

April / May 2007

Collaborators Special

ALD # FOCUS

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

'Quadrophenia at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Lighting: Cat Crick, see page 26. Photo: Kirsten McTernan

Under the Patt 243 this issue:
Same play, same theatre, 24 years on • Agents demystified • Collaborators reviewed • Was Victorian lighting design dim? • Lighting in Wales • Being an Assistant... and much more!

Price to non-members £3.50

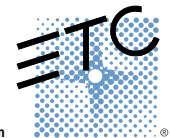


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Rick's Revelations

Congratulations first and foremost to Francis Reid. By the time *Focus* lands on your doormat he and Jo will have celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary. I am sure all the ALD will want to join in wishing them continued happiness and joy. Francis: a book on how to make a relationship work for that long in this industry would really be a useful guide! And while congratulations are being doled out I want to add mine to Natasha Chivers and Mike Roberston who won this year's Olivier for their outstanding work on *Sunday in the Park with George*. Reports have reached me that they gave a good plug for the ALD's efforts to raise the appreciation for lighting designers at the ceremony. Thanks!

We are only a few weeks away from the first **Light Relief Day** so there is still plenty of time to join in supporting our charity that is there to help those in the lighting industry



Light Relief day: April 24th.

who fall on difficult times. Most designers are making a donation of their royalties from April 24th including most West End shows, and many other members are offering to support the day with donations and collections. Please help to make this day a real success, donation forms can be downloaded from the website www.lightrelief.org.uk and do remember to Gift Aid them when appropriate. I also note that some intrepid (crazy?) folks are planning to climb a few mountains and raise money for Light Relief – good luck.

The ALD/Equity/BECTU campaign against the use of the minimum fees is coming together and there will be

an official launch of this in May. This along with some encouraging news from the Designers' Committee of Equity, our union, reminds me that we can use some new members of this committee to start in the summer. Things are changing and this is only because we have had strong representation on this committee to make the case for Lighting Designers. Let me know if you can serve. Please consider offering to keep up the pressure to make our union work for us.

I was delighted to be able to visit the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and remind the students there of the upcoming Michael Northen Bursary. This is a great chance to add lustre to your C.V. as you finish training, so please enter a project.

Thanks too to the increasing number of contributors to *Focus*. You will notice not only has the font grown from the first issue, so has the number

of pages. This is because we are getting so many interesting articles and through the support of some advertisers who are helping to fund the expansion of the new look *Focus*. #

Regards, Rick



ALD AGM

The AGM will be on Wednesday 13th June on the second floor of the Royal Horticultural Halls Conference Centre at The Lawrence Hall, Greycoat Street, London SW1. (The same room as last year) 14.00 – 16.30

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OFFICE ORACLE

Latest news from Ian's production desk

Subscriptions 2007/08

If you have not received one already, then you can expect a reminder to arrive on your doorstep soon. Please remember that the deadline for receiving payment for your subscriptions is July 1st. If you pay by standing order we will send you a new card sticker once we have received confirmation from our bank that we have received payment. We have over £15,000 paid to us in standing orders during April, so please be patient while we reconcile payments with members. You can help us too, by ensuring your unique membership number is included as a reference detail to your payment.

2007 AGM

This year's Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 13th June during the ABTT Theatre show at the Royal Horticultural Halls in London. (Details on page 3.)

There are two proposals for change that the Executive wish to make to the definition of membership categories.

1) Student membership

The intention is to widen the student category to include any students in further or higher education, whether they are studying lighting courses or not. We are receiving applications from potential members who have an interest in lighting but are not formally studying it, and we feel this category should be extended to accommodate them.

2) Non-profit organisations

We wish to change the current Non-Profit Organisation category into a *Focus* subscription category for organisations, companies and individuals that wish to be in contact with the issues and thoughts of the lighting design industry.

As the constitution of the Association states, such

changes need to be voted upon at an AGM. Only professional members who have paid their subscriptions up to date are eligible to vote.

Caption Competition winner

The winner of our last caption competition was Roger Simonsz (member #134) with, "Blair announces back to work scheme for persistent couch potatoes".

The other highly commended captions were, "Right, Kenny, ignite the jets and we'll focus the FOH!" and Stage Manager: "You idiots – you bounce the ****ing bar not the ****ing set!" (Expletives deleted in case students' parents are reading this).

Our thanks to all who entered, and to Woolworths plc for donating the MP3 player.



Charity News

Reaching for the sky to benefit Light Relief

A group of intrepid explorers (pictured) from White Light in London are in training to take part in the Three Peaks Challenge on May 19th and 20th. Organiser Joss Gamble told *Focus*, "The aim is to climb to the summit of the three highest peaks in England, Scotland and Wales (Ben Nevis, Scarfell Pike and Snowdon) in 24 hours including the journey between each one." Joss hopes to have a team



of seven for the event, and White Light have generously agreed to cover the costs of the transportation. Money raised through sponsorship will be for Light Relief, and we urge ALD members to support the White Light team by emailing Joss. Gamble@WhiteLight.Ltd.uk for sponsorship details. Good luck Joss! #



The intrepid White Light team during one of three training weekends.

Ken's Running to London

As if organising ALD members' Collaborators entry for the Nottingham show just wasn't hard enough, Ken Coker is running in the London Marathon on April 22nd. He's running in aid of Wheelpower – www.wheelpower.org.uk and members can donate or find out more details of this stupid idea at <http://www.justgiving.com/kencoker>

Snowdon for CiN

On the £1200 success of last years' North Yorkshire Moors hike, Jackie and her team are reforming in order to conquer Mount Snowdon on 27th May. Proceeds are for Children in Need and the team can be sponsored at: [#](http://www.justgiving.com/togsonsnowdon)

Euphemisms for 'going to the pub' heard over the cans

"We're going to check the red phase"

"Where's the bank dear boy?"

"I'm popping out to the super-market... I may be some time."

If members have any more examples, please email them to editor@ald.org.uk.

*in 2004, following the publication of the IEE harmonisation of wiring colour codes [BS7671], this phrase changed to "I'm going to check the brown phase" but reverted back soon after it was realised that this phrase was already used by sound technicians to indicate a 'comfort break'.

Focus Email

Please note that as from the 1st April, the focus@ald.org.uk email address became obsolete. Any feedback or submissions for publications should be sent to editor@ald.org.uk. Companies wishing to send press releases to the ALD should send them to office@ald.org.uk so that they can be posted to the website for the membership.

Remembering Chris Parry

As we mentioned in the last issue, Chris Parry died at the age of 56 on January 16th. He started in amateur theatricals and was so absorbed with lighting that he joined the RSC as an electrician, eventually becoming assistant head of lighting and a lighting designer. After 13 years he emigrated to the USA, worked on Broadway and taught in the theatre department of the University of California.

Mike Goldberg remembers, "I was, and am still shocked by Chris Parry's untimely passing. I first met Chris some sixteen years ago when he was using Rainbow Scrollers, which at the time I was selling. He was interested in using them on *Tommy* and also had a proposal for me. He wanted to be involved in selling them in the USA.

From that time until now we remained good friends. He was successful in getting Rainbows accepted in the USA and we met many times in San Diego for business meetings which involved long walks on sandy beaches! And late nights in strange bars. Chris was a complex person and a very shy man and one whose word really meant something. He will be missed by me and by those that he touched in his life."

Prema Mehta added, "I never had the pleasure of meeting Chris, but whilst interviewing him via email for 'Insight' in *Focus* last year, it was clear that he was an extraordinary man. Hugely successful in his career but so quick to acknowledge and thank others in the industry for the part they played. His modesty was apparent in every sentence. The imagery he created within his designs was striking, although the word 'striking' doesn't do his work justice enough. Our thoughts are with his family and friends." #

Dates for your diaries

1st April

2007/08 subscriptions due

1st & 2nd May

AC Lighting North Trade Show *

12th May

Next *Focus* Deadline

13th & 14th June

ABTT Theatre Show *
ALD AGM 13th, 2pm, 2nd floor

1st July

Deadline for subscription payments

9th to 12th September

PLASA 2007 *

* the ALD will have a presence at these events.

Keep an eye on www.ald.org.uk/diary for more information on these and other events and members' show openings. If we have missed any interesting events in this list, please let us know!

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Professional Members

Michael Grundner, Austria. **Martin Kinnane**, NSW, Australia (re-joining the Association). **Matt Prentice**, London: Lighting design includes drama, dance, musical theatre, site specific and re-lights. Current employment at Royal Academy of Dramatic Art as Head of Lighting Design.

Associate Members

Chris Barstow, London. **Michael Brenkley**, Berkshire. **Stephen Britton**, London (re-joining the Association). **Peter Kirkup**, Cardiff (re-joining the Association). **Ed Marshall**, Wokingham. **Jason Meininger**, London: Lighting for theatre, dance & opera. MFA Lighting Design from University of Washington 1997. **Marc Thomas**, Leatherhead.

Sponsored Students' Scheme

Central School of Speech & Drama: **David Alcorta**, **Liam Cleary**, **Tim Deiling**, **Andrew Furby**, **Thomas Hackley**, **Daniel Large**, **Mariah Thomas**, **Ana Vilar**. Rose Bruford: **Sarah Lawson**, **Yui Okada**, **Chris Withers**, **Esteban Nunez**. Guildford School of Acting: **Scott Monahan**, **Helen Trow**. University of Central England: **Charlotte Davies**

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To submit industry and corporate press releases (Corporate Members only), please send them directly to the ALD office (office@ald.org.uk) and not to Focus so that they can be posted on the News pages of the ALD website for more immediate and wider coverage. Contact the office to arrange advertising in Focus.

Editorial guidelines for authors are available on request from editor@ald.org.uk.

The opinions published within Focus are not necessarily those of the Association. #

Professionals' Chat Room – Mark Jonathan



I'm back on a long haul to New York... Just watched the 'History Boys'... I have typed up my cue synopsis for 'Prometheus Bound' and thought I'd better write this instalment of the professional's page before my battery runs down...

Professional Members' meeting

We had a very interesting and productive meeting of professionals on February 17th held at the Young Vic. Thanks to ALD member and head of lighting at the Young Vic Phil Gladwell for fixing it. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ALD initiatives and to exchange ideas on what the ALD was capable of doing next to meet the needs of working lighting designers. I say "capable" because our association basically operates on what we can do ourselves. We do not have an office full of paid employees at our beck and call.

Producers – What next?

Rick Fisher talked about the letter to the producers and what our next step might be. We agreed we should write to the producers again and we should ask producers to consider further the fees they pay to LDs along with the importance of real per diems that cover the actual period we are on the job, especially as production periods and preview periods are getting longer in many cases. Jo Town said it was essential we change producers' perception of the value of our work.

Simon Corder referred to points that Ralph Koltai made recently in Nottingham on fees and that we need to be open about fees. Simon also suggested that the minimums were such a mockery that we should make them a nominal one-pound. Managements seem to find it difficult to understand how many days one actually works on a show and the issue of affiliating one's fee to a daily rate was

discussed. This follows a meeting between BECTU and Equity where a daily rate idea was discussed. These broke down to £150 per day for fringe, £200 for mid-scale to £300 at West End. Jo Town pointed out that at the Royal Court the casual rate for 12 hours on Sunday was £180 and staff could earn £1,000 a week in production. Andy Voller added that programmers were on around £230-£250 a day. It seems to me that if you break our fees down to an hourly rate we are lucky if we are even on the same rate of pay as the lowest paid worker.

Rick Fisher suggested that in the case of theatres that pay a fixed amount for expenses after the job was over, an LD might consider writing to the management just to say what had gone well and that, for information, what the *real* cost of travel and accommodation had been.

It was suggested that we

should compare our rates of pay with others who work alongside us, such as photographers, musicians, and scenic painters. Jo Town said we must continue to badger managements to pay more. We should also try and draw producers' attention to how the role has changed.

The ALD Rider

We were interested to get feedback on how the Rider was working.

Rick explained that his agent sends out the Rider before the contract is issued and asks what the management will agree to. What they don't agree to or isn't applicable can be struck out. *[See Michael Finch's comments on pages 14-15].*

The ALD Overseas Rider will be developed for designers who live in one country and work in another. Paul Pyant, John Buckland and Colin Grenfell have already agreed to look at developing this. I suggest that once they

have made a start we will circulate it to a wider group of LDs.

Fees

We discussed how open we should be about fees. Clearly, producers and managements talk to each other about what they are paying and so should we. All the designers at the meeting agreed unanimously that they would share information on the fees they received. It was suggested that we could lodge fees paid with the ALD office but the information would only be made available to on "a need to know" basis and that it would be shared with members who participated in the scheme.

I think this could be a real breakthrough. If we share information on fees paid we may be able to stop managements grinding the rates down or being at standstill. It would also make it

easier for us to target theatres that are falling behind on fees. We obviously need to discuss further how the system would work effectively but I think we will develop some sort of contract summary form. It's already standard practice with United Scenic Artist contracts in the USA as a copy of the contract is sent by the management to the union.

Members also felt that agents needed to talk to each other more. We agreed that there needed to be another meeting with agents and the ALD.

Equity

Along with the minimum rates it has been suggested that if only a minimum rate was applied that might mean only attending for a minimum amount of time, which is an interesting perspective.

Jo Town, who sits on the Equity designers committee, along with Matthew Eagland and myself, was keen that we find other ALD/Equity members to join when Tony Simpson (who has done such

sterling work on our behalf) retires from the committee. Jo felt that with the larger presence of LDs there was no question that the attention had shifted and that the needs of LDs were considered by Equity. Jo also felt that the Equity minimum of £100 was still good value.

Meetings

Will Evans updated the group on recent meetings which included Chichester, the digital scenography meeting, Grand MA. There has been a proposal for a meeting on professional development which would include selling yourself and PR. I was surprised that little interest had been expressed by LDs. In these situations I wonder if it is just that while LDs are interested, they are also away in rehearsal or production and just too busy to take advantage of the meetings?

Possible areas of development for LDs could include negotiation skills, PR and marketing, general business skills, and websites.

There was some interest in comparative shoot-outs. David Howe said these are difficult to organise as manufacturers can be worried about their product being culled. Paule Constable suggested that each product could have an LD who had "championed" it. Andy Voller suggested that we could do it without involving the manufacturers. Nick Richings felt we don't get an opportunity to feedback to manufacturers; they don't ask our opinion at the research and development stage. We should look at developing our corporate links in this area.

Another meeting/professional interest could be design and art issues.

We had a discussion about VectorWorks and the cost both of the software and of training. Nick Richings didn't want to pay for training. I'm delighted to report that Alex Wardle suggested that he would be pleased to offer professional members VectorWorks training. Members attending would need to bring a PC laptop or Mac. The maximum size of

group would be 12. This idea will be developed and I hope that you will hear more about this soon. Many thanks to Alex for being prepared to do this. Andy Voller suggested that we might have VectorWorks and CAD mentors who could support members when they had a problem.

FOCUS

We asked for feedback on the new *Focus* and this was enthusiastic. The new "trendy" landscape was fine except it was more difficult for Jo Town to read (one handed) on the tube! I think the larger font size has worked. Thanks were expressed to the Editorial team and to Andy Collier for his outstanding contribution.

PR

Rick suggested an idea which is a "bolt-on" PR initiative. The ALD could hire a Public Relations officer who would strive to publicise the work of LDs who joined the scheme. Rick sighted Simon Corder has a great example of someone in our field of work who sends out a press

release and reaps the reward in the coverage he gets for his interesting external/architectural projects.

Conclusion

It comes as no surprise to me that if you can get a group of ALD professional members together to talk about issues that affect us we will get some great ideas and make progress. We will endeavour to do this more often. Thanks to everyone who attended and contributed their ideas. They were Rick Fisher, Ian Saunders, Will Evans, Andy Voller, Hansjorg Schmidt, Alex Wardle, Simon Corder, Mike Robertson, David Howe, David Kidd, Nick Richings, Johanna Town, Ben Pacey, Paule Constable. Thanks also to those of you who sent me emails with apologies and contributed ideas too. Full minutes of the meeting are available from the office. #



The Professional Members' meeting held on February 17th at the Young Vic.

Olivier Awards

The same weekend I attended the Olivier awards. The Olivier Award for Best Lighting was won by Natasha Chivers and Mike Robertson. I was quite taken aback when the winners of the lighting award started talking about the importance of the ALD. Natasha said "So many thanks to the Association of Lighting Designers who have always been there for us whenever we needed help or advice". This was followed by Mike who added "Absolutely, the ALD is working incredibly hard to raise the profile of the work of the lighting designer, so please do take their endeavours seriously and then perhaps we might get the fees up, and stop having to take so many jobs". So, many congratulations to Natasha and Mike and thanks for having the nerve, or should I say "balls", to raise the ALD in front of a ballroom of tight-fisted producers! It certainly gives me new interpretation for the word 'ballroom'...

MJ

STOP PRESS: Colour Midi at Rose Bruford

Fred Bentham's 1930s Light Console, based on cinema organ technology, became Strand's most advanced control for nearly two decades, but his real reason for creating it was to play Colour Music – a performance combining light and sound. Today, lighting is replayed automatically at the touch of a button, but what if the lighting artist was a performer, playing light as a musician plays music? A 'baby' 1946 Light Console from James Laws' collection has been partially restored by Nick Hunt, Principal Lecturer in Lighting Design, and a team of lighting students. They invite you to come along, find out more and to play with a real, working Light Console from 2-4pm on 18th April 2007 at Rose Bruford College, Burnt Oak Lane, Sidcup, Kent, DA15 9DF. The event is free, but let Rachel Candler know if you're coming (tel: 07931 517765 or email rachel.candler@bruford.ac.uk).

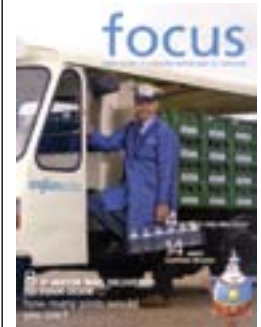
Gardening Corner

A Focus reader in Zimbabwe discovers a free Easter lunch while checking his carrot Parcans for predators.



Featured journal of the month

Spotted by Graham McLusky. A new opportunity for resting LDs?



Patience at Normansfield

How would a Victorian audience have experienced the lighting for Gilbert & Sullivan's *Patience* when the D'Oyly Carte production transferred to the new Savoy Theatre in 1882? James Laws went back in time...

This gala performance by the Carl Rosa Opera was in Normansfield Theatre, Teddington. Using restored 19th century scenery from the extensive Normansfield collection and period lighting, we aimed to recreate the

ambience of the 1882 *Patience* 'relight' from gas to electricity. Act 1 would take the form of a staged rehearsal at the Opéra Comique and Act 2 would be fully staged.

James Laws



James Laws is a Fellow of the ALD. He lights mostly in churches (permanent designs as well as events) and

in other non-theatre places, for clients as diverse as The London Mozart Players and The National Trust. He specialises in recreating stage lighting of past eras.



Scenery coming to life in Act 2. All photographs: James Laws.

New fangled electric light

The Savoy prompt copy indicates, 'full light throughout act two, with green and blue lamps in the wing lengths'. The barely practical new incandescent electric lighting of 1882 promised safety, brightness and lack of heat which outweighed the artistic compromises of only 6 steps of intensity, high installation and running costs. The brightest lamp available was 16 candlepower, perhaps as bright as a yellowed 25 watt lamp today. The Savoy had over 800 of them on 6 circuits, four of which were step-dimmable on open battens in the

footlights and in the wings.

Wing lights were particularly important when the scenery was mostly hanging canvas. Bunch lights had a 'bunch' of 7 to 10 lamps in one flood fitting, on a stand, lighting the stage area near the wing. Wing lengths, which were long lengths of timber with lots of lamps fixed to them, hung on the scenery and illuminated the next wing cloth upstage.

One great advantage of the earliest electric lamps was that they could be dipped in lacquer and, because the lamp envelopes contained a partial vacuum, the heat from the carbon filament would not be transmitted to the glass, so the lacquer wouldn't burn off. My carbon filament lamps are made with an inert gas, so the full 65W of heat is transmitted and these carbon lamps can only be used 'open white', but they are useful as the white circuit in a batten or footlights to provide a reference brightness

Recreating the lighting design

I used 16ft of open footlights, using a total of 48 lamps on four circuits. For the 3-colour circuits, I used the next generation of vacuum lamps from 1910, so I could dip them in Rosco Colorine, using Canary Yellow, Ruby Red and Midnight Blue. The four 10-lamp, 8ft lengths had a combination of Midnight Blue and Emerald Green lacquers.

On stage there were original perch positions for

limelight operators above the prompt corner and OP so we fixed a vintage 500W PC spot in each position which I controlled from the desk. In practice, they never got above 60%, which is an indication of 19th century light levels. They achieved a degree of modelling which the dominant footlights could not hope to do. Our followspots were two Strand Pattern 43 1kW PC spots from the 1930s, with halogen lamps and external irises, which gave the beams a softness as they narrowed and dimmed.

So was Victorian electric stage lighting dim?

Inevitably, we noticed the lack of brightness. A 1kW Patt. 43 set at medium flood at 50ft throw with a Lee 103 gives about 60 lux but this still registered against the up-light from the floats and it enabled the proscenium side doors to be used.

Likewise, the two onstage spots would have been overwhelming at a 12ft throw, so they were dimmed down too. But the float lamps that

we used in the coloured circuits were more powerful than the carbon lamps used in 1882, probably twice the brightness, so if anything we were brighter than the Savoy would have been.

Benefits of dipped colour lamps

Because we used dipped lamps the colour mixing was a real merging. With later compartment battens oddly coloured flickering shadows are seen when the performers block the light from some compartments. With 24 lamps per colour, and 180° spread, the 1882 effect was virtually shadowless.

The scenery came to life under the floats and lengths, achieving a three-dimensional quality. The colours achieved by colour-mixing the floats as they played on the gold leaf of the proscenium were spectacular, especially in the yellow to pink range.

The performance

The audience didn't seem worried about the lack of brightness. I adjusted levels by eye on a live preset at the



Bunches and lengths.

back of the stalls, setting a course for a full up finish. Act 1, the staged rehearsal, used white and yellow floats, wide FOH limes with straw gels, perch limes at 50% and the four bunch lights set just on-stage, pointing centre from the portal positions, so there was quite a lot of glare, too. I used the open white battens to touch in upstage, where the rehearsing singers sat when awaiting their cues.

For Act 2 we started with an all blue/green state, to show that colouring on the scenery and because the action starts with Lady Jane singing a rather melancholy but ultimately hilarious song, regretting the passing years. During the aria I quietly added pink floats and the 'massive' Lady Jane was covered by the FOH limes in open white, so she appeared to be surrounded in her own rosy regret.

As the action progressed I added in the bunches and, for the finale, we went to full yellow foots. The perch spots were added as and when needed. I didn't use the

open white battens, except to balance up the borders with the legs.

So, within a range of about 150 lux, we were able to achieve a measure of flexibility and to think about what light means to a scene. This may be more than the electricians did in 1882 but, from our viewpoint, lighting design is what you add to darkness and we certainly explored the first 150 lux. From the Victorians' viewpoint anything more than we achieved at Normansfield would have been cold, harsh and garish, so I would guess that our worlds met at the right place.

The first professional performance at Normansfield since 1909 was a sell-out and had shown the theatre to be an excellent small lyric house. May *Patience* be rewarded with a new era of opera at Normansfield. #

Normansfield Theatre

The story of Normansfield is the story of Dr John Langdon Down, identifier of Down's Syndrome. As the wealthy owner of a private mental hospital, he was free to develop his own therapies, including theatricals. He built a gloriously decorated theatre with an 18ft proscenium, edged with deep ribbed coving, covered in gold leaf. The best scenic artists were employed for proscenium panels, cloths, wing pieces and borders, all of which were neatly stored in a cloth store, upstage. But the venue has been dark for nearly a hundred years.

*Photos right: Act 1 – rehearsing with bunches at the Opéra Comique.
Far right: Full up finish.*





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Understanding agents

Michael D. Finch hopefully clears away some of the myths of the dreaded Agent

Why do you need one?

So why should a budding LD want or even need an agent? After all it's only a matter of checking a laptop's calendar for availability and saying "yes", isn't it? Oh, if only life were that simple! Producers and general managers like to issue long, finite (and 'interesting'...) contracts of engagement these days. If you miss that crucial paragraph you could be signing away your rights, ad infinitum, not to mention the right to re-negotiate your fee and royalty payments if the show transfers or turns into a movie.

Don't get me wrong; I am not saying that everyone is a Shylock. On the contrary, I am just saying that in any business, you should always protect your own interest – that is why contracts are issued. It is therefore the right of the client to question, refer and challenge paragraphs in that document. Do you, the exceptionally busy and over-worked LD, want to be bothered with all of that paperwork? Or would you rather an agent did that for you, referring back with the salient points? Yes, exactly. So, agents are actually quite a useful thing to have after all! Creatives need to stay creative, and agents just need to sort it out.

Client / agent relationship

An agency should support its client base as much as possible, not just in the role on an agent negotiator, but also as a shoulder of support, encouragement and enthusiasm. There's more to life than money, but I sure know how many hours people 'donate' to our beloved arts



industry and also how badly sometimes creatives are paid. Through careful progressive negotiation, I am able to continue to make an in-road to those highly-guarded production budgets and carve off larger slices for my clients. Royalties are all very well and good, but audiences are fickle things – the minute they no longer want to see something, the show is sent to the scene dock in the sky, and that's it, no more royalty.

From this you can appreciate that as far as an agent's management is concerned, the client/agent relationship is very much a close, personal symbiotic process. We look at new clients as a complement to our professionalism and not because it is just another name on the website. After so long in the profession an agent knows whether you are going to work well

together or not. It is very much an initial personality choice. Faith and trust are the keystones to success and therefore form the basis of any client partnership.

Agents should use the LD Rider

I think it is important to emphasise the need to use the ALD Rider as at least a basic foundation to your employ. I was just signing off my contract template with my legal team as the ALD version appeared in *Focus*. I was humbled to see that both mine and the ALD's riders were saying the same sort of things and I can honestly say that I amended mine further to incorporate certain aspects of the ALD Rider.

A few European producers have refused to entertain such a rider. Others in America and elsewhere have been very receptive and grateful of such a comprehensive document.

I always insist it goes with a covering letter and explain why it is being sent, and that it must be seen as a basis for discussion in an assistive, not a resistive, fashion.

It's not all in the hands of an agent

My clients are their own Public Relations and marketing service. No good – no work. Their future is in their own hands and they know this only too well. The facilities offered by the ALD website for members' portfolios are an excellent benefit to them and a valuable resource for their future employers. Naturally my agency has a web site and clients are listed there too, but I also think that it is a waste of time duplicating excellent pages, so mostly it is a conduit of traffic management for visitors to view clients' portfolios on relevant sites elsewhere.

In conclusion, one outstanding question may be: "Are you anything like the Jeremy rent agent character in *Little Britain*?" Although I did write the theme tune to our logo, no other similarity can be drawn! #

Michael D. Finch

After thirteen years of theatre management, various freelance work and a period as hire manager for Sparks Theatrical Hire, Michael D. Finch took the bold decision to open his own business. Now, as MD of The LUXF@©tor Group, one part of the business is to act as an agent predominantly to creatives such as lighting, video, sound and set designers.

www.luxfactor.co.uk

Collaborators: UK Design for Performance, 2003 - 2007

Our guest reviewer, Rosy Runciman, visited the SBTD Exhibition for Focus

Collaborators was the latest in the series of four-yearly exhibitions that have been organised by the Society of British Designers since 1979. It celebrates the wealth of theatre and performance art design created by British designers, and designers based in the UK, over the last four years. The breadth and standard of the exhibits this year was very high with many detailed and well executed models, some great photographs and a very noticeable swing to more screen-based and interactive exhibits. The latter have been well spaced throughout the exhibition to provide variety and prevent sound conflict where they are playing on a continuous loop.

Importance of the venue

I applauded the decision to opt for a complete change of venue. The last exhibition which opened at the Millennium Galleries in

Sheffield was a new, glitzy space that gave the theatre design world kudos. Waverley is essentially a well worn student building, used by the various art and design courses that houses a decent sized black box theatre. Hence the building in itself immediately gives a sense of creative process and development that is absolutely right for *Collaborators*. Its shabby corners and faded paint remind us of those battered areas backstage with which we are all too familiar.

"Three productions lit by Paule Constable had photographs that conveyed the artistic beauty of her 'painting with light' "

Displaying lighting design

With part of my job being installing exhibitions in Delfont Mackintosh theatres I have been asked by lighting

designers for my view on how they should display their work out of the performance context. It was with this question constantly in mind that I walked around *Collaborators*. Although the first exhibition area, immediately by the entrance, was rather cramped with exhibits, it was very advantageous for the ALD because the collective entry illustrating the work of sixteen different lighting designers was the first thing you saw as you came in. On a bright day the projections onto a white wall were rather pale but those seriously interested could view them in full colour on the computer screen. This positioning was a huge profile raiser for the ALD and given that, in the short time I was there, theatre professionals from both Germany and France were going round the exhibition I would be surprised if future engagements do not arise out of it.



Superb black and white image of *Le nozze di Figaro*, Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, 2004. Lighting by Colin Grenfell.

Die Walkure Den Ny Opera, 2005 Lighting by David W. Kidd. Photograph by Den Ny Opera and Roy Bell.



Depth and contrast in *After Miss Julie*

Photographs are another obvious way of giving an impression of the lighting and in *Collaborators* there were some superb examples. For me personally the best were the late lamented Ivan Kyncpl's black and white photographs of *After Miss Julie* at the Donmar Warehouse. They were beautifully printed and in the process brought out the full depth and contrast of Neil Austin's work. This production has deservedly been selected for exhibition at the Prague Quadrennial in June. Another black and white image in the show – for the RSAMD's production of *Le nozze di Figaro* – worked to Colin Grenfell's advantage in showing how he had trapped the Count and Countess in a pool of light in the rape scene.

Colour photos captured artistic beauty

There were also some excellent examples of colour photography bringing plaudits to lighting

designers, for example, Roy Bell's photograph of the Den Ny Opera production of *Die Walkure* with David W. Kidd's muted lighting reflecting off huge textured columns. The uncredited photograph of Terry Hands' production of *The Crucible* at Clwyd Theatr Cymru with its extended forestage and minimalist décor illustrated that sometimes all you need is light. Three productions lit by Paule Constable had photographs that conveyed the artistic beauty of her 'painting with light'; soft dawn light peeps through the casement windows in the Royal Opera House production of *Le nozze di Figaro*; sunlight casts deepening shadows over precipitous volcanic rocks in the Strasbourg production of *Così fan tutte* and *Evita* is cocooned in a curtain of light

"David Howe... describes how they used 'beautiful and brutal' beams of light on the characters in **The Trial**."

in the latest RUG production at the Adelphi Theatre.

Lighting plan and photos superimposed for 'A Masked Ball'

How else does one illustrate light to your average exhibition goer? Nick Moran's exhibit

showing his lighting plan for the ENO production of *A Masked Ball* superimposed above production photographs was a graphic reminder to the public of the lighting designers perspective on a production. This may sound like stating the obvious, but

it immediately conveyed something of the reality and complexity of the job in a way that no other exhibit in *Collaborators* achieved.

Pamela Howard and Henk Van Der Geest's entry about *The Greek Passion* was equally graphic with its



Orestes 2.0 Guildhall School of Music and Drama, 2005 Set and costume design by Bec Andrews. Lighting by David Howe. Photograph by Nobby Clarke.



on-site sketches recording their first discussions about the staging and lighting of the piece. These sketches highlighted the exhibition theme of collaboration and the importance of the lighting designer being involved from the outset.

Getting the 3-D feel

By their very nature light boxes do better justice to the set, costume and lighting designers work, giving it a much more 3-D feel. This was particularly the case in *Dog in the Manger*, one of the plays in the RSC's Spanish Golden Age Season, that Es Devlin designed with a brass floor giving Ben Ormerod opportunities to have fun with its reflective qualities. Es also worked with Ben Ormerod on Fin Walker's dance piece *Essence* where the whole focus of the set was on light, consisting as it did of light tubes that moved vertically

Photo previous page: 750 light bulbs on a bed of black cables with a dress of faded flowers' formed one of the scenes in Geneva/Grace a collaborative piece created by Quarantine and lit by Mike Brookes.

and horizontally to create phrases from poems by W.B. Yeats.

Bare light bulbs were a feature of the Iford Arts production of *Rusalka*. Here they had a dual purpose representing the fruit of the tree of life as well as adding to the shadowy, ethereal effect of the opera.

Shafts of patterned light also catch the public eye. Libby Watson's model for *Three Sisters* at Birmingham, backlit by James Farncombe to throw sultry sunlight through shuttered doors onto the floor is a prime example.

Beautiful and brutal light

Sheer strength of light is a much more difficult concept to convey to the public in an exhibition because of course it adds to the drama without their realising it. Two of David Howe's exhibits are good in this respect, in the Guildhall production of *Orestes 2.0*, that has been selected to go to Prague, he describes how they used 'beautiful and brutal' beams of light on the characters in *The Trial*. In his

projections of *Wozzeck*, the light has a raw, edgy quality that reflects and enhances the whole tenor of Berg's opera.

Lighting outside the theatrical box

Collaborators vividly demonstrates the range of venues in which lighting designers work. Doing the lighting for the Cardboard Citizens production of *Pericles* in the varying spaces of an old supermarket distribution warehouse presented Peter Higton with an unusual challenge.

In the collective entry it was good to step outside the production box for a moment and be reminded how much theatre lighting designers can bring to architectural and event lighting. I am particularly thinking here of Simon Corder's lighting at Alnwick Castle.

In conclusion I quote the statement from one of the collaborators on Bobby Baker's show *How to Live*. 'Blessed are the cracked for they let in the light.' #

Rosy Runciman

Rosy is Archivist for Cameron Mackintosh Ltd.

The SBTD Exhibition was held at the Waverley Building, Nottingham Trent University, 10 January – 4 February 2007. A selection of exhibits from *Collaborators* will form the British entry to the Prague Quadrennial at the Industrial Palace, Vystaviste Exhibition Grounds, 14 – 24 June 2007. For further information please see www.pq.cz.

In addition the majority of *Collaborators* will be exhibited at the V&A for 20 months from November 2007 to Summer 2009.

And now for an ALD member's view by Michael Dobbs...

Wow! was my reaction after spending a couple of hours at this exhibition. I felt exhausted; there was too much to take in. I knew that I would be back. On my second visit, I had a little more time to reflect on this large exhibition.

Covering three floors of the Waverley building the exhibition was presented in a mixture of styles highlighting collaboration as a theme in designing for the theatre.

As well as stage set



Michael Dobbs: "So much to take in..."



Little Voice at Manchester Royal Exchange with Michael's record player.

models, production photographs, computer and video presentations, there were costumes and sound designs as well as several intriguing exhibits. Collaboration with space as a concept was also explored with a model of the auditorium for the new Courtyard theatre at Stratford as well as a model for an outdoor production of a project for another company. Just to give one example of the idea of collaboration which caught my eye was a production of *Little Voice* for

Manchester Royal Exchange. The set was based on the concept of a 1960s' record player (yes – I had one just like that). Here setting and sound were integrated as part of the whole production concept. The catalogue of the exhibition shows the vast range of material which was on display. It provides inspiration and is an invaluable resource. I was intrigued by the way some of the set models had been lit with MR16

lamps masked down with blackwrap, or perhaps a small fluorescent, masked offstage. I did detect one or two LED fittings that had been deployed as well as some specialised miniature shop display fittings. This scaled-down lighting of models reminded me of my early days with a model theatre lit by torch bulbs. Power was supplied by a bell transformer with three different tappings, which was then fed through

a rheostat. With three lamps and the cellophane from a certain variety of sweet wrappings, or a particular glucose drink, I could work miracles! Certainly, an excellent exhibition of the variety of work which sometimes we may take for granted within the whole business of theatre. #

All photos by Michael Dobbs

Michael Dobbs

No, I am not the author of political novels but now a retired priest of the Church of England! In my early career I worked for Strand when SEECOL was imprinted on stands, and continued my interest in lighting throughout my ministry. I am the proud possessor of a T-shirt awarded to me by the local theatre crew emblazoned with "Seen the light, focused it!"



The ALD collective entry.

THE DEEP BLUE SEA

Terrence Rattigan's play *The Deep Blue Sea* at the Northcott Theatre Exeter was the very first professional credit for Hugh Vanstone in October 1982. Last November, some 24 years later, he was invited to return to the Northcott to have another go...

The first production was staged at the Northcott – my local rep – directed by Stewart Trotter and designed by Tim Reed. When Ben Crocker, the current artistic director, felt that Exeter was ready for another look at the play, I leapt at the chance because although I have had the opportunity to revisit many designs they are rarely separated by so many years.

Both productions were intended to play for about three weeks and the schedules were almost identical. Re-rig on the Saturday night after the previous show, fit up over Sunday and Monday, focus and plot Tuesday with the cast on in the evening to start tech, first dress Wednesday evening, second on Thursday afternoon followed by

opening night. All very neat and compact – oh, that more shows were like that. It does make a nonsense of the monster musicals that take two months to put on and everyone has lost the will to live by the time you open!

Contrasting set design

The play is set in a tawdry flat on the first floor; a conversion from a once grander suburban home. The 1982 production was a completely realistic design, effectively a box set with ceiling. Last year's – designed by Sara Perks – took a rather more abstract approach, still with the room represented in detail, but with a splintered ceiling made up of three triangular screens painted with clouds. These allowed me some scope to add another dimension - a barometer of the pressure that

builds up within the play and a way of expressing some of the oppressive world surrounding the protagonists.

"...in the end, it's all about atmosphere, and it's a mistake to get hung up on realism."

Another constant between the two productions was Maurice Marshal, the chief electrician of the theatre both then and now. It was he who rashly allowed me my first "proper" go at lighting at the tender age of seventeen. I remember feeling absolutely convinced of my talent and ability and probably pestered him into submission. Of course I was supervised, and I did get away with it – but only just, I suspect. It was heart warming to see Maurice still at the top of his

game – not to mention the top of his TalleScope – and wiser than anyone else in the venue in the ways of getting a show on.

The plan in 1982

Looking back at the original plan, I am struck by its formulaic approach. A 45 degree angle, 12 point area wash from left and right on the advance bars and a number one bar that could just sneak in under the ceiling. These were, astonishingly, in Cinemoid 60 minus 52 from one side and 60 minus 54 from the other. Even more bizarrely, these colours were repeated from a lower angle FoH wash. Now 52 and 54 were the predecessors of the now familiar Lee 152 and 154 but 60, as I remember was a grey neutral density. Yuk! How any light came out onstage

Hugh Vanstone lighting designer

Hugh has designed the lighting for more than 150 productions and worked for



most of the national companies and extensively on Broadway. He has been nominated for seven Laurence Olivier Awards, winning three for: Pacific Overtures (2004, Donmar); The Graduate (Gielgud) and The Cherry Orchard (NT) in 2000; The Unexpected Man (RSC) and The Blue Room (Donmar), 1998.

is a miracle. I suppose I was trying to achieve a grimy feeling and tone down the pinkiness of the 52 and 54. Twentyfour years on I realise I probably only succeeded in making it dim and vaguely pink. The rest of the rig comprised furniture specials

and door backings in slightly more reasonable colours and treatment for an up centre cyc beyond the windows.

Colour change for 2006

My 2006 version took a much fresher approach colour wise, but I was still using pretty much the same positions as before because my hand was forced by the ceiling – still no backlight – but using

slightly more extreme angles. The colours this time were open white and Lee 201 from FoH and Lee 174 and Lee 201 again overhead. So much cooler than before. This time, because of a much easier location of the window (on SR), I was able to get much better keylight through it: Source 4s in 201 for a cold morning light, and 1kW beamlights for afternoon

sun. I did have more tricks up my sleeve this time: some brown focused linear gobos from FoH and overhead just to keep areas of the room present when they were not lit, and some pars with scrollers at a very low angle FoH to add a low fill, which proved very useful.

But the method of design remains essentially the same: I read the play, wrote a list



The Deep Blue Sea 2006. (Lovely modelling and flesh tones – Ed.) Photo: Alan Winn.



The Deep Blue Sea 2006. (Change of lighting atmosphere and detail – notice the window shadow on the door – Ed.) Photo: Alan Winn.

The Deep Blue Sea 2006. (All about atmosphere – great window light! – Ed.) Photo: Alan Winn.



of needs, created it (largely with the stock equipment available) then coloured it in. I still feel that things almost design themselves and all

internal cues subtly adjusted the focus and light to suit the action, and this undoubtedly produced a much less flattened out effect.

"Several 'invisible' slow internal cues subtly adjusted the focus and light to suit the action, and this undoubtedly produced a much less flattened out effect."

I do is guide it in the right direction. Even though both sets had a realistic feel, when it comes to lighting I find although I have an idea of what realism dictates the room ought to look like, in the end, it's all about atmosphere, and it's a mistake to get hung up on realism.

And the differences?

The first production, plotted on a 120 channel three-preset manual board (Strand Threeset) had only thirteen cues, while the second, programmed on a Strand 500 series, had around 100. Although to the untrained eye both versions had more or less one state for each act, this time I was able to move the focus around much more. Several 'invisible' slow

I'm sure that my more recent version was better lit, although there were a few things I had to leave annoyingly undone due to lack of time. But I suppose it would be true to say that both were 'fit for purpose' to use that modish terminology. It's just that things have moved on. I think the greatest leap that I have made is in attitude: in understanding my place within a team; that the crucial thing is to think about how to support what the director and designer are doing, calmly and efficiently without unnecessarily adding to their stress; and of course, being completely willing to dispense with ideas that don't work - in your opinion or someone else's! #



The Deep Blue Sea, Northcott Theatre Exeter 1982. Mike Burnside, Mary Yeomans, John Astbury. Photo: Alan Winn.

Thanks to Andrew Sinclair at the Northcott for help with archive photographs.

Grand MA meets Quadrophenia

On Fri 16th February ALD members met at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama to see a demonstration of the Grand MA lighting desk and see it in action on the student production of 'Quadrophenia' at the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff. Will Evans enthuses...

The day started with Tim Routledge, the current Lighting Supervisor for this term, demonstrating the desk's powerful video server system. Currently the only desk that can directly control images and video playback with no need for an external programme. After a lunch laid on for us by the college we had a guided tour of the college's facilities by lighting design student, Cat Crick. After lunch we moved into the Sherman theatre to see the desk in its natural theatre environment and had the chance to play with Cat Crick's rig for *Quadrophenia*. We all noted how quick it was to set up groups and focus points and recall them easily on the touch screen. I felt that it was very 'user friendly' especially for programmers.

It also deals with timings in a very nice way in that you can give separate attributes or dimmers separate fade/delay and wait times which eliminates the need for part cues especially as these are effectively unlimited on the MA.

"The lighting was cool and slick, just like the show."

The desk in action

The college's production of *Quadrophenia* is well worth a lengthy mention here as is the design. For starters it is the first independent production of this iconic rock opera, 'blessed' by Pete Townshend himself, who made an appearance at the opening night. I have to admit I was dubious as to whether

a drama school could pull off such a large and complex production, I'm very pleased to say they did.

The visual design was quite simply sublime. Set designer Sophie Khan had created a harsh and industrial environment consisting of corrugated plastic cyc, a large steel 'Alice Band' (as it became known) which was on a double revolve, two very large framing trucks which could track fully across the stage and become solid walls or a large tunnel entrance. Not to mention a real London taxi that explodes and many smaller flats and set pieces. The band was on a scaffolding platform which, during the second half split and trucked left and right (with band still playing!) to allow use of the outer revolve.

Impressive lighting design

Cat's lighting design was also something very impressive. To begin with a rig of sixteen moving lights and sixty or so generics with a plotting time of only 8 hours would be daunting for many lighting designers, let alone a student! The lighting was cool and slick, just like the show. Cat had the concept of lighting all the male characters in cool colours and the females in warm and open white. A challenging concept but one which worked seamlessly and gave depth to the piece which plot is, to be fair, thin. The entire show was almost entirely side lit which as Cat herself admitted was very alien to her. She confessed she was more a fan of traditional musicals and after conversations with the director and designer where it

Will Evans

Will is a member of the ALD Executive with a shared special responsibility for meetings.

He also has an affinity with students as he was once one and is still trying to work out how you can actually live on an LD's wage while repaying student debt. www.willewans.co.uk



was established that it should not be lit from the front and always seem to be a world lit in a 'half light' it quickly became apparent that front light was going to be minimal. In fact it is nonexistent except for two spotted down 1.2kW PCs used as follow spots to lift faces.

Not Rock 'n Roll lighting

Despite the relatively large moving light rig and LED strips concealed in the back wall, Cat has restrained her self to very few 'rock and roll' moments. I think this is to her credit, it would have been very easy to light each number as a rock concert and have lots of effects and wizzy lights. However this is not the mood of the piece which is very dark and moody. It is only at the end that we really see the rig used to its full extent and during a couple of 'big' scenes that do need to steal the show.

".. all the way through the performance I had to remind myself it was a student production"

I could write about the show for many more pages but I think the editor may have words! But before I go, It is also worth noting that the entire production and creative team were students, the only input from lecturers was as departmental supervisors. I have to point out that all the

way through the performance I had to remind myself it was a student production. I have witnessed many shows by professional companies that were not as well executed as *Quadrophenia* by the students at RWCMD. #

Quadrophenia at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Photo: Kirsten McTernan.



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Meetings Update

A.C. Lighting North 2007, 1st and 2nd May

As the North's premier entertainment technology tradeshow and one of the first UK events in the industry calendar, this year's A.C. Lighting North tradeshow will be the first opportunity in the UK to see prototype or final production models from a huge range of leading brands. The ALD will be there, so come along and see us.

We've been told that there will be many lighting product launches at the show including: Anyscene 2 advanced DMX scene recall unit and Symphony elegant colour changing fluorescent light fixtures from **Anytronics**. Starlette Softlight luminaire from **CCT Lighting**. Color Web 125 LED visual effects display matrix from **Chroma-Q**. LED projectors, fixed installation LED colour changers, moving head LED colour changers, XR8 spot, XR8 wash and XR9 spot moving head fixtures from

DTS. EOS lighting control range & SmartFade ML with moving light control from **ETC**. **Hippotizer** V3 media server with Version 3 software. **Luminex** ethernet-DMX8 gateway truss mounted & ethernet gigabit switch truss mounted. Redback 6 channel dimmer rack from **LSC**. **Osram's** Baby SharXS@HTI@s250W-575W metal halide lamps range. **Roscolab's** LitePad slim and compact LED lighting panel. Mini LED RGB DMX fixtures from **Spotlight**. **Strand's** Light Palette Classic, Light Palette VL, Palette Classic & Palette Preset 32/64 lighting consoles, and **Zero 88's** Leapfrog 48 and 96 lighting consoles.

Full details of the range of exclusive guest speaker seminars will be published by AC Lighting in the coming weeks along with a complete list of exhibitors and new product launches. Show admission is free for registered industry visitors and includes

entry to the seminars and free buffet lunch. Pre-register to guarantee your admission by calling A.C. Lighting Ltd on 0113 255 7666 or go online to www.aclighting.com/tradeshow

Vector Works

The ALD will be holding an informal Vector Works 'workshop' with Alex Wardle on **Sat 28th April** at a central London (location TBC so look out for email bulletins for details). This will be aimed at professional members who use Vector Works Spotlight or who maybe want to consider using this very popular CAD package. Space is strictly limited to 20 members and you must bring your own laptop. Alex will be showing some of the best ways to achieve results with this design package and helping existing users and novices get more out of it. You do not need Vector Works on your laptop as demo versions will be available to load onto your PC

or Mac. The session will start at **10am** and go on to around lunch time where members can then meet for coffee and some refreshments. **Places are limited to 20 and will be given out on a strict first come, first serve basis. This meeting is open to professional members only. To register a place, email: meetings@ald.org.uk**

Grand MA meeting:

A reminder about the forthcoming Grand MA meeting and demonstration at Central School of Speech and Drama in Swiss Cottage, London, on **Fri 3rd May at 10.30am**. If you have not already done so and you wish to attend, please email: [#meetings@ald.org.uk](mailto:meetings@ald.org.uk)



*Grand MA meeting at Lincoln.
Photo: Michael Dobbs.*

Hitting the Big Time! – Part 2

The Role of the Lighting Designer's Assistant in the UK By John Leventhall

In the December/January issue of *Focus*, we looked at Associate Lighting Designers. But there are other important jobs in the LD's team! LD's Assistants (or 'Assistant LDs') are often critical to delivering a big-scale production. There may be one or several Assistants on the Lighting Team and nowadays they are frequently needed. In this article we will examine what's involved in being an LD's Assistant and how you get to be one to add to the understanding of how you get to be a 'fully fledged' LD.

offering services they might already be very expert in – rigging, board operating, effects, etc. The distinction between LD's Assistants and Production Technicians is not always clear. Put simply, the role boils down to: "The LD's Assistant delivers tasks and services which extend the LD's role, resources and capability."

Now it gets a bit soft-edged! There is wide range of functions for LD's Assistants. This diversity shows that LD's Assistants are certainly needed and means there are lots of opportunities

"The LD's Assistant delivers tasks and services which extend the LD's role, resources and capability"

to get employed on a big production.

In Pre-Production: LD's assistants may originate the CAD plan, paperwork, colour calls, hire listings etc. Assistants may develop and build practical fittings, effects or be specialists in moving lights, projection etc.

In the Production and Fit-up period: Most usually,

LD's Assistants work during the production period at the venue. They may be there throughout, or perhaps for a week or just specific days. Assistants keep the plans and production paperwork up to date. Depending on the size of the production, an assistant may do the programming.

A common function is managing the followspots – preparing and calling cues during rehearsals and ensuring operators integrate with the rest of the design. Assistants acquire, prepare and install practical

John Leventhall

John spent his formative years in and around theatres as LD and electrician from small-scale to Opera House. These days he is a Marketing Executive and Consultant. John's role on the ALD Executive is to drive the association's development.



fittings, special effects and projection. Nearer to design work, the LD's Assistant may be responsible for plotting moving lights and doing some focusing.

What does an LD's Assistant do?

Our LD 'focus group' identified a wide range of functions. If you're hoping for a neat 'job specification' in this article, I have to disappoint you! 'LD's Assistant' is not a very accurate title. Assistants might well be freelance practitioners,

What is the Difference between an Associate LD and an LD's Assistant?

The LDs and Associates interviewed for the previous article all made these clear distinctions.

Associate LD

- Management!
- An LD in his/her own right.
- Makes creative input, gives LD advice.
- Stands in for anything the LD does.
- Involved throughout the production

LD's Assistant

- Workforce!
- Probably Crew Technician - LX, Board op, etc.
- Not usually expected to comment!
- Provides specific areas of expertise.
- Works for shorter period at specific stage(s)

What LD's Assistants do depends on the LD. One of the most rewarding jobs is to be a "gofer" – to do anything and everything that comes up. This may range from the "coffee-run" right through to handling logistics and liaison with the Production Technicians. Like Associate LDs, the Assistant may help co-ordinate backstage with the production desk team and board operator(s). It is in the role of a 'handy sidekick' that the LD's Assistant can get to know the LD, develop people skills and perhaps be a sounding board on design points. All this builds up experience in the voyage to being an LD or senior Production Electrician.

Generally an LD's Assistant doesn't attend pre-production rehearsals, production meetings, allocate expenditure and make decisions for changes.

What Qualities do LD's look for in an Assistant?

The LD wants someone enthusiastic who gets their part of the job done on time, with quality, keeping good relations with other members of the production team and suppliers. Assistants should be self-motivating and not need to be asked/told everything. A good Assistant strikes the right blend of enthusiasm and invisibility! You need good 'radar' to be at the LD's side at the right moments and fade into the shadows at others.

The worst sins an LD's Assistant can commit are over-eagerness, being too pushy, exceeding their brief (particularly in things they are not there to do!), being difficult to find and worst of all...irritating other production members!

Many LDs and Associates are aware that they too

started to learn their trade as an LD's Assistant. So a massive benefit is that LDs are usually more than willing to train Assistants. An LD will re-commission an effective Assistant who is familiar with their ways of working.

Being an LD's Assistant is a golden opportunity to observe LDs 'in flight', to understand the workings of 'the business', to develop influencing skills and network. The good assistant absorbs and uses that training, gains experience of team working and visibly develops new skills. As with Associates, effective networking – getting to know people, getting known and following your leads – is critical to go further.

How Do I Become An LD's Assistant?

You need crew experience in live entertainment and/or events (maybe some from college). Assistants are frequently electricians who are 'spotted' by an LD or Production Electrician.

You need to get to know other Assistant LD's,

Production Managers and LDs. Offer a bit of unpaid help as a 'taster' to let an LD put you through your paces. Ask if you could observe a day on a fit-up. As a crew member, good work and getting on well with others is usually noticed. Keep up your membership with the ALD, where numerous networking events bring you into contact with influential people. If you work for a supplier to the entertainment industry, you may come into contact with people who may be your future clients.

Your availability to work is essential, sometimes at short notice. When you work for a supplier or venue this is not always easy and one day you may need to make the critical decision to dive into the world of freelancing. If you have aimed for this and spent time actively preparing for it, the likelihood is that the water will be warmer when you hit it!

What Do LDs assistants get Paid?

Rates are generally similar to those of crew

colleagues i.e. LX, board ops, programmers etc. The producing management usually employs the LD's Assistant and therefore rates will generally be 'the going rate'. Always check what you're offered, though.

Where Can I Get Advice?

One of the ALD's functions is to share experiences to help members with developing better careers, contacts and contracts. Many LDs, Associates and Production Staff are happy to give advice. Mail office@ald.org.uk and we may be able to help you with further contacts. #

"Many LDs and Associates are aware that they too started to learn their trade as an LD's Assistant. So a massive benefit is that LDs are usually more than willing to train Assistants."

Through the Lens... part 1

We twisted Jackie Staines' arm so hard she had to write a piece on photography for Focus or never work again – serves her right for bragging about her new sexy Nikon D50 digital SLR camera at PLASA.

I've been meaning to write about submitting photographs suitable for publication for some time as this seems to be a perennial problem – not only for *Focus* but also for other publications I work on in a professional capacity. The subtlety of pixel dimensions and the black art of resampling are all rather academic until you have a decent picture to work with. The technicalities of publishing photographs will be covered in part 2, but to begin, here are a few tips on getting a good image in the first place.

Sadly, I have very few good photos of my lighting designs at the Stephen Joseph theatre in Scarborough. As a lighting designer watching the technical rehearsals with a critical eye *and* as chief technician keeping the LX department running, I rarely

had chance to photograph my own work, with one notable exception when some of the cast of *Love Off The Shelf* agreed to come in early one afternoon to pose some shots for me. Even then, the pictures were not as good as I'd hoped as it was an unfamiliar camera and there was not a great deal of time. See figure 2, opposite.

Don't rely on the theatre's publicity shots

Of course there were official production photographs but as a lighting designer I found them to be unsatisfactory because they tended to be close-ups of the actors rather than pictures of the whole production and, apart from some set pictures, they were black and white. The shots did not really give justice to any of the designers involved in the production and caused me constant irritation as they seemed to be *actor* photos rather than *production* photos. In figure 1, you can see the actors well enough, but you have no idea that the scene was lit in Supergel 68 and 74 with shafts of Lee 147 cutting through; or indeed that Michelle Butterly is sitting on a lightbox! (And yes, that is a young Stephen Tompkinson stood beside her.)



Figure 1: A typical black and white production photograph, *The End of the Food Chain*, Scarborough, 1994. Copyright Adrian Gatie.

Jackie Staines

Although best known as a lighting designer for her work at Scarborough's Stephen Joseph



Theatre, Jackie also freelanced for a while and reached her pinnacle when Alfred Hitchcock of the Northern Echo described her *Macbeth* at Harrogate Theatre as: "The lowest Wattage lighting plot I have ever witnessed. It's terrifyingly good." Taking early retirement from a life of "funereal darkness", Jackie now works as Technical Editor for Entertainment Technology Press / etnow.com.

Try to arrange a photographic session

Capturing decent images of a stage production is enormously difficult for the amateur photographer. Unless you have a specific photographic session, the odds are stacked against

Figure 2: Gina Cameron posed for a scene from *Love Off The Shelf*.



you: difficult or low light conditions (even if the lighting is excellent, it's still tungsten and colour temperature plays a part), moving subjects, long distances – all of which need to be compensated for by the use of colour correction filters, fast shutter speeds and a tripod. There are also different types of camera to consider: digital vs analogue, compact vs SLR.


Benefits of digital photography

Attempting to compare digital with analogue cameras is too wide a scope for this article as so much depends on the quality and price range of the individual products within the category. As with all computer-related technology the quality of digital cameras has increased and the cost decreased dramatically in recent years. There are some purists who will always believe that film photography is better, however digital photography, particularly in difficult light conditions or for other experimental projects, has one major advantage – the delete button. You can

run off as many shots as you like without wasting money on developing and printing costs. If a shot is not good enough, simply delete it and try again. I enjoy digital photography but that does not make it better or worse than traditional film photography, it's a matter of individual choice related to the work you intend to do with the camera. To help you reach your own conclusion I have found further information on this matter: <http://www.theimage.com/photography/>

What type of digital camera?

Compact vs SLR is a much more realistic comparison as, although there are some very high specification compacts around these days, it all boils down to the quality of lens. In the same way that some LDs swear blind that there's never been a Fresnel as good as the 243 – because of its massive 10 inch lens – so there will never be a compact as good as an SLR because of the size and quality of the lens technology. Having said that, many people will produce excellent shots from



a compact because they are easier to use and less bulky and, just like tools, you will get better results from those that you are familiar with. However, with an SLR you have much more control over the photographic functionality (as opposed to the electronics of the device) so you will be able to obtain better results in low or contrasting light levels as you can set the aperture, shutter speed and ISO (ASA) settings yourself.

This is true of both digital and analogue SLRs although, in the case of the ISO setting

in an analogue camera, this comes down to the choice of film; whereas in a digital SLR the ISO setting is an electronic sensitivity that can be varied during any individual photographic session. Most digital compacts are set to ISO 100, which really is optimised for good daylight work. When I look back through my photo albums, I have some very good nature shots taken in good daylight on my Fuji Finepix A303, (figure 3) but the image quality rapidly deteriorates as the light levels fall. Also, it seems to take a

“...as a lighting designer I found [official photographs] to be unsatisfactory because they tended to be close ups of the actors rather than pictures of the whole production”

long time to save the image data and recharge the flash between shots – not that we want to use flash for show photography! I didn't suffer the same problem with my analogue Olympus compact as I tended to buy faster films – 200 ASA minimum and usually 400 ASA. My Nikon D50 can be set up to ISO 1600, which was fast enough for me to take almost 200 pictures at this year's PLASA show without using the flash at all. Also, the resolution of the image was large enough to publish the photographs as a full A4 page if required. But more of resolution later as the ISO/ASA story doesn't end at 1600. There was one particular production at Scarborough that was so dark, the production

photographer had to have 3200 ASA film shipped in from the States to do the job. (This was as much to do with the predominately blue lighting as actual dimmer levels.) Even then, the photographer had a struggle. The show was *Othello* and I hasten to add that 'darkness culprit' was not myself but Mick Hughes!

Catching a moving actor

Faster shutter speeds help capture moving objects – such as actors – but there's less time to let light into the camera, so you need to compensate with a wider

aperture and/or faster film. Alternatively, the camera may have a multiple shot function so you can take, say, six or eight shots of a moving object and one of them will capture the required moment. (Figure 4)

Choosing lenses and filters for production shots

Perhaps the most obvious advantage of an SLR is changeable lenses and filters. If you want general production shots, you may well need a wider lens than the standard one supplied. Alternatively, if the 'photography position' is



Figure 3: Reasonable quality shot taken with a digital compact in good daylight.



Figure 4: A camera with a multiple-shot function will give you a better chance of capturing a moving object such as this swan. The same principle can of course be applied to actors!

"If you want general production shots, you may well need a wider lens than the standard one supplied. Alternatively, if the 'photography position' is located a long way from the stage, a zoom may be of use."

located a long way from the stage, a zoom may be of use. If you are photographing from a distance, with or without a zoom lens, the use of a tripod is strongly recommended. As for filters, unless you want to get into trick photography the only filter that is really needed is tungsten-to-daylight correction filter, particularly if the bulk of the rig contains straws, golds and roses. Proper photographic filters screw onto the lens (sometimes via an adaptor ring) but if you don't have the filter, or you are using a compact and your pictures are consistently too 'hot' with an orange cast, stick a piece of 202 over the lens – it does work! A digital SLR should allow you to adjust the white balance from the menu, doing away with the need for colour correction filters. Alternatively, use tungsten corrected slide film in an analogue camera.

You are now armed with your camera of choice and various accessories, but before you start taking the photographs you need to decide what you want to do with them after the photoshoot. Are they going to be used for personal viewing (prints or slides), a web gallery, large format prints, professional publication, CDROM? These are important questions, as the final required format affects some of the technicalities of obtaining the picture – particularly with digital photography. I will be explaining formats, jpgs, pixels and resolution in part 2 (next issue of *Focus*).

But before you begin, you may wish to practice with aperture settings, shutter speeds and ISO settings a little at home first – an example of theatrical style photography is shown in figure six, details in the caption. #

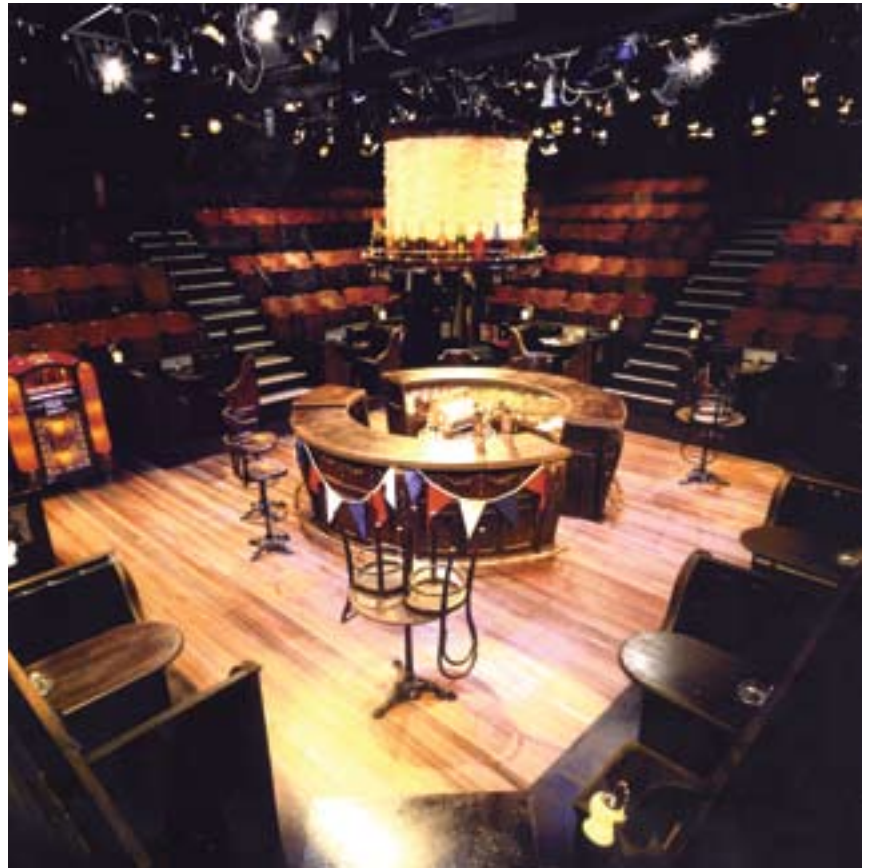


Figure 5: Set photograph for **Conversations With My Father** at Scarborough, copyright Adrian Gatie.

Figure 6 (back cover): A chess set on a dining table lit with four birdies: three in Supergel 68, one in Supergel 21. Camera settings: ISO 1600, Aperture 1/4.5, exposure 1/40, white balance tungsten, pixel dimensions 3008 x 2000.

