to the stage. At this point, I should mention the triangular columns of the set had mirrors on one side of them so this linked with the reflective par cans. Above the stage, the par cover had straight 2m sections of truss added. These were flown between two flying bars so that by raising and lowering the bars independently, the flying angles of the par bars could be altered. For the show's finale, which was naturally Bohemian Rhapsody, the par



Killer Queen's pad, visualised



Killer Queen's pad, realised

bars could be flown in to give more of a rock concert feel for the audience. MAC 500s were placed above the stage and on the truss arch. MAC 600s were placed above the stage, two at the base legs of the arch with two more either side of the rostra. Those at the base of the truss arch were positioned to uplight the arch in colour as well as to sidelight the dancers and provide uplight over the audience.

Rehearsal time

During rehearsals, I blocked out cues using the Chamsys MagicQ PC software with the Sunlite visualiser on a laptop to run the show. All of my shows are pre-plotted using the visualiser package with a full scale 3-D model of the Loughborough Town Hall rig in it. This has always proved fairly accurate with only slight tweaks required for the position palettes once at the theatre.

The director and sound/video designer were enthusiastic about incorporating video

sequences into the show. There were various musical numbers throughout the

show where obvious video sequences could be used, and although the set already

had a projection screen at the rear of the stage, we added two extra screens in front of

the pros arch stage right and stage left attached to the truss arch. We also wanted to have



live video feedback between characters on stage and on screen. It was decided to split the animations onto the large rear screen and have the DVD of the main characters played back on the smaller side screens. Video was recorded at rehearsals of the Killer Queen and Khashoggi and the main characters had

to rehearse speaking lines in time with the DVD.

The final rehearsals were on us and I had the chance to run the show through entirely about four times with the visualiser and last minute tweaks to timings and position palettes were made. Dare I say it but I think we were ready for the get in.

Back to reality

When everybody was happy with the focussing and colouring, I plugged the laptop into the DMX line, fired the rig up and checked the patch - everything except for a touring rack patched out OK. I updated the position palettes and set, ready for the tech run through.

Rehearsals over, Monday night and I relocated to the back of the auditorium in the control area which reminded me of sale time at "Laptops R Us". Everybody had laptops performing various functions and with monitor screens keeping a check on the MD for timings you almost had trouble seeing the stage! The show went well and every audience was really impressed. Considering it was the most technically involved show Christchurch had produced, the only major glitches we had all week were a couple of MAC lamps blow.

It certainly proved that technology can really help a show. The ability to pre-plot and visualise means



Show preset

there is more creative time to tweak the show once at the theatre. Also by having a desk that was linked to the visualiser, you can benefit by being more familiar with the rig and are able to hone cues during rehearsal. The tech crew at Loughborough Town Hall also appreciate

the quality plans with all the required patch, gel and position data, which really speeds up the get in process. Well that's it. I can close the laptop lid down on another show. Oops, spoke too soon... got to start plotting for The Full Monty. #



Chamsys MagicQ software

“Sixty seconds with ...” Neil Austin

Sum up your career to date in a short sentence.

Lucky.

What are the three favourite shows you have lit and why?

Caligula at the Donmar Warehouse. It was my first show at the Donmar (which is enough to put it in my top three anyway) and then



After *Miss Julie*, Donmar, London.
Lighting: Neil Austin.
Photo: Ivan Kyncl

there was the famous back wall covered in silver-leaf – a perfect canvas to paint on.

Therese Raquin at the National Theatre – a perfect marriage of set, lighting and sound with direction, acting and script. It was a completely integrated production, full of mood and atmosphere inspired by the paintings of Degas.

Rhapsody for the Royal Ballet – Ashton’s greatest ballet with new designs including an extraordinary cyc, based on Turner’s unfinished paintings. It was the most extraordinary moment for me to sit in that amazing auditorium lighting my favourite ballet company and realising that my two possible career routes had just collided.

What were the best moments of your career?

When, in January 2007, I had shows playing in each of the three auditoria at the National

Theatre on the same night and then I was nominated for an Olivier for one of them in the same week.

Where are you now?

In the Donmar, lighting *Parade*.

What is your favourite theatre/space?

Donmar Warehouse.

If you weren’t a lighting designer what would you be?

A National Park Ranger on Dartmoor (or a retiring ballet dancer).

Where would you rather be right now?

Devon and Cornwall.

What is your favourite colour?

Sunset.

If you were a colour what would it be?

R78 (Trudy Blue).

Which part of the job do you enjoy least?

Drawing plans.

If you could scrap one piece of kit or one tradition or part of the job from every theatre in the world what would it be?

Having to draw a plan.

Which part of the job do you enjoy most?

Plotting – creating pictures on stage.

If you were going to light a show on a desert island what three things would you take with you?

An angle grinder to cut a hole in the roof so that they could do open-air performances during the day (and I could stay on the beach)! Therefore the other two things would be sun cream and a snorkel.

What keeps you awake at night?

Car alarms.



What common piece of kit would you be least likely to find in one of your rigs?

Lee filters.

How would you like to be remembered?

Fondly. #

The Wild Duck, Donmar, London. Lighting: Neil Austin. Photo: Johan Persson



Letters

From Peter Wright: LEDs

Hi Andy, In response to Calling all Associate Members! in the Dec 07/Jan 08 issue of *Focus*, it was interesting to note the reference to refocusing Patt 23's, which left me wondering if it was a common perception that out here in associate-member-land that this no doubt redoubtable and stalwart lighting instrument was still at the pinnacle of equipment? I am sure that this is not the case but it

did set me musing about equipment I have used over the years and how some may be surprised to learn that the latest technology is not necessarily out of reach in our little corner of the universe.

When I joined the ALD, over twenty years ago, I was head of drama in a secondary school and our studio was full of Patt 23s and 123s, eventually supplemented by parcans, Preludes and CCT Minuettes. The purchase of a Pulsar Memory System, which worked in conjunction with a BBC computer c/w

32kB of memory, allowed me to not only record cues but also to use a half a dozen Pancans in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Hair* where I soon discovered the inherent problems of HTP with anything that moves but, I think the concept of LTP was still a few years away. I am pretty confident that my school was one of the very earliest adopters of moving light technology; certainly I had never seen anything like it in use in the theatres around Manchester. In the last couple of weeks alone, I have lit a production of *Alice in Wonderland* using a Color Web 250 as the backdrop, and hired into a local secondary school, Robe 136 LED moving heads, some Chroma Q DB4s and 12 lengths of Pulsar Chromastrip along with 8 x Rainbow par colour changers and there isn't a Patt 23 in sight.

I began to see the possibilities for LEDs last year when I initially used some cheap and cheerful LED cans to provide the light through a couple of windows

in a production of *Oliver!* I needed some colour change and this was an easy way to do it. A few months later I was providing the lighting for a school in Bolton who were putting on the schools' version of *Les Misérables* and they have terrible problems with providing enough power. So having worked out that this thrust stage production needed far more lighting than could be provided with a dozen or so profiles and PCs one possible solution was LED lighting. So in the end 24 Chroma Q DB4s were employed and certainly had enough punch for this moody show, particularly when it came to deep blues. The final result was a very happy client, so much so that they have just purchased 18 Showtec Studio Beam fixtures with 1 watt LEDs. As with most LED fixtures these are not so good when the dimming level gets down to about 10% but the school's drama technician is aware of this and reckons he can live with it.

This problem with the dimmer curve at the bottom



Alice in Wonderland

end also became apparent with the Robe LED 136 moving heads I have just put into a Stockport School's production of *We Will Rock You*. No matter how low you set the trigger point on the desk so that the luminaire can be moved to a new position, without the "lamp" being on seems to be unachievable



Oliver!, showing the LED cans lighting the windows



Alice in Wonderland

with LEDs as they kick in as soon as you trigger the move. So cues had to be plotted to move the heads first, but there are only four of them so it's not too big a task. Generally the LEDs in this production (DB4s and Chromastrips, as well as the Robe 136s) are used as eye candy and in this respect work very well.

As for the Color Web this was used as an abstract scenic device. The set was all black and the director didn't want to go down the route of backcloths etc. and so I proposed the Color Web. It gave an opportunity to add colour to the production in an unobtrusive way, helped create the illusion of Alice falling down the rabbit hole, provided a moving psychedelic backdrop the scene with the caterpillar, a suggestion of a heart for the Queen of Hearts etc.

The joy of using this, was that it was easy to rig being so very light and surprisingly straightforward. The Robe Media Fusion software is new but wasn't too difficult to get

to grips with, though I think the interface could do with some redesign. There are virtual rotary knobs which are not the easiest to use with a mouse - faders would be much better. We also had a few problems connecting a lighting desk so that cues could be saved but we got over these in the end.

I wouldn't use LEDs just for the sake of it but they have got a place as long as you are aware of both the possibilities and the limitations. #

**From Eric Lund:
So You Think You Can Light?**

Dear Editor, I always enjoy reading *Focus* and, as someone who takes great pleasure in lighting dance, was very taken with Louise Levene's excellent article in the last issue. Unfortunately, though, it brought back memories of a TV show I'd been watching the night before.

I'd become fascinated by a programme called *So You Think You Can Dance*. The idea behind the show is that dancers come along to a

filmed open audition, are critiqued by a panel of judges, and the best are selected for the finals in Las Vegas (it was made originally for the US audience, despite being produced and introduced by Brits – I know, don't ask!). The auditions happen all over America and take place on bare stages with one lighting state which contains plenty of side light (shins, mids, tops and one higher level for lifts etc.).

The night before reading Louise's article, I'd been watching an episode of the finals. These performances had been lit completely differently. Now the stage itself was lit by a large selection of moving heads doing immensely impressive things with colour, movement and gobos, and the dancers were lit by backlight and frontlight followspots. The set wrapped all round the dancers, making sidelight tricky, though one or two Source Fours did show themselves from time to time in order to blind the cameras looking from the far side.

Now, although the lighting was incredibly slick (some of it was so tightly synchronised to the music that it was clearly programmed to SMPTE) and very impressive, the purpose of the lighting was 99% entertainment and 1% enhancing the dancers' movements. The followspots lit the performers' heads (in o/w) and the stage looked magnificent, but the principles of both dance lighting (e.g. all parts of a dancer's body are as important as all others) and lighting people in general (e.g. creating light and shade on the face, using appropriate colours and drawing the eye to the relevant nuances) went out of the window in order to create a spectacle which fit the music and entertained the audience, but washed out the performers and gave most focus to the heads and least to the legs and feet.

For me, the auditions, with their one basic lighting state, were better lit than the whizzy, huge-budget finals. Entertaining and exciting the audience is one thing, lighting dance is another.

I openly accept that there is a strong case that the lighting was brilliantly designed and achieved the goal of enhancing the feel of a fast-paced, exciting TV show. But for me, Francis Reid and Jim Woodley (both quoted in the last *Focus*) have it right when they say they'll allow "the odd bit of disco stuff in the occasional song", as is a certain periodical I know who like to say something about using fewer tools but more art...! #

From A. Reader:

Dear Sir, Seeing the British cyclists doing so well in the world championships at the Manchester Velodrome this week made me wonder if you had a photo of our fit Administrator in his Spandex shorts I could pin up? #



Students' Union

Michael Northen Bursary

Michael was a founding member of the ALD and a previous President. He set up his student bursary 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 2007 – June 2008). This award was originally made in conjunction with the White Light Bursary and since 2004 the ALD administers the scheme and organises the presentation of awards as a tribute to the work of Michael. The fund itself is held by The Mousetrap Foundation, an organisation committed to encouraging young theatre practitioners. The ALD therefore awards the bursary each year in conjunction with The Mousetrap Foundation.

The Michael Northen Bursary Award winner will receive £500, and this year two other winners will receive prizes of £250 sponsored by ETC and ALD. All three winning submissions will be displayed on the ALD stand at the PLASA08 in September, where the prizes will be presented.

Applicants are asked to complete a submission form as part of their application which will demonstrate the development and processes of a successfully realised lighting design performance project. Additional material to support the application such as photographs, storyboards or plans are set out in the guidance notes of the submission form. The entries will be judged by a panel of industry professionals.

It should be emphasised that this is a design bursary and the ALD are not looking for wonderful project

management or equipment lists. The submissions will be judged on an imaginative design and creativity in lighting. Students should therefore consider carefully how to communicate their concept for the lighting design and how their ideas were realised in performance.

Submissions must be received at the ALD office (address above) by Tuesday 1st July 2008.

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

Entrants may submit work in an electronic format on CD, but must ensure that files are printable and in a common format (i.e. Word, Excel, Jpeg's, Bitmaps).

For more information and details of how to enter either contact your course tutor email the ALD student Rep (mary.pope@ald.org.uk) or visit www.ald.org/students #

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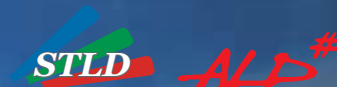
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