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ALD # FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers
"More art, bigger text..."



The Pyramids at Giza. Lighting by Durham Marengi, photo by Nick Jones.

Under the parcan this issue:

- Children's Theatre
- Equity update
- Improve your sex drive
- A tale of two operas
- Lighting balls up in the air
- Dancing in the spotlight... and much more!

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February / March 2007

Competition Special

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Rick's Ruminations

I hope you have all been stimulated by the new look Focus. It has been great to see some first reactions to it as I have shown it to a variety of members and non-members. I particularly liked "wow". Most of the feedback has been good and constructive. I believe Focus will continue to develop and with your input will be an even greater advantage to being part of the ALD. Well done to the new team who have built on the hard work of previous editorial teams. If you have other ideas about the magazine that you would like to share please do get in touch with me and/or the Focus team directly.

It has been a great delight and long over due that the ALD has recognised the huge contribution to the art of lighting design by Lennie Tucker by welcoming him into the elite group of Fellows of the Association. It was an honour for me to present him

with his plaque and especially fitting to have so many of his friends, colleagues there as well as his family. Congratulations Lennie!

Speaking of recognition there has been some well-deserved mentions of some of our members. The entire design team of *Lord of the Rings* in Toronto was celebrated at LDI in Las Vegas in November. The mammoth task of bringing that story to the stage must have been a great piece of collaboration (the theme of the Society of British Theatre Designers exhibit this year) and it is entirely appropriate that the whole team was cited. Well done to Paul Pyant and David Howe and we look forward to you inviting the ALD to see behind the scenes of the magic when you are settled into the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, (hint!)

Many congratulations to Paule Constable and Chris Davey for making

it to 'The Stage 100' this year. The Stage's annual list of the one hundred most influential people in theatre was published on 29th December.

2006 has been a busy year for the ALD. There have been many changes and developments. New faces in the ALD office and at Focus will soon need to be joined by some new members willing to sit on the important Designers Committee of Equity. This job has been done by Tony Simpson most recently as chairman, and he is stepping down in a few months after years of service. Due to Tony and his colleague's hard work, Equity is beginning to notice that LDs have many issues that must be addressed and we are moving forward. Equity appreciates that it can work with the ALD as partners to improve conditions for Lighting Designers. It is essential that we keep working Lighting Designers

represented on this committee so that the slow progress does not disappear. I would be very grateful if someone would contact me about representing LD's interests at Equity. #



*Regards,
Rick*

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OFFICE ORACLE

Latest news from Ian's production desk

We are not in Welwyn any more!

The Office has now been fully re-located in Oxford for six months, the old PO Box address has just expired and we are unable to extend the mail forwarding. Therefore please note that as of the start of 2007, any mail sent to the old Welwyn Garden City address will not be delivered to the office. Please ensure that you have updated the ALD to the Oxford address in your Filofax/PDA/phone/laptop contacts/address book (delete as applicable). And that is especially the case if you still have the pre-2000 Worcester Park address on your records!!!

Spring is in the Air

It's that time of year once again, when the gardeners among us will be thinking of sowing their carrot seed in old PAR Cans and when the request for next year's subscriptions will be dropping through your letterbox. The

Executive would like to remind members that you have three months from April 1st to pay what you owe. Therefore if you currently pay by standing order, please ensure that it is due to pay the correct rate for your membership category. Those who choose to pay by cheque or have not set up a standing order are urged to pay on time to help the cost planning of future events for the Association. If you are unclear about any details of your membership, please contact the office for clarification.

If you no longer wish to continue with your membership, please contact the office in advance of 28th February, so that we do not send you a request for money.

For all those student members that are currently on the sponsored student scheme, here is a reminder that if you are a student at a Conference of Drama Schools college, you need to apply to the scheme again to take part in 2007/08.

If you pay by standing order, please cancel it as we cannot alter any details of this arrangement between you and your bank.

Sponsored Student Scheme

For all those student members that are currently on the sponsored student scheme, here is a reminder that if you are a student at a Conference of Drama Schools college, you need to apply to the scheme again to take part in 2007/08. We require confirmation that you still qualify and therefore need a new application form and proof of student status. If we do not receive this by the closing date of 28th February, your membership will revert to a standard



student category, and you will receive a request to pay the £20 fee. Those members who were final year students on the 2006/07 scheme will have their membership changed to Associate status.

The Guardians of the Theatre Museum

You have probably seen the press coverage about the closure of the Theatre Museum in Covent Garden at the start of January. The ALD is proud to support the Guardians of the Theatre Museum a body set up to ensure there is a future for the museum at the heart of London's theatre land rather than being just another gallery at the V&A in South Kensington. On Radio 4's *You and Yours* programme on Friday 5 January, V&A Director Mark Jones confirmed that it would be two to three years before a replacement facility was in place in South Kensington. Furthermore, the huge potential of the site as a cultural focus in Olympic Year 2012 could well have been thrown away.

A last-minute change by the V&A meant that the Museum closed to the public a day early, on Saturday 6 January. However education work continues to take place until August this year, and the lease on the building runs until 2028. The closure to the public should mark the opening of serious negotiation with the V&A about a solution to the problem.

The Guardians plan to enrol as many members of the theatre professions and the theatregoing public as possible, as quickly as possible. Membership is of course free and at the time of writing currently totals approximately 15,000. A Guardians' spokesperson commented, 'Our supporting organisations account for tens of thousands of people. If we can mobilise the theatregoing public, this target can be reached very easily. The V&A, and their masters the DCMS, have suggested that no one cares about the Theatre Museum. We care about it passionately, and we can prove that we are not alone.'

All those working for the Guardians are doing so on a voluntary basis, but the organisation also requires a fighting fund. In response Marc Sinden's production of *Seven Deadly Sins, Four Deadly Sinners* will be playing for a special Gala Charity performance at St Paul's Church, Covent Garden in aid of the Guardians on Sunday 25 Feb '07 (box office: 020 7836 5221).

To sign up as a supporter, and for more information on the Guardians' aims and objectives as well as the latest news visit www.theatremuseumguardians.org.uk. #

Chris Parry

We are saddened to learn the news that Chris Parry passed away at his home on January 17th. Chris was a brilliant lighting designer and a professor in the theatre department of the University of California, San Diego. He had been a member and active supporter of the ALD since its early days. He moved to the USA to take up an appointment at UCSD in 1988 rising through the ranks while maintaining a busy and high profile career as a lighting designer with credits on Broadway, the Royal Shakespeare Company and important regional theatres, including many productions at La Jolla Playhouse. #

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Professional Member

Mike Robertson,
London.

Associate Members

Nicolas Walsh, Banbury.

Ben Phillips,
Clacton-on-Sea.

Peter Bragg, London.

Lucy Record,
Twickenham.

Student Members

Kris J Love,
St. Andrews, Fife.

Corporate Member
Projected Image Digital.

Dates for your diaries

28th February
Sponsored student
scheme application
deadline

12th March Next Focus
Deadline

21st & 22nd March Royal
Scottish Academy
Graduate Show *

1st April 2007/08
subscriptions due

1st & 2nd May AC
Lighting North Trade
Show *

13th & 14th June ABTT
Theatre Show *

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!

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those of the Association. #

'He's Behind you!'

– No he isn't and never will be, so sit down and listen!

Lighting children's theatre - A beginner's guide by Will Evans

Rule 1: Children's Theatre is NOT, I repeat NOT panto! At Christmas I can see how the two can get confused, but trust me, I have not just spent the last three weeks lighting four pantos. I have, instead, spent the last three weeks lighting four children's shows.

Rule 2: Just because the show is aimed at younger audiences doesn't mean your production values are any lower than perfect.

Rule 3: Just in case you have forgotten, children's theatre is NOT panto.

My short career to date has had one main theme running through it – children's theatre. Don't get me wrong, I have lit,

re-lit and crewed on a fair few adult shows (by this I mean aimed at mature audiences not some kind of strip show!). But if there was to be one common vein running through my CV to date it is not opera, Shakespeare or musicals but theatre for children. Christmas time is naturally the busiest period but so also is the summer, mid spring and mid autumn (holidays, you see). In fact this Christmas was my busiest yet with one new show to be lit, two revivals to be re-lit and one West End show as associate. Oh, and yes, this all happened in three weeks between (in order) Brighton, Stirling, Maidenhead and London. No wonder I'm tired!

"The reason I go back time and time again to light, re-light, board op, stage manage etc is that [the theatre companies] are both passionate about what they do and have very high standards."



Looking forward to Christmas? Alice Jackson as 'Emily' and Ed Burnside as 'Dad' in *The Night Before Christmas*, photo: Stuart Slavicky.

Many people assume that children's theatre is done on the cheap with lower standards, shorter get-ins and a cast that is only there because they were turned down for panto. Well those are all not true (except maybe the bit about get-ins!); the standards are just as high, the cast comprises well experienced actors and the get-ins maybe just a

bit shorter than normal. I have mainly worked with two theatre companies specialising in theatre for younger audiences: the fabulous Tall Stories and the equally brilliant Big Wooden Horse Theatre for Young People. The reason I go back time and time again to light, re-light, board op, stage manage etc is that they are both passionate about what

Will Evans

Following his run of children's shows this Christmas, Will is preparing to return to 'Shared Experience', re-lighting on tour their latest production - 'Kindertransport'. But not before installing 'Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus' into the studio at the Lyric, Hammersmith in February where once again he will be taking on the very serious matter of lighting a 5 foot tall pigeon and his transport related escapades! www.willevans.co.uk



they do and have very high standards. The Tall Stories' shows I was working on this Christmas were two re-lights of the magical 'Snow Dragon' and the infamous 'The Gruffalo', both brilliantly lit by James Whiteside. For Big Wooden Horse I was LD for 'The Night Before Christmas' which opened in Brighton before a whirlwind

UK tour to finally settle in Guildford for the week before Christmas!

So, is there a 'formula' for lighting kids shows? In that

there is a formula for lighting opera or Shakespeare; but in short, not really. I take the script, watch rehearsals, attend production meetings

and discuss ideas just as in any line of lighting work. However, the style of the performance is usually different (especially in the



A cold mouse under some warm lights! Cheryl Blaize as 'Eddie the Mouse' in *The Night Before Christmas*, photo: Stuart Slavicky.

3-7 year old market) and often the settings are much more 'heightened' than in a straight piece of drama. By this I mean the settings are often imaginary, e.g. the 'Deep Dark Wood' of *The Gruffalo*, or plain preposterous as in the world of *Don't let The Pigeon Drive the Bus* (Big Wooden Horse) where a seemingly normal bus driver interacts with a 5ft tall pigeon! This has to be reflected in the lighting; not to do so would be the same as ignoring the settings of *Macbeth* or *Swan Lake*. It is by no means a

a fade time (after all, if the action goes from sunny day in the park to dream sequence in 3 seconds, then why shouldn't my lighting?). You also have the opportunity to 'think outside the box' (I hate that phrase!), if the action, setting and costumes are not confined to reality, then neither should the lighting. A notable example I witnessed was when I operated *The Gruffalo* for the first time a few years ago. James Whiteside had used break-up gobos at shin level in a lavender (Rosco 55 for those interested) for the

" The only time it becomes formulaic is when you stop looking at it as a piece of professional theatre and look at it as 'just a kid's show'"

rule, but often it turns out that colours are brighter, fades sharper and gobos a little less 'realistic'. The shows are set to fire the children's imaginations and your lighting must go along for the ride. I find this very liberating. I can use those saturated hues that I would normally

'Deep Dark Wood'. Upon seeing the plan I thought, "How can break-up gobos work at shin level? Light can't realistically come from there and certainly not through the trees!". Fortunately, I now know better. The effect fits the scene excellently and gives an air of extreme (yet fun) menace just prior to the Gruffalo's entrance, with

shadows playing upon the face of the little mouse and a totally different feel to the by now familiar set.

To look at another example, in my most recent design, *The Night Before Christmas*, the only exterior scene is when Eddie the mouse is heartlessly thrown out of the window by Emily (fear not, she learns the error of her ways by the end). We needed to go to a very different place, and indeed a different scale. Instead of perhaps a traditional moonlit scene, I decided to play with the colour a bit. I lit the scene solely in Lee 708 high side (a cool lavender in both senses of the word), Lee 071 back light (trusty Tokyo blue) and high side linear break ups in Lee 344, a much pinkier lavender. It shouldn't have worked but it did, the scene looked cold, wintry and night time. Often you simply cannot treat a children's show on a realistic level, but then the action, script, set and costumes don't either, so just as in any production you harmonise the lighting with its surroundings. Above all, you



The Snow Dragon, flying into Scotland at Christmas. Lighting Designer: James Whiteside, re-light: Will Evans. Photo: Saint @ MacRoberts Theatre, Stirling.

can have a bit of fun with light, and let's face it, that's why we do this job!

The only time it becomes formulaic is when you stop looking at it as a piece of professional theatre and look at it as 'just a kid's show'. Sadly this is the attitude of some theatres and arts centres up and down the country when you take a show in and they've ignored your tech rider and plan because, "All the kids shows get is a warm and a cold wash and some blue back light. Oh, and you have to play on top of our (much more important) production of [*insert title here*]". This does annoy me and maybe that's why I don't tend to go out with the shows anymore. Attitudes are changing, though, and I have learnt from people that have been involved with children's theatre much longer than I have that receptions are generally warmer and a lot of theatres know to treat you like any other professional touring company.

So do I still do it out of choice? Absolutely. There is a very genuine pleasure of lighting something that is going to be (for at least some of the audience) their first ever theatrical experience, and if it's below par they may not ever come back. I have made some great friends and some very useful contacts through accepting, by accident, a board opping job four years ago for *Tall Stories*. I thought it was as LD (not lx and sound op) and by the time I realised, I couldn't say no. And I'm very glad I didn't! #

Improve your sex drive - Mark Jonathan

It all started when our new editor said he wanted to spice up Focus a bit. I had mentioned running out of vitamin pills while I was in Los Angeles. I had popped into GNC and was wading through the choices of vitamins and asked for help. "What's the difference between these and those?" I said. The helpful salesman replied; "Well, those vitamins help your eyesight". Well, I thought, I have been struggling to read the channel numbers on ground plans for a while now..."And they improve your sex drive," said the salesman. "I'll take'em!" I said.

Cut the stress

So I suppose you want to know if I can read the channel numbers any easier? I'm not sure if I can, actually. The Ginkgo is supposed to help me remember where I put my reading glasses. Anyway, one of the things that will affect your sex drive is how much stress you are under. I'm sure that you will all be relieved to know that I survived the travel trials of the autumn and the stress of washing my passports. I'd like to thank everyone for all the sympathetic messages. Of course, I realised that while consecutive jobs in Washington, NYC, Munich, London, Los Angeles, Leeds and London looked OK in the diary as the months passed and I got closer to the actual

jobs it was perhaps a bit too much. It's very difficult to gauge how you will feel in nine months time. The week when I was commuting between Munich and London was really tough and I only realised afterwards that I had overdone it. I thought I was on top of "my stress" but it was tested this week as I sat back and watched the press night of 'Napoli Divertissements' at the ROH. Halfway through, a gremlin struck the lighting systems and we lost a big chunk of the rig but worse the cyc scrollers went through the 20 odd colours a few times. As I gripped the arms of my seat I imagined the press quotes, "British Lighting designer destroys Danish ballet set in Napoli with crazed lighting"... Although the management

made an announcement we sat gripped for the rest of the evening wondering if it would happen again. At the end of the evening we left Michael Scott with the unenviable task of working all night to try and sort the problem out.

"I divide the fee by the number of days and get more stressed out when I see how low the daily amount can be. I've even been advised not to do this as "it only upsets you."

Given our peripatetic lifestyle and the long hours we work it's really easy to succumb to stress or to "bad" things that might help us through a stressful period. I'm happy that I don't smoke, I've

cut back on alcohol intake and I try and eat sensibly. Endless meals away from home and the temptations of cakes in coffee shops are always a risk to weight increase. I know if I don't go to the gym on a very regular basis I will just fill-out. In November, I was away for exactly one month and arrived back 7lbs heavier. The long hours, along with falling down the stairs in the West Yorkshire Playhouse meant no exercise and some rather tempting apple crumble and late night vases of red wine had all contributed to my quick downfall. I was fairly cross with myself and getting rid of the 7lbs has meant no alcohol, no puddings and 5km daily runs.

I've been talking about the stress caused by overwork but then for many freelance LDs there is the perennial question of where's my next job? This can cause stress too. If you are lucky enough to be in work there is the business management side of the job to fit in too. I was finishing my accounts on Boxing Day and ever hopeful that my

accountant might get the return in before the deadline at the end of January. The next bit of stress is 'have I saved enough money to actually pay the tax bill?' To combat stress holidays are essential but do our fees really allow for us to be able to afford to get away?

What should we do next?

Please read Colin Grenfell's letter (page 28) where he dreams a little about the ALD becoming a union rather than an association. This made me think about what we (the ALD and professional LDs) should do next? A year ago we wrote to every producer in the land. We asked them to think about whether their lighting fees had kept pace with inflation and if the fees were really appropriate for the work we now do? While we did get some notes of support, the ROH contracts department just referred our letter to their



ALD's sexual health guru



MJ managing his stress in the mountains...

management association, the TMA. We then received an admonishment from the TMA for daring to write to its members rather than going through Equity. We replied saying that Equity was simply negotiating the entry level minimum and this bore no relevance to the actual fees paid.

I'm sad about the Royal Opera House as I'm back there this month and it's such a joy to work there except for

the contracts department who are completely disconnected from the reality of what we do. It does seem to me that even in smaller regional theatres that there is a "head in the sand" approach. The Artistic Director doesn't want to know about the crap fees and the negotiating manager doesn't really understand about how many days we are on the job including the "unseen" days before the fit-up and the week or more of previews that even

small fringe theatres have adopted. At the ALD AGM, Richard Pilbrow advised us that we needed to have hard facts. When I have time I jot down the number of days I have been on a job including all the prep and meetings. I divide the fee by the number of days and get more stressed out when I see how low the daily amount can be. I've even been advised not to do this as "it only upsets you".

So, my question to you all

– is what shall we do next? Rick and I have talked about sending a follow up letter to producers. Rick says things are not going to change overnight. But that we have to keep chipping away at this issue. Are we paid as much per hour as other senior members of production staff? How can we get managements to seriously review our pay? I noticed in four years that one of the UK's leading regional theatres has increased its lighting fee paid to me by £50. I'm going to email a cross-section of LDs and ask you for ideas of what to do next. If you have an idea then please email me.

Clearly, the ALD does not have the resources at present to become your union. We can see even as Equity members, with all the "might" of the union, that while agreements have improved and the support when producers default is good, the minimum fees just raise our blood pressures.

Raising our profile

For some years we have tried to raise the profile of the LD. This is something that every LD can do. Do we use publicity and marketing enough? It's great that Kate Burnett and her SBTd team have mounted another designers' exhibition - *Collaborators* at

By popular demand... Marko's de-stressing travel tips from last issue were:

Train Tracker 0845 7484 950 *for train times on your mobile*

www.thetrainline.com *to book train tickets including 1st class singles*

www.maxjet.com *For business class flights from London to NYC, Washington and, coming soon, Las Vegas*

www.amtrak.com *For trains from Washington to NYC and Boston*

Miele washing machines www.miele.co.uk

Nottingham. Well done to those members who have made individual entries and huge thanks to Ken Coker for his work in creating the

ALD collective entry. By the way, Rick has asked the TMA if they will create a new category for their TMA awards for lighting design.

So my conclusion for this month is try and manage your stress; don't eat too much sugar and fatty foods, don't overdo the alcohol

consumption, get to a gym wherever you are, take a good multi-vitamin and think about what we can do collectively to improve our fees. #

Please read Tony Simpson's article on developments with Equity. I'd like to second Tony's view that its in the interests of working LDs to belong to the ALD and Equity. Many thanks to Tony for the outstanding contribution he has made while working on the Equity Designers committee and as Chair of the committee.



La Sylphide, Royal Ballet. Lighting by Mark Jonathan. See review on page 25. Photo: Bill Cooper

Congratulations to all our colleagues who have been nominated for this year's Olivier awards for Best Lighting Design:

Jean Kalman for *The Crucible*
Hugh Vanstone for *Monty Python's Spamalot*
Natasha Chivers and Mike Robertson for *Sunday In The Park With George*
Neil Austin for *Thérèse Raquin*
Kenneth Posner for *Wicked*

ALD Fellowship for Lennie Tucker

On Monday 18th December, Lennie Tucker was recognised for his contribution to the art of lighting design when he was made a Fellow of the Association of Lighting Designers. Lennie has over a hundred West End lighting credits to his name spanning 50 years of lighting design experience.

He was also the first Head of Lighting for the National Theatre when it was originally based at the Old Vic, as well as overseeing the move into their present



David Hersey, Laurie Clayton and Richard Pilbrow congratulate Lennie on his ALD Fellowship. Photo: Ian Saunders.



Mark Jonathan and Rick Fisher wait in the wings and ponder the lighting design as Mick Hughes gives his tribute to Lennie. Photo: Simon Corder.

home on the South Bank. During his 22-year tenure, he was instrumental in setting up many of the repertoire lighting procedures within the department that are still evident today. He received his award from ALD chairman Rick Fisher and ALD Fellow Mick Hughes.

Congratulations Francis!

Mark Jonathan was honoured to be asked to make the citation and present Francis Reid with his Fellowship to the ABTT on December 15th. In his entertaining mathematically-correct speech, given in ETC's splendid Matcham-inspired showroom in West London, Mark added up some of the things that Francis had achieved during his career. He has lit (deep breath): 66 operas (excluding revivals and re-lights), 51 pantos, 14 West End musicals, 15 West End plays, about 30 assorted tours, festivals, and his spare time has written 13 books (an unlucky number so the 14th is out next year) some of which have been translated into Catalan, his lecture tours span the globe to include 30 cities in as many countries, including Wolfenbüttel, and he has held educational posts at RADA, the National Theatre School of Canada, the position of Dean at both The Hong-Kong Academy of Performing Arts and The Central School of Art and Design whilst directing British Council International Theatre Lighting Seminars from 1988 until 1998 and giving conference papers in 24 cities around the world. Mark concluded that designers, technicians and students both in the UK and all over the world will want to thank Francis for the inspiration he has given us, both through his designs and in his writing and teaching.



Francis and Mark. Photo: James Laws.

EQUITY UPDATE

By Tony Simpson, Equity Designers' Committee Representative

I would like to start by thanking Mark Jonathan, Johanna Town and Matt Eagland, along with all other members of the Designers' Committee, for their continued membership and support of the Equity Committee. We have, for the last 18 months, had four lighting designers who have quickly become invaluable members of the Designers' Committee. This is a first for this particular committee, and I hope it will continue to be the norm from now onwards.

Here's a quick recap on the role of the Designers' Committee, starting with a topic which has been much sought after and fought for; the issue of Equity minimums. As most of you know, the Union has over 30 specialist committees representing all aspects of the industry including issues of health and safety to funding, choreographers to directors, and so forth. Amongst many other responsibilities, one of the chief tasks for each

committee is to discuss, and debate the rates of minimum fees as laid down by the three collective agreements (which are operated by Equity) covering all sectors of the Arts; the TMA, ITC and SOLT. It is still a widespread misconception by managers and producers that the minimums are a scale upon which wages and fees should be based. This is only ever, or should only ever, be the case when arriving at a fee or rate for a practitioner who is a graduate. Needless to say, this is a painful thorn in the now rather inflamed sides of such specialist committees! Even by today's standards, the minimums currently set for lighting designers across these three collective agreements are painfully low. If a practising Equity member is ever offered a minimum fee, or below minimum fee, they are encouraged to contact the Union or the ALD. These current minimum rates can be found on the three respective

websites: www.tmauk.org, www.itc-arts.org, and www.solt.org.uk.

The latter of these agreements (SOLT) is awaiting the conclusion of the performers' rates negotiation and therefore continue to operate under the 2003 rates. If you have an idle moment, do log on to the SOLT site and it may, or may not, surprise you to learn that lighting design is still regarded by the body who governs this sector as an element of the production which can earn considerably less than anyone else involved! Hmm...what was that in the press about the West End theatre and related industries being deemed as the most lucrative in London?

Oh well, enough of a rant. The good news (if we can call it that...) is that after a face-to-face meeting in 2005 with the TMA Designers' Committee, the TMA did finally agree that the minimums in this sector were generally far lower than the rates actually being paid in real terms, and we have now secured a two stage increase (let's pop those champagne corks!)

On another note, the Equity

Council have now accepted an offer from the TMA to increase the minimum fees for MRSL Grade 1 theatres by 20% and MRSL Grade 2 & 3 theatres by 10% over two years. In addition, RPI % increases to the fees for RSC, NT, the commercial sector, Opera and Ballet. The first increase (year 1) came into effect on 1st October 2006, and the second increase (year 2) will be effective from 2 April 2007. Finally, the ITC rates have increased this year by 3.5% + RPI so that if you are offered work on an ITC contract as a lighting designer, the minimum now stands at £1,829.00 (with effect from April 2006). As ever, this is a slow process but as a professional body I hope, as I know many of you do, that we will continue to operate, and cooperate (with Equity), as a collective in support of this process.

Finally, I have been on the committee since 1999, and Chair for the last four years, and once this term concludes in July, I will be standing down as an Equity Rep. I am grateful to have this opportunity to say to the membership that if you are at all interested in

helping, or contributing, to the on-going negotiations, or if you're simply considering applying for membership, then please do apply to Equity in writing. Regarding the latter, the underlying value of Equity membership to a lighting designer is categorical – Who will support you in your hour of need?

There is a small school of thought whose belief it is that belonging to one (e.g. ALD), or the other (e.g. Equity) is sufficient. To belong to both would be careless. Perhaps a small portion of those are working on the premise that one annual subscription fee is far more palatable than two (altogether understandable in theory!). But the ALD is our network, belonging solely to us as a support body and professional representative. Equity is our Union. Both organisations are, in my experience, as important to any lighting designer as the other. As with any organisation of this nature, Equity as our Union can only be as effective as the people within it, and by the volume of voices that support it.

Tony Simpson #1097

A Cunning Little Whorehouse

Philip L. Edwards compares and contrasts the styles of Janacek's *Cunning Little Vixen* in the round and *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* at the Royal Northern College of Music

The space

The Studio Theatre of the Royal Northern College of Music is an under-used asset. Built in the basement of the first extension to the College buildings, it is a black box about 44' square, with a scaffold grid some 15' high. The longer bars of the grid are wired as six parallel, eight way, internally wired spotbars with a further twelve circuits available at floor level. Dimmers are Strand Lighting LD90 – 64 of them with four dedicated to houselights. Control is by Strand Lighting 300 series desk with 125 intensity channels.

A technical gallery occupies about half of one of the longer walls – open to the studio. The lighting control and stage management desks are normally located here. There is no permanent sound desk – the College Recording Department provides

whatever is necessary for each production.

Opposite the technical gallery is an alcove with a door about 8' above floor level leading to the College car park. It was originally intended to install a get in lift in this alcove. This was cut during the building process to save money. In retrospect this was probably just as well. We have had no problem getting anything we need into the Studio via the stairs or the nearby passenger lift and the alcove space has been very useful for day to day storage and as a performing space in major shows.

The Studio sees rather less use than it deserves. Most of the time it is set as an end stage with a seating bank across one of the shorter sides and used for internal concerts, classes and rehearsals with the occasional visit from small

theatre companies. The BBC has also found it useful for recordings of radio panel games.

Flexible staging

Recently a number of the College's opera productions have been presented in the Studio Theatre rather than the main house. This poses an interesting challenge to the Staff Director, Music Director and production staff. Opera is normally a proscenium activity. In the Studio we have an empty box, no scenery facilities and no orchestra pit. Nevertheless over the last couple of years we have presented several operas in a variety of ways, in the round, end stage and thrust.

It was decided that in December 2006 we would present a College production of Janacek's *Cunning Little Vixen* in the round, with a cast of rather more than fifty and

an orchestra of fifteen.

Inspired by an earlier College production of *The Threepenny Opera* in the Studio, The South Manchester Amateur Operatic Society, a regular visitor to the main Opera Theatre, decided to attempt a Studio production. A typical operatic society, it normally relies on hired scenery and costumes and productions are subsidised by members' subscriptions and fund raising social events.

Their choice was *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* and my colleagues and I were asked to come up with a set design and to light the show. The director asked for several levels and also, if possible, for a high level entrance from the technical gallery.

It was decided to play with the Studio in its normal end stage layout and so avoid the cost of resetting and restoring the Studio. My assistant Paul

Botham came up with a layout of Steeldeck rostra starting at the technical gallery upstage left, effectively forming a walk-down staircase across the back of the set and down the right hand side. To stage left was a free-standing rostrum area 1' high. Most costumes and props were found by Society members.

The band – the leader of which acts as a narrator – was placed upstage right

Preparation

Fit up time for *Vixen* was not as constrained as for *Whorehouse*, after all it is our Studio. There were however other constraints. Seating capacity had to be maximised – we need the money and demand for seats for our performances is high. Even though we were using an orchestra reduced from the original, a fair amount of space was still needed and

it was essential that contact be maintained between the conductor and band and singers.

The director of *Vixen* – Stefan Janski – also asked for levels; a table is needed for the interior scenes and a burrow for some of the exterior scenes. Working with Stefan, I devised a very simple set. An 8' x 4' Steeldeck rostrum, 3' high with a 1' high Steeldeck each side. 1' high blocks formed benches on top of the lower rostra. The whole was set diagonally in the space between the four seating banks and covered with a canvas cloth slit along the join of the higher and lower rostra, to allow the cast to sit on the benches with their feet under the higher rostrum. The cloth and floor – Rosco dance floor laid over the Studio floor – were very simply painted mottled green.

As a result, the cast could climb over the set, circle round it, sit at table and dive into a burrow under it. The areas outside the set between the seating banks became acting areas for onlookers

and entrances. At a couple of points in the opera, the end of the technical gallery not occupied by stage manager and lighting operator, was used by the chorus as (vocal) onlookers.

Costumes were designed by Elaine Needham, the College's Wardrobe Manager, and made by her with a number of freelance assistants.

The orchestra was set in the alcove, as with *Whorehouse*, although occupying rather more space.

Lighting design

I would have expected there to be significant differences in my lighting techniques for two such different shows but, looking back, there are many similarities. In both cases I made myself as familiar with the piece as I could, read, listen to records, watch rehearsals, talk to directors and so on. It is not possible to "help the actor" – which is what lighting should be doing – without really knowing the show in detail.

In a show with music a

lot of the cue timings will come from the music and this proved to be the case with both of these productions. Significantly though, the best cue in *Vixen* was the fade to blackout after the shooting of the vixen. This took place in complete silence and had a magical effect.

In the case of *Whorehouse* the biggest limitation was

the fact that, with an 8.00 get in on the Sunday, we needed to get the cast on stage by late morning for a walk through followed by a run. I had prepared a list of suggested cues in advance and agreed them with the director. These were put in the book and we agreed that cues found not to be necessary (3) would be deleted, any extra

cues (4) would be a's and b's and there would be no renumbering. Thus we all knew what the framework was and I could light over the rehearsals while the director concentrated on the cast. Tidying up took place on the Monday day time prior to a dress rehearsal in the evening. Opening night was Tuesday.



The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, South Manchester Amateur Operatic Society in rehearsal.

There is no real alternative to the time honoured method of dividing the stage up into smaller areas and

then arranging a lantern layout such that performers standing in those are lit in a way combining visibility,

modelling and atmosphere. In the case of *Whorehouse*, time and budget meant that I had to use the Studio as

it was – no budget for hired lanterns and dimmers and, although the College has a pretty good stock of additional

gear available from the main house, there was precious little time to rig and focus.

So my rig left the Studio gear pretty well in its standard positions focused on a basis of two front lights to each area at about the text book 45° vertical and horizontal, together with a third straight downstage backlight. This ensured visibility and modelling and also provided the ability to emphasise or play down areas as required. The whole lot was coloured in 202 to take the yellow off – especially when dimmed. What about atmosphere? As this is usually a polysyllabic word for darkness the answer was to take out – or at least check – some of the rig.

What little real colour I used was provided by a pair of Pattern 743s at each corner of the acting area. One in Lee 119 and the other in Rosco 21. So it was possible to overlay a warm tone for interiors and warm scenes and a dark blue for romantic night (and, on check, for scene changes!).

I plotted some ninety cues



The Cunning Little Vixen at the RNCM. The fox cubs dance round Vixen Sharp Ears, their mother, and Golden Mane Dog fox, their father. Rehearsal picture. Anthony Redmond



The Cunning Little Vixen at the RNCM. The captive vixen is tormented by the cockerel while the hens gloat at her discomfort. (Rehearsal picture. Anthony Redmond)

over the Sunday rehearsals. I don't pretend that there was anything spectacularly original in the lighting. I do claim that it provided a well modelled ambience for the show. It delineated the various scenes, responded to the drama and the music and pointed the moods of the show. The main point is that, even with a very limited rehearsal time, it was possible to achieve a more than adequate result by virtue of close collaboration and careful planning.

Vixen was quite a different experience – more time for a start. Fit up for stage and electrics had a whole day, an hour or so to strip out all the seating and leave an empty

floor for electrics rigging. In fact we stripped the standard rig out and started again, stage followed with the set and seating and we focused in the evening. The cast had their first stage rehearsal the following day, although they had been working on a mock up set for about a week previously.

In passing, I must note that students learn during rehearsal and so the rehearsal time on set is longer than would normally be expected. I often feel guilty about the time we have for lighting. We are all used to lighting quickly and it is strange to have “all the time in the world”. Three evening lighting sessions (only two actually used to plot the 109 cues) and plenty of time to light over rehearsals. In effect the plotting sessions are really to ensure that we all agree, to get the cues into the book and to get a state into the board for each cue. The real detail plotting is done over rehearsals.

There were similarities to *Whorehouse* in the rig. The acting area lights were again

all coloured 202 and again I gave myself a facility to put an overall colour wash in.

The limited number of channels available means that I really have to think about Studio rigs. As far as possible I like to control each lantern separately, so it's essential that everything has a real job, there is no facility to put something in “just in case”. Again the stage was divided into areas. The main floor into octants, the three rostra as separate areas, the “entrances” between the four seating banks and, a token gesture (two 300W Minims), for the (nearly) off stage chorus on the technical gallery.

As far as possible each area was lit with three lanterns at about 120° to one another, so that a reasonable degree of modelling was achieved for each position, viewed from every seat. This couldn't be achieved for the entrances, due to the physical limitations of the Studio. The coverage was steeper than for *Whorehouse*, due to the need to keep light out of the

audience's eyes.

Again, colour washing was achieved from a lantern at each corner but this time with Selecon Pacific 45/75s with scrollers, focused into their own sides and working most of the time as a group. These proved very useful in providing colour enhancement. Rosco 304 or 31 for warm scenes, 21 for the night time in the inn and 85 for darkness with the gobos in the forest. Primary red proved very popular as a wash for the slaughter of the chickens (and diluted a bit for the wedding scene). In addition I put a pair of SL23/50s at each corner to give warm and cold gobo cover, simple small break up for the warm in Lee 103 and a cloud gobo in 161 for the cool, to allow big enough holes to catch faces in strategic places.

All of this was normal, conventional (boring?) stuff. The only unusual feature was a break up gobo coverage of the seating areas in Lee 152, used to add texture to the houselights before the show and during the interval. The only electronic sound effect

used was thirty minutes of gentle rural sound played as walk-in music, so that the audience entered the forest as soon as they entered the studio.

The whole production period went very smoothly. The long rehearsal time gave chances to experiment and to perfect things. The performances were well received by the public and enjoyed by cast, musicians and staff.

Reading through this article, there is perhaps rather less about lighting than might be expected in Focus. Perhaps we need reminding that lighting is only a part of the performance and that – in keeping with the title of the SBTD exhibition – it is a question of collaboration. #



The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, South Manchester Amateur Operatic Society in rehearsal.

DNA - LIGHTING THE CODE

James Laws has lit some unusual things in his time: artificial fish half immersed headfirst in a dartboard and a church spire 2km away from the open air stage. But nothing so far had prepared him for an e-mail from Dr Graeme R Jones, Senior Lecturer, Chemical Ecology Group, Keele University...

Reading on, I saw that Graeme was also Dreamtime Fellow, Sexy Science Inc, at which point I should have been prepared to suspend disbelief. Actually, what Graeme was about to suspend was:

“the largest model of DNA in the world, hanging from the hook in the nave ceiling of Norwich Cathedral. Although the model is 15m long it is only about 40cm wide - very long and thin and therefore lighting will be crucial to make it stand out.”

Graeme went on to explain that the colourful and bobbly nature of the model was going to help us to contrast with the surrounding stonework and that he envisaged the model *“sat in a beam of light”*.

The Cathedral weren't initially keen on there being a light source permanently

on the nave floor for the ten days of the exhibition, which was part of a massive science weekend taking place in the Cathedral Close in early September. However, we persuaded the Sacrist that there would be a distinct advantage, as the light(s) could be hidden by a display tower with the words GOD and DNA in red and blue



James Laws

James Laws was the last member to be elected to the original Society of British Lighting Designers and,



as #16, one of the founders of the ALD. He was awarded ALD Fellowship, following a number of years spent variously as Treasurer and/or editor of *Focus*. 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. His speciality is in recreations of stage lighting of past eras and he has just lit *Patience*, 1880s style in an untouched Victorian theatre for The Normansfield Centre Trust. James lives in Suffolk with his wife Pat.

respectively, cut into the display boards, and backlit.

So, how do you light an object 15m long and 40cm wide? Luckily, I have a 90cm 1940 searchlight mirror mounted in an optical jig. My theory was that the extra surrounding beam path would give stray light to the model,

providing it was positioned exactly under the DNA and pointed precisely vertically.

I usually run the mirror at 2kW, as this is a useful size for the big outdoors but for the DNA I fitted a humble T19 1kW lamp. The small filament gives a very narrow beam, probably 1 degree and, with a beam measured in miles for the 2kW, the smaller lamp proved perfectly capable of staggering 15m towards Heaven.

Of course the inverse square law is there to try us, so I positioned four Cantata

wide profiles at Triforium level (think flyfloor), two per side, to sidelight the upper reaches of DNA. We also packed some birdies to light up GOD and DNA from within the display tower. Happily, the searchlight lit these panels just enough – you tend to get initial side scatter over the first metre or so – and the birdies weren't needed.

These photos were taken whilst there was a fair quantity of ambient daylight, so the full effect isn't apparent, but in Graeme's own words: "*The model looked great and*

the lighting makes all the difference. People think that we have even placed small lights in the model, the atoms sparkle so much".

We were expecting that we could get light through a central hollow column of DNA but the atoms were built off the central catenary and were in very tight helical spirals. Nevertheless, scatter light was getting through to the upper atoms.

A few years ago I wrote a letter to Focus asking whether anyone had any theories why some car headlights showed up much more as beams than others – compare par cans and profiles to see the same difference. I can now attempt to answer my own question. It must be the way that a parallel beam wraps its self around the passing dust particles with lensless optics. The searchlight beam appeared to be lighting the individual model atoms.

This was a very worthwhile project to help with and it was good to have to think outside the box. Thank you to the Royal Society of Chemistry,



Keele University and the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts for funding and to Graeme Jones for the challenge. #

Photos by Tony Collins, except DNA / GOD, by Jon Challicom.

Book Review

The considered approach to designing in America

Theatre Design by Babak Ebrahimian, published by RotoVision.

Although the RotoVision Editorial Office is in that most English of boroughs, Hove, there is nothing UK-based about the twelve contributors to this 175 page book, not that you'd know from the introduction or the back cover. Maybe this is an innocent slip but I somehow doubt it, as the title on the front cover spells the word *Theatre*, as we would expect. Throughout the text it is spelt *Theater*, as all the contributors are from the USA. They all seem to know each other (big country, small world), through working for the same international directors or teaching at the same universities. However, several have been to and worked in Europe, so the UK, plus its flagship opera and



theatre companies, merit a few mentions in a very full index.

British dramatists, led by Shakespeare and Becket, get more attention and the framework set up by Babak Ebrahimian is revealing, in that he interviews the twelve practitioners, using the same questions for each and asking their reactions to specific design problems. Becket's tree in *Waiting for Godot* is a case in point; opinion differs as to whether it is a tree, a bush, a willow or whether indeed it exists at all. It is the way that these eminent designers respond that interests the reader, as much as their answers.

Whilst I feel that this book is aimed at the massive US student market, it also has its place in UK college libraries. The methods of working as related are often well wide of UK practice, but vital pre-production thought processes are exhaustively

analysed and the profuse illustrations demonstrate their translations to model and sometimes to stage.

The disciplines of set, lighting and costume are covered, with some of the twelve designers credited with two of the three elements. Those involved with lighting are Howell Binkley, Beverly Emmons, Jennifer Tipton and Robert Wilson, who designs sets, lighting, directs and... well, read the book for what the true lighting specialists think about lighting for Robert Wilson when he's directing. The interview technique has captured a flow of comments that I'm sure the lighting designers wouldn't have written as a book chapter.

This spontaneity is the best way of capturing a creative process that has few golden rules – the designers mostly start by reading the script but thereafter there are many routes to the first night. Beverley Emmons bemoans

the fact that “...in the US, we have to have a lighting plot all finished and in the shop before the first day of rehearsal.” I think that many of us would find this requirement extremely worrying and not conducive to blending the lighting to the production.

The credits for the production images in this book are very telling. The set and costume designers never credit the lighting designer, even when the lighting has clearly given the overall design its unity, as in the Chicago Lyric Opera Ring Cycle of 1992, with set and costume designed by John Conklin. His approach to designing sets relates that “working with the director is of course the primary collaboration but all the other designers (costume, light and, increasingly, sound) are also crucial”, so why no lighting credit?

You may ask “what has all this to do with the book

Theatre Design

Behind the Scenes with the Top Set, Lighting, and Costume Designers by Babak Ebrahimian, ISBN: 2-940361-43-6, is published by RotoVision, priced £25.00. ALD members can purchase the book for the special price of £23.00 with free postage and packaging (UK only). Please call the distributor's hotline number on 01476 541 080, quoting reference JF19. The offer will run from 1st February until the end of April 2007.

under review?” The answer is that *Theatre Design* by Babak Ebrahimian is essential reading for anyone contemplating their first important lighting job in the US, because the designers, between them, show us the state of play stateside, the expectations and the attitude. There is a lot that we can learn from them and vice versa. #

James Laws

LIGHT RELIEF

MOVING INTO 2007 WITH A NEW FUNDRAISING EVENT AND A NEW WEBSITE

Rick Fisher, Light Relief trustee

There is a new day to circle on your calendar and mark in YELLOW on your wall planner: **APRIL 24TH**. This is going to our first Light Relief Day when Lighting Designers and others in the profession can help raise money for Light Relief, the registered charity for people in the lighting industry who have fallen on hard times.

Let me offer a bit of background. I wanted to think of a way we could permanently

remember Tony Gottelier who founded the charity. Some of us, myself included, have been fortunate to do very well out of the profession. Because of the campaigning efforts of earlier Lighting Designers we are lucky enough to have a continuing income stream from royalties for the commercial runs of our shows.

I am proposing that we voluntarily give a night's royalties to Light Relief once a year. While I thought originally of doing this on Tony's birthday, he had the great fortune to be born on Christmas Day. Naturally this is the only universally dark day of the year. So in

consultation with his wife Susie, I am suggesting that we use April 24, which is their anniversary, as the date for Lighting Designers to celebrate Tony, and remember that with our good fortune we can still look out for each other.

"Who knows, maybe we can extend this spirit to include a day's hire from the companies who supply equipment to our shows?"

It doesn't have to be just West End Wendies who can support the day. It can also be a focus for others in the industry to join with us to raise funds, either by donating that evening's beer round or overtime proceeds, rattle a bucket on the shop floor or whatever to Light Relief. Who knows, maybe we can extend this spirit to include a day's hire from the companies who supply equipment to our shows?

In addition to generating income this will give Light Relief a good press story every year, by listing (if desired) the shows, designers, companies and individuals contributing to the cause.

As Light Relief is a registered charity our donations can be

easily gift aided which makes them worth even more, and donors are also eligible for tax relief if you have been lucky enough to slip into the top tax bracket.

I have already spoken to many designers who have agreed to support this idea. I am particularly gratified by the immediate support of most of the current West End hits including those designed by some of our American and French colleagues.



I am delighted to report that the new and improved Light Relief website is up and running and can be accessed at www.lightrelief.org.uk for full details of the organisation, its aims, and some of the people we have helped. There are also forms to download to enable contributions to attract Gift Aid. My thanks go to ETC, White Light and Harmer PR for supporting this site.

Light Relief also wants to thank the generosity of White Light who instead of sending around a hamper from Fortnum's made a very generous donation of £2000 to Light Relief. We also raised a record £1000 from a bucket rattle this Christmas! Thank you! #

Rick Fisher



John Simpson (right) presenting White Light's donation to fellow Light Relief trustee Rick Fisher

STUDENTS' UNION

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BECOMING A LIGHTING DESIGNER BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK ... BY MARY POPE

After wishing I had taken notes at the last Student Seminar, I found myself wondering how I could start to write about this, let alone advising anyone on 'everything you needed to know about something' – I'm still afraid to ask!

I want to start this new regular space in Focus with one of our most frequently asked questions. I do, however, feel a bit out of place writing it as I know I am still learning 'how to be an LD' and I am not sure what point you 'become' one. However, I will do my best to try to write down the many different options I have been told are a good idea to follow.

Firstly I think the most valuable thing to do is say "yes" enthusiastically to any work that you are offered, even if it is not exactly what you want to be doing. Working as a casual in lots of different theatres will

enable you to get to know as many people as possible and gain valuable experience in different venue types.

"Sometimes it may be more difficult to relight something you would not instinctively have done yourself. This is where you gain the most experience – understanding why it was lit the way it was and making sure it is time and time again."

You must also remember that just because you have done a course in Lighting Design does not make you an LD! Once you have graduated you need to return to the bottom rungs and be LX crew and work at picking up knowledge. At the same time as working as a casual, hopefully in a wide range of theatres, you should try to light some fringe shows as this will enable you to get to know directors, designers and producers who may be able to work with again as you move out of the fringe scene.

Relighting is also a good way to gain experience and meet people as well as giving you the chance to light shows

in different scale theatres to those that a new LD would be asked to light in.

Relighting and its uses to students starting out as an LD

Relighting – from what I can tell it's very useful. You learn new ways of lighting a scene that you wouldn't have thought of, either because of you they don't make sense visually, or because you lack the experience to put a unit 'there' to do 'that'. As a relighter you get the chance to work with another LD and learn from them. In what

appears to me to be quite a lonely trade this is a rare and valuable chance to gain experience and ask WHY as much as possible!

In an ideal world you will be around from the start of the project to observe the focus and plot and have the chance to learn the intentions of the cues as they are constructed. If not, then the LD should talk you through the rig, focus and plot in as much detail as possible to enable you to recreate the show accurately.

The show will hopefully be plotted and on disk ready to tour but this doesn't mean you can be complacent about the look of the show. Each venue will result in a slightly different plan. The tour venues may not have the same amount of kit or dimmers as the original venue. It will be up to you to draw a plan and 'tweak' levels to give the same look. You are

Mary Pope

Mary has recently joined the professional world after leaving the safe confines of the RADA theatres.

She is enjoying working as both an LD and electrician on productions ranging from children's theatre to contemporary dance and opera. Mary is now in her second year as student rep for the ALD.



there to relight, not redesign. Sometimes it may be more difficult to relight something you would not instinctively have done yourself. This is where you gain the most experience – understanding why it was lit the way it was and making sure it is, time and time again. If that boom can't be where you want it, you have to find a new way to make things look the same.

If you are lucky to be asked to relight a show when starting out as an LD, you will learn much more than lighting something yourself.

Relighting will push your abilities and not just let you do something you know works.

You will be doing things so frequently that someone else knows works that it will become second nature to you.

One of the most important things to remember is the importance of working as an electrician. You will learn a lot at the top of a ladder focusing a light with a sticky shutter to a part of the stage you can't quite see! Try to get as much experience in as many different aspects of stage lighting (LX crew, LX technician, casual LX, board op, programmer, relighter, assistant, associate, LD) in as many different types of theatre (fringe, regional, music, dance, rep, producing, receiving, West End) as possible. At the same time you will need to light as many shows as you can.

This is by no means the only way to become an LD and certainly not a quick route or a 'get rich quick' method. If anyone knows of a way to do the latter and become an LD please let me and many others know. #

Mary Pope

New Education Rep for ALD Exec

We are delighted that Nick Moran has joined Scott Palmer to be the London-based representative for the education sector on the ALD Executive committee. Contact education@ald.org.uk. Nick has worked in lighting for live performance for over 20 years, on projects ranging in scale from fringe theatre to stadium rock. After two years as a Lighting Manager for English National Opera, Nick joined Central School of Speech and Drama in 2003 as Lecturer in Lighting Design and Production Lighting. He is currently leader of the Performance Design pathway, and continues to practice as a lighting designer.

MICHAEL NORTHEN BURSARY

The bursary award is open to all students and not just ALD members. Applicants submit work showing the development and processes of a successfully realised lighting design performance project. The winner will receive £500, the ETC and ALD runners up will both receive £250. These three submissions will be displayed on the ALD stand at PLASA and ABTT in 2007. Submissions must be received at the ALD office by Monday 4th June 2007. Details at www.ald.org.uk/students

Shadows of the Evening Steal Across the Sky – Mervyn Gould

"Yes, I've been around a bit," said the faded old pro, hitching the bar stool closer to the bar, settling in the corner. "In fact, I nearly made it. For a time I was nearly up there with your Roger Friths, your Francis Reids, and your Jim Lawses. Before your time, of course, before you were born, in fact." The eager young student interjected a question. "Of course, a pint, though, not a half."

"More than thirty-five years ago, now. In one week I had my lighting at both dates in a city, No. 1 tour date and major rep. – I thought they'd beat a path to my door. Still here, waiting, dear boy." The student asked another question.

"Well, we didn't have all these courses and qualifications then. We just did it. No 'hashes' – real

Pattern numbers. Of course, we weren't an Industry then, we were just in 'the Business'. I didn't actually carry stuff from the railway station, but all the rest, lad. Hand-fed carbon arc limes, resistance dimmers on shafts, using a foot, both arms, and nose if necessary, lad. Counting to 5, or 7, or whatever the fade was. All good stuff, you know, with FOH lanterns in metal housings so that bits wouldn't drop onto the stalls, and some places even had the new Strand stuff with pre-focus lamps in. None of this multi-lantern complexity we used to read about in Fred Bentham's editions of *Tabbs*, though, for us."

"By the way, I'm ready for another. Yes a great thirst, dear heart. Well, it was the heat, you know, standing in a badly-ventilated lime

box with two DC arcs going, using last week's box-office card for a fade or strobe effect. Or on the board with 70-odd resistances therming away behind the metal front. Scratching around for odd scraps of gel – and back then some theatres still had a box of real gelatine colour sheet. Digging around in the LX store to find a rusty old tin box still with a lens to rig as a special for the walk-down. Having the manager on the house 'phone about the Maximum Demand Meter at a Full-Up Finish. Changing the gas mantles on the secondary lighting. And twice nightly, sometimes. It drove you to it, really it did. And it was useful to fill the liquid dimmers when they boiled nearly dry."

"Weekly rep. took it out of you (only once did I do twice-nightly), but then so did touring. What a way to earn a living. All those hours on the A1 in the scenery wagon because the trains wouldn't get you to the next date in time for the get-in. Doing the get-

out up the ramp at Aberdeen H.M.'s in a snow-storm. The cloth battens bouncing over the icy cobbles after coming down the cloth chute at Leeds Grand. Arguing the contra. At least the pro. pubs had lock-ins in the afternoons, so you were all right when there wasn't a matinée. Whilst Stage Management were re-setting or propping, LX would be replacing the body fluids."

"Summer seasons were your holiday, if you fixed for good digs. Get the four programmes on and you were away. No matinées, if you were lucky. Except Butlins, of course, where it was a sod getting lamps and spares, and you were forced to maintain the Hawaiian Bar Mount Vesuvius LX with fork lightning and water ripple effect. All that water around certainly made you wary of the lash-up behind the set."

"Well, how kind, certainly another one."

"I think it was panto that was your mainstay. A solid three or even four months

work, then. At places like Nottingham, Birmingham, and Sunderland we ran till the end of February or into March. A bugger at the beginning, with two shows a day and three on Saturday, and on Christmas Day as well in Scotland, but after the New Year pro party with other companies, when old enmities flared and new alliances were made, you settled in to find a shop for your spring tour and summer season. Bit short-handed on matinées, of course, when your local firemen or dockers or ambulance men were on shift, so no limes, and LX even had to muck in with the hairy lads of the stage department, but, like all pros., you gritted your teeth, swore lustily, and said to yourself it was all part of the glamorous side of show-biz."

"Another? I don't mind if I do."

"Well, once it all died – by 1980 it was virtually all gone, the bottom had dropped out of it – what could one do? I'm empty, dear heart, isn't it

time you got your wallet out? I thought, be clever about this, and went on to tell youngsters about the all the skills one needs to get a show in, up and on – tipping the resident staff, arguing with the M.D., thumping the mercury arc rectifier to get the striker to bounce, twitching relay contacts on motor-driven dimmer banks, trimming your arc gap, throwing and tying-off a cleat line, putting PAR38s in your battens – then along came steel-framed sets, par-cans and moving lights, and knocked the bottom out of the business. Not to mention Health & Safety fussing around. Tour dates rebuilding with the lottery, not the same world."

He settled more comfortably in the corner; a snore came. The student crept away, possibly gladder in the heart, but certainly lighter in the wallet, as the late Tony Mulvihill once said of the subject.

The rest is silence... #

DANCE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

We continue our series of lighting design comment by welcoming Gavin Roebuck with his view of recent lighting design for dance

"It doesn't count if it's on tour" may be true of some relationships but not between lighting and dance. Indeed lighting is often integral to the success of dance shows as it is about so much more than enabling the audience

to see the dancers. While contemporary dance often has little or no sets, which make the lighting crucial, contrastingly in big ballet productions lighting is still fundamental to creating the mood.

Nutcrackers

The Nutcracker made an early start in October with St Petersburg Ballet Theatre at the Royal Albert Hall. This traditional production tours the UK with their other classic repertoire. Touring, especially if visiting a venue for only a few days, with a mixed repertoire presents many challenges for performers and technicians alike. Irina Kolesnikova filled

the sold out venue with her engaging charm and balletic technique as Clara. For over a decade Konstantin Tatchkin has built up his St. Petersburg Ballet Theatre into a company that gives high quality performances of the classics and the promoter, Artsworld Presentations, has also made a commitment to the UK dance scene by sponsoring a UK run dance prize. SPBT usually tours for about 12 weeks and has good artistic and production values though the programme doesn't credit the lighting designers!

I saw the 253rd performance of The Royal Ballet's traditional *Nutcracker* and though viewed many times before and the sets are now a tad worn this production could go on forever and not lose its appeal to audiences. Making full use of the Royal Opera House facilities, Mark Henderson did a superb job with the lighting from domestic interior through to the Land of Snow and the fantasy Kingdom of Sweets. Some of the corps dancers are given opportunities during



Alina Cojocaru in the Royal Ballet The Nutcracker. Photo: Bill Cooper.

the run and the Arabian dance of Tara-Brigitte Bhavnani was exciting enough to keep any bored dad, taking his children to the ballet, awake.

English National Ballet have had a *Nutcracker* since the company grew out of the Markova-Dolin company to be London Festival Ballet in the 1950s and this used to be their big money-making production. In their current show Christopher Hampson has arranged the traditional choreography to bring a fresh approach to the



Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake, photo: Mike Rothwell.



Carlos Acosta in Rhapsody. Photo Bill Cooper.

seasonal favourite. There is no Victorian nostalgia in Gerald Scarfe's concept; instead there are uncluttered designs, imaginatively lit by John Rayment, which have a modern enchantment.

Alice in Wonderland

ENB is a good company of dancers and their Alice in Wonderland, also on at the London Coliseum then touring, appealingly brings the magic of Lewis Carroll's engaging story to life in Derek Deane's inventive production. In this classic English tale Alice embarks on her adventures following

the White Rabbit into a world of enchantment that includes a tea-party with the Mad Hatter, a sinister corridor of doors, an enchanting pool of tears, a magical garden and a bizarre game of croquet with the King and Queen of Hearts with each scene bringing its own lighting and dancing challenge. As Alice, petite Venus Villa captures the spirited and charming essence of the girl and shows off her acting as well as dancing talent to advantage. The engaging White Rabbit of Yat-Sen Chang seems almost constantly on stage and in motion with sharp

sparkling footwork. Hugh Vanstone artistically lit the dancers and the sets creating the perfect mood, which may linger longer in the memory than the pleasing, though bland, choreography.

Giselle

Earthy peasant to ethereal spirit; Giselle is one of the most challenging roles for a dancer and Agnes Oaks partnered by her husband Thomas Edur as Albrecht excelled in the welcome return of ENB's longstanding production. Doing the steps is only part of Giselle's task, it is her acting ability including the mad scene and transformation from a human into a spirit that taxes the performer. Agnes Oaks gave a star ballerina performance which appealed to the heartstrings as well as those with an eye for technical detail. Thomas Edur did not fail her as a partner presenting a believable character in his love and last act remorse with a sense of the dramatic. This partnership is a draw for audiences but there are also other interesting castings

during this run. Joyful rustic dancing at the wine festival by the excellent dancers of ENB contrasted in Act Two with the well rehearsed controlled coolness of the disturbed spirits, the Wilis. Sarah McIlroy gave a performance that had all the chilling cruelty of the Wilis, demands.

David Mohr's recreated lighting complemented David Walker's designs which ensured the rustic setting was enchanting and the forest spooky. Dating from 1841 this ballet and this 36-year-

old production has stood the test of time remaining popular with audiences.

Swan Lake

After a sell-out tour, Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake had a six-week run at Sadler's Wells. Matthew Bourne and his New Adventures company transformed one of ballet's best-loved stories into a contemporary gay slanted tale with extravagant designs by Lez Brotherston that are exceptionally well lit by Rick Fisher who imaginatively manages different shades



Royal Ballet in La Sylphide. Photo: Johan Persson.

of moonlight on the most interesting scenes in the dance work, those with the male ensemble as a flock of enchanted and menacing fowl with swanlike gestures. As the standing ovation on the first night indicates this show remains popular entertainment.

Rambert

Contemporary dance has different challenges for the lighting designer. Often sets, if there are any, are minimal and costumes simple so the lighting is more obvious as a central feature of the production. In 2006 Rambert Dance Company celebrated its 80th birthday making it Britain's oldest dance company. Artistic Director Mark Baldwin and Répétiteur Amanda Eyles restaged Andrée Howard's drama-ballet, *Lady into Fox* to mixed reviews with lighting by John B Read whose tendency for darkly atmospheric lighting suited this piece. It is interesting to see dancers develop into choreographers and

Rambert give their dancers choreographic opportunities. In this programme, using stylish sets, fashion designer costumes and clever lighting by Malcolm Glanville and Rob Oliver all helped to give a positive presentation for their artists developing new work.

Contemporary dance

The Royal Opera House also make use of their studio theatres with programmes like *First Drafts* which gives dancers a chance to try our choreographic ideas. With minimal rehearsal time designers like Gary Dooley seem to be able to set up a lighting rig and produce good results for audience and artists alike.

Touring until the end of March 2007 is Protein Dance's *Big Sale*. Luca Silvestrini and his company present a funny and at times horrifying satire on consumer and celebrity culture. Very accessible to a diverse range of people, *Big Sale* blends humour, text, music and movement and holds up a mirror to aspects of life

today. This mix of high energy performance, dialogue, pop music, props and live video by Adam Seaman see the transformation of James Cotterill's set, well lit by Michael Mannion, from a junkyard playground into a catwalk and a TV studio to late night hangout and a war zone. The music supervised by David Coulter includes diverse works composed by JS Bach, James Brown and Moondog. With an intoxicating energy the seven performers mutate from TV hosts to market traders, sex workers and political prisoners in a fast moving and funny piece of physical theatre incorporating some amusing moments including audience participation, flexible friends and a shampoo competition.

Royal Ballet

Coming up in the Spring with the Covent Garden Royal Ballet are Anthony Dowell's production of *Swan Lake* atmospherically lit by Mark Henderson, Frederick Ashton's *Rhapsody* ably lit by Neil Austin with some

exciting casts to look forward to and, lit by Mark Jonathan, the romantic era *La Sylphide* set in Scotland and, using warmer colours is Napoli *Divertissements* (set in Italy), packed with sparkling dance variations. Mark Jonathan has recently done a number of very successful lighting designs for the Royal Ballet including the company's 75th birthday recreation of the classic *The Sleeping Beauty*. Presenting additional challenges are productions such as those at the ROH which are filmed for DVDs or TV like *Giselle* recently

shown on the BBC which was lit by Jennifer Tipton.

All a dancer requires is that the lights shouldn't be at eye level to dazzle them when turning or jumping and for average audiences perhaps it is a compliment if they don't consciously notice the lighting but come away after a show walking on air happy with the totality of the performance unaware of the technical demands of either dancer or designer. #

Gavin Roebuck, a former ballet dancer, writes for The Stage and other publications.



English National Ballet, Alice In Wonderland. Photo: Bill Cooper.

LETTERS

More Art Less Tools

Dear Focus,

Sorry, team, this will not do. Not only is it illiterate, it is, more to the point, ugly. For an organisation that concerns itself in part with presentation, appearance and perception it cannot be allowed to stand as our 'slogan'. I suppose the idea behind it was along the lines of 'Less is More', which is an admirable concept and one I readily subscribe to. However I'm at a loss to recommend a suitable alternative. More

Art Fewer Tools is ridiculous (just look at the size of lighting rigs these days), More Art Less Technology just sounds Luddite.

I was interested to see that Focus has a new design (not that I had anything against the old one, mind you), but does the type have to be more difficult to read than the small print on a west end contract? Spare a thought please for those members of the readership whose eyes are not as young as they were.

Steve Greateorex, ALD #324

The phrase was coined at the ALD

professionals' meeting at PLASA and although we all know it isn't English, it describes concisely and colloquially the new focus for Focus. After some discussion, we decided to 'Think Different' as Apple Computers used to say and adopt it as our rallying cry. Regarding typography, we have had a few comments about the typeface, so we are enlarging it at the expense of content. Thanks, Andy.

ALD or ULD?

Dear ALD,

Close your eyes and imagine... the phone rings, it's a job offer, you're free, it's an interesting gig, but something doesn't seem quite right: the fee is a little low (no surprise there!) so you go online, check the going rate, and sure enough it's a few hundred quid shy. You ring up the producer who says that's absolutely all s/he can afford and there's no room for negotiation – "If you can't do it they'll have to go somewhere else". At this point you play your trump card and say that recently the ALD changed to the ULD, and that the producer wouldn't be able to find another designer who would work for less than

the minimum. "Ah", says the producer, "I guess I'll have to go to the drama schools, sure I'll find a recent graduate there..." You wish them luck, confident that they won't find anyone – after all, who in their right mind would work for less than the minimum? It might be a quick fix, but would seriously undermine their future earning potential; word would get out that the young designer would work for peanuts, and it would take years before they were paid properly for a job again. Sure enough, a couple of days later, you get a phone call; incredibly, a few hundred pounds have been squeezed from the producer's contingency biscuit fund, and they would love you to do the job (just don't expect any Jaffa Cakes at the production table).

Ok, you can stop dreaming now...(sorry, it was such a nice dream wasn't it?). We all know that reality is somewhat different, that fees are low, and producers often believe that LDs are interchangeable, that the only good LD is a cheap LD. My

question to the membership is why we have allowed this to happen? I'll freely admit that I'm playing devil's advocate here. We have Equity to represent us, and many ALD members sitting on the Equity panels working extremely hard on our behalf. I don't believe we could, or should, model ourselves on the Musician's Union, but let's face it, don't you feel a twinge of jealousy when you think of how well-protected their membership is?

The only solution I can see is for LDs to turn down jobs en-masse when the fees are too low, and to publish the fact (maybe on an ALD database?) Then when you are offered a job you can check the database to see if you're dealing with a producer who is scouting for cheap labour. If you are, then you turn down the job. If no one accepts the job then the fee would have to rise. This is clearly a tactic based on a very flimsy house of cards – at the moment we're not being paid enough to easily turn down work; but if we don't



look after our association and fellow members, then we can't expect the ALD to look after us... Let the debate begin...
Colin Grenfell

MA's missing



Hello!

Thanks very much for Dec 2006/Jan 2007 edition of Focus Magazine – love the new format and read it cover to cover.

However, MA Lighting have been omitted from the back cover where you list your Corporate Members! I'm sure this is just an oversight of putting your magazine into this new format.

Best wishes,

Richard Lambert, Technical Director, MA Lighting UK

Whoops. So sorry Richard. We're looking for some stage ashes to rub into the ALD monogrammed sackcloth shirt I've been given. Your Ma is now reinstalled with dignity, and many thanks for your support and kind words.

Thanks, Andy.

MEETINGS

Grand MA

The Grand MA range of lighting desks from MA Lighting are becoming increasingly popular throughout the industry, being used on shows such as *Wicked* in the West end and *Big Brother* on TV. In response to this we have organised demonstrations of the desk throughout the country for ALD members, specifically tailored for lighting designers and programmers. Grand MA meetings will be taking place in Glasgow, London, Cardiff and Lincoln in February and March. Thank you to those who have already expressed interest in attending.

The meetings will comprise a morning session from about 10:30-1pm for lighting designers to see what you can do with the desk, and an afternoon session, from about 2pm, concentrating

more on programming and operating the desk. Details of time and location will be sent out when finally confirmed, but here's what we have arranged so far:

Thursday 15th February

GLASGOW: Royal Academy of Music and Drama

Friday 16th February

CARDIFF: Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and The Sherman Theatre

Friday 2nd March

LINCOLN: Drill Hall Theatre (Hosted by Lincoln College)

Date to be confirmed

LONDON: Central School of Speech and Drama

If you haven't contacted us already for a place and you wish to attend, please email us with your choice of date venue and session(s).

Digital Media servers

PRG has invited the STLD to a meeting around Digital Media Servers on 20th February, and they would like to extend the invitation to the ALD too. The meeting will be based around a presentation by several users from different parts of the lighting industry as well as the PRG team, and you will get a chance to put your questions to them all afterwards. The timings are as follows: 19.00 Arrive for drinks and canapés, 19.30 Presentation and demonstration, 20.30 Question and answer session. If you are interested in attending, please contact Bernie Davis at chairman@stld.org.uk

PRG Europe, 20-22 Fairway Drive, Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 8PW

Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough

Advance notice for a joint ABTT/ALD meeting on Wednesday 9th May at 1.00pm. We hope to visit all areas, FOH and backstage and look forward to hearing their experiences after 10 years in the building. Details to follow.

Other meetings

Also in the pipeline we have 'How to sell yourself' with Philip Norfolk and a Vector Works 'Spotlight' seminar which maybe weaved into an ALD lighting design software forum later unless we receive more support for a separate session in the near future. So let us know! As usual, if you have any ideas for meetings or wish to express an interest in any of these please e-mail us at the usual address: meetings@ald.org.uk #

And (almost) finally...

Thanks to everyone who sent their comments, views and advice about the 'new look' Focus. ALL views are greatly appreciated and, as you can see from the enlarged typeface, we take your comments seriously. Sadly, a one point increase in type size has meant a loss of about 4 pages of content this time, so I have postponed a couple of really good pieces until the next issue. Even so, space was limited and also we didn't have time to include a full obituary of Chris Parry. We were all saddened by the recent news of his sudden death on the 16th January. His career touched so many of us (I met Chris during his time at the RSC in the 70s) and I would like to include some memories of him in

the next issue. So please let me have your thoughts to compile into a tribute from the ALD.

In terms of forthcoming articles, we have been overwhelmed by an embarrassment of riches. In the next issue we hope to squeeze in all you need to know about... lighting Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales in Bulgaria, photographing your lighting, an Agent's role, how to become a lighting assistant, Hugh Vanstone on lighting the same show in the same theatre 20 years on, a review or two of Collaborators, and lighting up a church. Please keep the ideas flowing.

Regards, Andy Collier

2007 A.C. Lighting North Tradeshaw Expands to 50% Bigger Hall

This year's A.C. Lighting North Tradeshaw is moving to a new purpose-built exhibition hall with 50% more space to facilitate an expanded exhibitor line-up and rising attendance levels.

The event takes place on 1st and 2nd May in the new Hall 2 at the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, which is adjacent to the original location and now the city's largest exhibition venue.

As well as accommodating the show's expansion plans, the improved facilities also enable the organisers to provide the main exhibition, complementary theatre seminars programme and buffet lunch with a bar and dining area all within the same hall.

The A.C. North Show has become an essential industry event for buyers in the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland due to providing these regions with a dedicated, definitive showcase

of today's entertainment technology market.

Full show details will be confirmed in the coming months, but visitors can expect the same popular format, including exclusive 1st UK showings of new products, the latest innovations from over 70 leading brands, one to one demonstrations and technical advice, and some exclusive 'show-only' exhibitor deals.

Visitors will again have a unique opportunity to go behind the scenes on, and discuss the production of, some of the most innovative entertainment projects with today's leading industry experts in this year's free guest speaker seminars programme.

Exhibitors will include an even wider range of theatre, concert, film and TV lighting, audio and associated equipment suppliers from A.C. Lighting's large stockholding of leading entertainment

technology brands, and representation from many of the key industry associations and publications.

Jonathan Walters, A.C. Lighting's Northern Sales Director commented: "We are really excited about moving to this brand new venue, as it provides us with even better facilities for demonstrating the latest entertainment technologies and the opportunity to invite even more exhibitors. I'm confident that this year's event will continue to position the A.C. Lighting North Tradeshaw as the definitive industry showcase for the North of England."

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/tradeshaw.

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aclighting.com/tradeshow

CAPTION COMPETITION

In an attempt to avoid the restrictions of Statutory Instrument 2005 No. 735 'The Work at Height Regulations 2005', an anonymous yet innovative crew of an unnamed theatre in London's Sloane Square has found a solution to the problem of focusing on stage without a Tallescope. Suitable captions should be submitted to editor@ald.org.uk by 1st March 2007.

No purchase necessary. Multiple entries welcomed. All entries will be judged by Johanna Town and the LX crew of the Royal Court Theatre (whoops, sorry) and the best photo caption, or most amusing name for their new access equipment, will win our star prize – a ruggedised 256MB USB data storage and MP3 player by Maxfield GmbH. Jo's decision will be final. No arguments. #



This MAX-JOY MP3-WMA ruggedised USB-Player has a bright 2-colour LED display and includes a SD/MMC card slot for memory expansion up to 1 GB or as a card reader. It is a fully accessible portable data storage device for all file formats including first class MP3 and WMA music playback and can also be used for voice recording via its built-in microphone.

The prize has been kindly donated to the ALD by Woolworths plc. www.woolworths.co.uk