

WOODS



The People in
Performance
Lighting

The Association for Lighting
Production and Design
www.thealpd.org.uk
Spring 2026
£5.00 / FREE to Members

INTO THE WOODS

Aideen Malone reflects
on her design - and a lot
of trees and leaves

TECH TALK AT AGM

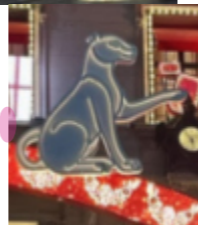
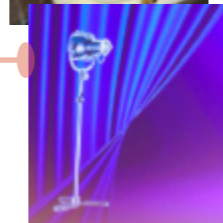
Aaron Porter takes us
through the many options
of LED tape

ASSOCIATION LOOKS BACK

Chair Johanna Town
summarises at AGM an
eventful year for the ALPD



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Welcome to the spring edition of Focus. I hope you are all having a great start to the year.

It was a pleasure to see so many of you at the Lighting Lunch and to present our Fellowship Awards. Do take a look at Nick's postcard for photographs -it was a wonderful afternoon and a real celebration of our community.

No sooner had Christmas passed than we found ourselves at the AGM in January. While nothing quite replaces meeting in person, it was heartening to see so many members join us on Zoom and to connect with colleagues from across the country. For more on the AGM and what we've been working on in 2025, please see my Chair's report.

We were also treated to a brilliant talk from Aaron Porter on the use of LED tape on set. He spoke candidly about what we all need to consider and prepare when incorporating LED into a production -from choosing between which type of tape or neon and to understanding that brighter and more colourful, is not always better! It was practical, generous and full of insight.

If you missed it, I'm pleased to say the talk will soon be available on our Academy pages, alongside a growing library of previous sessions and classes. And if you have a particular piece of equipment, a process, or a way of working you'd like to share via an ALPD Zoom meeting with members, please do get in touch -these sessions

are only as rich as the experiences we bring to them.

January was, in fact, a very busy month. Following the AGM, a small team of us headed to Glyndebourne to interview candidates for the 2026 Lumière Scheme. The lighting department there gave our shortlisted candidates a warm welcome and generous tours of the facilities - and even allowed us to witness a little maintenance in action (photo on next page). I'm delighted to announce that this year's Lumière is Harriet White. She has joined Glyndebourne for the summer season before working with freelancers in the autumn. We wish her every success.

Later in the month, we presented our Excellence Awards at the New Technology Showcase. Our thanks to White Light and RCSSD for hosting us.

I'm also very pleased to report that I was joined on my first show of the year by one of this year's Observers. Manu came to work with me on *Easy Virtue* and was a terrific addition to the team. His enthusiasm, thoughtful questions and keen eye were invaluable. I had asked him to give notes, and having a second pair of eyes during previews made the whole process sharper and more efficient. I can wholeheartedly recommend welcoming an Observer onto a show you are doing -it challenges and clarifies your own thinking about what you are trying to achieve. Manu took a genuine interest in every aspect of the process, so my thanks also to Claire Gerrens

From the Chair of the Association for Lighting Production and Design,
Johanna Town



and Ed Locke for so generously answering his many questions. I'm very much looking forward to working with my next Observer, Lucas, at the Royal Exchange later this year.

This issue focuses on first job: your first



lighting design, your first time programming for someone else, or even the first trailer you prepped. Do you remember what that moment meant to you? We would love to hear your stories -and what you might say to your younger self now.

The timing of this issue feels particularly apt. My own first job was at the Royal Exchange Theatre, where I was an apprentice electrician. One of my roles was to sit behind some of our greatest lighting de-

signers -Joe Davies, Mick Hughes and a very young Mark Henderson, to name but a few. I was asked to walk the stage, fetch colour, and -as the hours grew later -supply coffee. I was in heaven, watching them sculpt light in a theatre where lighting is the scenery. I was 18 years old and determined to make this my career for life.

What would I say to that young apprentice now?

"Don't rush, there is plenty of time. Savour the fun, the laughter, and even the tears. Listen to everything that is happening around you -everyone has a story, and everyone matters."

I never would have imagined that a few years/decades later, I would be in

their very seat, lighting shows -and it still feels extraordinary every day. Over the years, I've lit 25 productions for The Exchange, and I'm delighted to be returning in its 50th anniversary year to light *Private Lives* this March. In many ways, it feels like coming home. If you're in Manchester, do pop by to say hello.

Jo 🍀

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW ALPD MEMBERS

Professional

Nick Humphrey, London
Harriet White, Brentwood

Associate

David Byrne, Cambridge
William R. Margetts, Bath

Affiliate

Xuan Ge, London
Manu Agarwal, Chesham
Leo Wittwer, Glasgow

Fellow

Gerry Amies, London

Student

PeiYing Chiang, Guildford
Kuba Muszynski, Maidenhead
Jayden Coppage, Birmingham
Gayoung Lee, London
Hannah M Whitworth, Huddersfield
Abigail Brophy, London
Callum Foy, Macclesfield
Méryl Vourch, Oxford
Victoria Collins Barnes, Halifax
Abby Wills, Glasgow
Finlay Walker-O'Brien, Worksop

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

At the time of writing, the office is about to remind members that subscriptions are due at the end of March, and for those of you who use our Combined Liability Insurance, that too will be due. Most of you will have direct debits set up and don't need to do anything - the emails will simply be a reminder. But it's a good time of year to check your membership page and to update any changed addresses or other contact details.

TRADE SHOWS

The ALPD will be attending PLASA Leeds, ABTT and PLASA London in 2026. At Leeds, we will be found on the White Light stand. Do come and visit. You'll find trailers for the first two events in the magazine.

NEW WEBSITE

We are just a few weeks away from launching our new website. We hope you will find it more useful to use: you will be able to download your e-membership card direct from the site, pick up our logo for your own website and check your subscription balance.

You will only be able to display five photos on your listing. You can change these whenever you wish. When we make the transfer to the new site, the five moved

will be random. You may want to decide now what photos you would like to have in place. Photos from the present website will be retained in an archive, but please do ensure you have copies of all your photos stored locally as well. Hopefully you always have backups?!

Please do keep sending us photos that you might like to have displayed on our website banners? We plan to keep refreshing these regularly.

MEETINGS

We have two socials in March: T with Robe in Northampton and a visit to the Troubadour Canary Wharf to look at the lighting for *The Hunger Games* and listen to Designer Lucy Carter and programmers David Ayton and Jamie Harley talking about their work on the show. There will be an ALPD social at PLASA Leeds sponsored by Encore. Contact the office if you have any ideas for an event based social.

SOCIAL MEDIA

As well as our public Instagram and Facebook pages, we have a Facebook Members Group for current ALPD members only. It's a space where we often put news about members' socials and other opportunities. Search ALPD Members on Facebook and follow us! 🍀

News and information from the ALPD office by Amanda Laidler

DATES 2026

- 12 - 13 May PLASA Focus Leeds
- 3 - 4 June ABTT Theatre Show Alexandra Palace
- 7 - 9 June Scandlight Stockholm
- 9 July Backup Tech new venue tba
- 6 - 8 September PLASA Olympia

DATES 2027

- 2 - 5 Feb ISE Barcelona

Contact Amanda directly at office@thealpd.org.uk



UPDATE

TECHNICAL YOUTH THEATRE SYMPOSIUM

The Linbury Theatre at the Royal Opera House was a fitting venue to host this inspiring event. Photo below by Nick Moran, who reports:

Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT) has been running a Technical Youth Theatre programme for 18 years, with some notable success. The driving force behind it is Stage Manager, all round tech theatre

advocate and educator Sally Garner-Gibbons. She and our own Emma Chapman put together the symposium with the aim to share what CFT have been doing, to share what else is going on in and around the UK, and to inspire others to have a go at Technical Youth Theatre.

The audience heard about how CFT do it, and what they have learnt along the way. We also heard from “graduates” of the programme who told us what the young people involved get out of it. All



this to an enthralled audience who joined in a lively Q&A session in the theatre, which carried on into the foyer after the event.

The ALPD supported this event, and there will be more on this, and on the developments and collaborations that come from the symposium, in the Summer Focus. For now, if you happen to be working at CFT, or anywhere else with a Technical Youth Theatre initiative, please do offer your support. 🍷

PEOPLE & EVENTS

Members news, meetings, awards and announcements

OLIVIER AWARD NOMINATIONS - LIGHTING

Congratulations to the lighting designers nominated for the upcoming Olivier Awards, all of them ALPD members!

The Olivier Awards 2026 returns to the

Royal Albert Hall to mark their 50th anniversary on April 12th this year.

For Best Lighting Design the nominees are: Robbie Butler for *Punch* at Young Vic and Apollo theatre. Jon Clark for *Evita* at The London Palladium. Aideen Malone (lighting design) and Roland Horvath (video design) for *Into the Woods* at Bridge theatre (see page 44). Joshua Pharo for *Kenrex* at The Other Palace.

officiallondontheatre.com/olivier-awards/ 🍷

LUMIÈRE SCHEME

The ALPD is delighted to announce that this year's Lumière is Harriet White (photo below). She has joined Glyndebourne for the summer season before working with freelancers in the autumn. 🍷

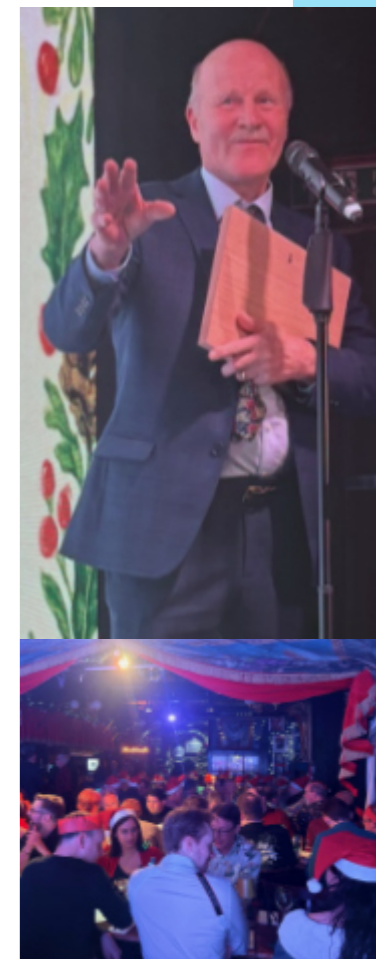


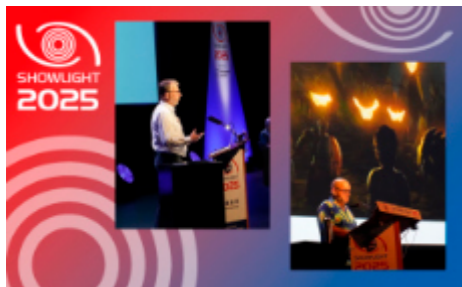
LIGHTING LUNCH

There was lot's of Christmas cheer at the annual Christmas lunch hosted by Mark Jonathan and organised by the hard working Jason Larcombe. The ALPD was delighted to join the room full of lighting folk to celebrate the brilliance of this year's recipients of the ALPD Fellowships awarded to Gerry Amies (pictured), Michael Hulls and Sarah Rushton-Read (who both couldn't attend, see Focus Winter '25 edition for details).

Paule Constable remarked about Sarah: "This industry is full of unsung heroes - but I don't think there is one who has been so consistently brilliant and yet so rarely seen in front of the spotlight. Sarah has been a powerhouse. She has championed lighting, women, mothers, freelancers and everyone in this part of the industry. Her curiosity is endless; her humour second to none - her brilliant ability to see the serious in the ridiculous and the ridiculous in the serious. Her energy has always been off the scale. And her friendship - I've known her since before I even knew what a light was - has been one of the most consistent things in my career. She has - to put it simply - been my inspiration. Thank you Sarah. For it all" 🍷

Photos A. Laidler





SHOWLIGHT SPEAKERS ONLINE

The international lighting conference has published two more talks of its illustrious line up of speakers, Bryan Raven and David Gray.

Since stepping back from White Light and d&b in early 2024, Bryan Raven has been working as an independent consultant. He has advised a number of organisations like PLASA, ABTT and Theatre Green Book on sustainability issues and Power of Events on advocacy for the wider events industry.

A highly experienced Project Director with a career in themed entertainment, David Gray took us on a journey through fictitious worlds where the original IP has no "electricity", introducing us to custom character fixtures created for *Smurfs*, *How to train your Dragon*, *Kung Fu Panda* and *Shrek*, and closing with the story of the

1000 exterior strobe Burj Khalifa installation.

These videos are part of a series of periodic releases, with more Speaker presentation videos going live as we move towards the next Showlight.

www.showlight.org/videos



FREELANCERS MAKE THEATRE WORK - CONSULTATION

"What do you want and need from an independent body for arts freelancers?" asks the grassroots organisation run by volunteers. "FMTW is evolving and wants any freelancers in the industry to take part in their consultation process. Links to the online consultation questionnaire (google doc) or invitation to book a zoom call are found in the newsletter - subscribe on the website below." FMTW is aiming to represent the 200,000+ self-employed and freelance workers from all areas of theatre,

opera, dance and live performance, who make up over 70% of the UK theatre workforce.

Freelancersmaketheatrework.com
SCANDLIGHT 2026 - CALL FOR



PAPERS

The Association of Swedish Lighting Designers (SLF) invites you to Scandlight 2026 -a unique opportunity for inspiration, professional exchange, and the chance to connect with colleagues and build new networks.

We invite submissions for workshops, master classes, works in progress, readings and lectures. Please read our Call for Papers guidelines and submit your proposal for consideration. Submission deadline for papers is the 15th of March.

www.scandlight.nu



Backup looks back - New Village Fete venue - finance workshops online

The technical entertainment charity's new chair Lee Dennison described last year's challenges: "2025 has shown us just how vital Backup's work truly is. We've seen a significant increase in grant applications and a marked rise in requests for mental health support—clear signs that our industry is facing real challenges, but also that people know where to turn when they need help." Backup has provided over £105,000 in grants to 38 recipients

this year -already surpassing 2024's total number of awards. On average, someone in our industry called the 24/7 Wellbeing Helpline every week this year, with January and October bringing the most requests for help.

The vital funds come from generous donations from individuals, the industry, and popular fundraising events. The Fabulous Village Fete raised £51000, another £50000 was raised by the BikeFest Spain event. The largest single donation came from ETC with £35000.

Check the website for how to reach the helpline, donate or get involved, join the next fundraising events, or listen to the



World Champion and Paralympian cyclist, Mathieu Bosredon, joins Ayrton team for BikeFest Spain 2026

latest podcast "Backstage with Backup".

Backup Tech – The Village Fete, the annual celebration that has become the definitive charity event for the UK's live events sector, returns on 9 July 2026 for its 12th consecutive year. New venue TBA!

How to Become a Financially Savvy Freelancer is an ongoing series of free workshops for live entertainment freelancers supported by Backup Tech delivered by The BACK LOUNGE and UK Live Event Freelancers Forum. Hosted by Suzi Green and Paul Jones and regular contributor Jon Cowley, FCCA, from David Howard Accountants. PLASA 2025 featured a live version and past episodes can be accessed via the Backup Tech website.

The series aims to provide practical advice balanced with an exploration of the culture shift needed to plan effectively for long term security and will include a Q&A at the end of each session. The series topics includes paying tax in the most effective way to having a war-chest for those dry spells. The sessions are for anyone working in UK in live events, music touring, theatre and broadcast.

24/7 Wellbeing Helpline 0800 464 7068 www.backuptech.uk

HONOURS

Congratulation to ALPD Fellow Paule Constable on her OBE in the New Year's Honours List: For services to theatre.

Paule, after announcing her retirement earlier last year, has also officially become the most honoured individual in Olivier Awards history, with an impressive 17 nominations.

Paule's illustrious career boasts numerous stage credits, including iconic productions such as *War Horse*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, and *Les Misérables*. She is not only a trailblazer for women in the industry but also a dedicated mentor to aspiring lighting designers. 📸 **Photo J. Davidson**



EQUITY

"Stop AI stealing the show!"

AI opinion call out:

Equity is gathering information to help better understand how AI might negatively affect our workflow.

If you feel there are ways in which AI will take a job and earnings away from you, please get in touch via zoespurrlighting@gmail.com.

For more information on Equity's campaigns regarding AI please visit www.equity.org.uk/campaigns-policy/stop-ai-stealing-the-show



NORTHAMPTON SOCIAL

ALPD and Robe invited members and local students of Northampton College's Technical Theatre course to an afternoon talking lighting design and equipment at the Royal and Derngate theatres, where LD Rory Beaton's show *Top G's Like Me* is currently running. The play's set is a giant functioning skatepark (designed by Rebecca Brower), dividing the Derngate as a traverse. Rory (pictured) insightfully talked about the specific challenges and fun the busy contemporary production posed, as actors speed in and out on ramps and various levels and entries - met by an economic mixed rig from the theatre's own stock and units donated by the local Robe office for the run.

"We have a naturalistic environment, leaf gobos and all, clashing with the internet world of TikTok colours and dynamics. Just covering the very fast cast on this scale needed some radical ideas. Thankfully, we could collaborate with the College and four students run the followspots - not tracking, or remote - real old school, as the theatre stocked them. But I prefer this, I like the human connection between light and performer."

All units in the relatively small truss, clustered on the stage ends and dotted



deep in unused boxes had to work continuously, switching from cover to effects and eyecandy. "We had to use every possible, and often not used before, nook and cranny as all traditional rigging points had to be left free for the high-speed entries and exits."

How did the multi coloured graffiti affect Rory's choices, the visitors wanted to know. "We had our work cut out trying to keep up with the immense movements. But we still had time to consider other ideas: For example to pop the graffiti we trialled UV - but it didn't help to tell the story to justify the money. We went for deep saturation from our units instead."

Following the Q&A session, "T with Robe" invited us to a round of refreshments - including ALPD branded cupcakes - and a hands-on demo of their T - range (get it?), on stage in the Royal next door. A great opportunity to find out about the instruments' great zoom range, new choice of gobos, and the especially impressive linear 0-15 degree Profrost of the T3. 📸

Photos: A.Friess



NEW TECH SHOWCASE

It almost belongs to New Year's traditions like a fresh gym membership: In collaboration with the ALPD and White Light, the Royal Central School of Speech & Drama started 2026 again with hosting the popular round up of the newest developments in lighting technology.

Leading lighting manufacturers demoed their product ranges in a riveting back to back shoot out. The atmosphere was of friendly competition - but competition nonetheless: The new tech showcase served again as the starting gun for this year's trade fairs, and the trends became quickly clear - often meaning that companies represented 'similar' products and features.

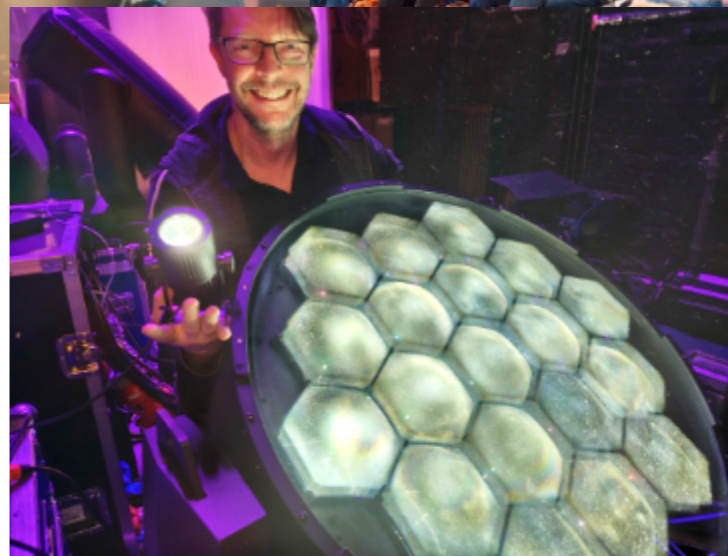
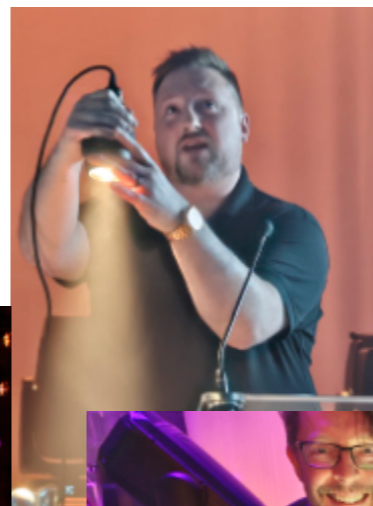
Smaller, brighter, but versatile: For example the Robe T10 compact zoom profile has a 5 to 55 degree beam, but weighs under 10 kg and should give many solutions for small to medium stages, or where weight is a concern. Elation showed off the KL Core IP LED engine, which can attach to theatrical lenses as well as bowens adaptors for beauty dishes and softboxes for TV and broadcasting, while all elements stay sealed and dust free. 'Making it smaller' is also the message from the Martin MAC One Beam at just 5kg (still not skimping on the eye candy),

while Robert Juliat presented the small Bizet Fresnel, following last year's profile, as a powerful yet silent zoom for theatre and broadcasting.

GLP's X5 Dot, created first with Neil Austin as prototype LED fixture for Paddington the musical, stood next to the Astera QuikPunch. As serious upgrades of the 'Birdie', both feature a wide zoom,

advanced optics and can add accessories like barndoors, frosts, and run from battery.

Other products provided quite a bit of déjà vu: A new Sharpy from Clay Paky (13 years after the first one), a new ETC data flash (20 years after the original launched - minus the dreaded drop outs after a few seconds use). For another feature you have



Full house at the New Tech Showcase. German Light Products managed to present the largest (the 'Mad Maxx' large IP66 rated fat-beam fixture) and the smallest unit (X5 Dot Wash) of the show side by side, while Astera's QuikPunch (top left) features high brightness and precise optics and colour rendering for broadcast use.

to go much further back in time: Multicoloured colour flags resurrect disco 1977, appearing in more than one profile this season. Crazy big zooms are de rigeur: 0.7 degrees! 63 degrees! (Not in the same unit though)

Others went back to basics: Robe iEsprite LTL - never mind it's a swiss army knife washbeam - the LED transferable engines for different outputs, the MAPS positioning system and available RoboSpot camera shouldn't hold you back to use it as a manual Follow Spot, if so desired: the optional attachment hands all controls over to an operator at its side (picture right).

At the Q&A, Rob Halliday wanted to know: "Are theatre lights becoming too bright?" "No" came the answer from the assembled manufacturers on stage "Developments are now like Swiss army knives versus a chef's knife - do it all versus highly specialised units - and can we make them cheaper, lighter and more efficient please! We are in an arms race against each other - but also against video which gets brighter and brighter" 🍷



Retirements: Nick Moran announced that this the last showcase he organises as member of staff at the RCSSD (below), and White Light Technical Director Dave Isherwood, who leaves the company after 37 years.

Bottom right: iEsprite LTL as manual follow spot by Robe's Cat James.



A whole grandMA3 in a small red chocolate box - well not quite, it's a maximum of 2 universes to play with on PC. Chris Munn from Martin not playing DeadMau5 - it's actually a colour output comparison. Extremely popular: the excellent cake buffet.





ABTT THEATRE SHOW

On 3 - 4 June 2026, the ABTT Theatre Show returns to Alexandra Palace, London, promising to bring together people, products and conversations shaping the future of technical theatre. Registration is free (see link below).

For lighting designers, the Show offers more than an exhibition floor and the usual opportunities to explore the latest in lighting technology, control systems, sustainability-led innovation and integrated production solutions. With expanded workshop and demonstration spaces in 2026, there's deeper technical insight from manufacturers, programmers and fellow practitioners on offer.

This year also sees the introduction of the Coffee Conversation Stage, an informal forum tackling the issues influencing backstage theatre practitioners today, from evolving workflows and emerging technologies to workforce wellbeing and long-term career development. Meanwhile, the ABTT Careers Hub and the re-

launch of the Apprenticeship Network reinforce the Show's commitment to strengthening the talent pipeline across technical theatre.

The first day of the show also culminates in the prestigious ABTT Awards, recognising outstanding achievements in product innovation and technical contribution

The new ABTT Apprentice of the Year Award and ABTT Sustainable Product of the Year Award reflect our continued commitment to championing emerging talent and sustainable innovation across the theatre and live events industry. Nominations for both awards are now open, with a submission deadline of 17th April 2026.

These awards aim to recognise outstanding individuals and forward-thinking products that are helping to shape the future of our sector. As lighting design continues to evolve at pace, the ABTT Theatre Show remains a place not only to

see what's new, but to engage with the ideas, people and innovations shaping what comes next. Photos: Last year's show-floor and newly extended outdoor space.

www.abtt.org.uk



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COMING ATTRACTIONS

ABTT and PLASA Focus Leeds invite to new tech, hands on demos and networking



PLASA LEEDS

PLASA Focus Leeds returns to the Royal Armouries on 12-13 May 2026, welcoming the live events, installation, and entertainment

technology community back to Leeds for two days of hands-on technology, knowledge sharing, and meaningful industry connection.

With 125+ brands already confirmed, PLASA Focus Leeds 2026 will present a broad and in-depth cross-section of the technologies underpinning today's live productions, installations, and experiences.

Due to continued high demand from exhibitors, the 2026 edition will expand

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further into the Royal Armouries' museum and café areas.

Complementing the exhibition, the PLASA Focus Leeds 2026 seminar programme will return with a curated mix of technical sessions, panel discussions, and industry insight.

Building on its successful introduction last year, the PLASA Focus Leeds app will

return for 2026, helping visitors with a digital entry and to navigate the show.

Student and newcomer engagement remains a central pillar of PLASA Focus Leeds. The show continues to provide a welcoming and accessible environment for those at the start of their careers.

The sun always shines in Leeds ... The Royal Armouries hosting PLASA with lots of outdoor space.



HISTORIC STAGE LIGHTING COLLECTIVE

The Historic Stage Lighting Collective (HSLC) is pleased to confirm the formalisation of a Hosting and Collaborative Display Agreement with White Light, a d&b solutions company, relating to the display of historic stage-lighting artefacts at White Light's Wimbledon premises (photo).

This follows the signing of a Title Transfer by the Backstage Heritage Collection (BHC), through which ownership of the display artefacts was formally transferred to HSLC. The Title Transfer formalises HSLC's responsibility for the long-term stewardship, care, and curatorial oversight of the physical artefacts.

Under the Hosting and Collaborative Display Agreement:

- HSLC retains ownership and curatorial responsibility for the transferred artefacts.
- White Light continues to host the display at its Wimbledon premises.
- White Light retains ownership of its own historic display equipment, which remains alongside the collection.
- The parties may acknowledge the collaborative display partnership using agreed branding.

HSLC's focus is on physical stewardship, conservation oversight, and structured display development, while BHC continues its work in digital documentation, archival research, and online interpretation.

The shared intention is to ensure that artefacts are responsibly cared for physically while their associated knowledge remains accessible to the wider theatre and lighting community.

Ian Lewis, Chair of HSLC, said: "We are



grateful to BHC for the constructive approach that has enabled us to clarify ownership and establish a stable framework for the display. Formalising the hosting arrangement at White Light ensures the artefacts are stewarded within a clear and accountable structure. We look forward to continuing collaborative discussions that support both physical preservation and digital interpretation."

www.thehslc.org.uk 💎

OBITUARIES



Ēriks Otto 1948 - 2026

The ALPD was saddened to learn of the death of Ēriks Otto. Ēriks was born in 1948 in England, where his parents fled to as refugees at the beginning of the Second World War. Alongside his regular schooling, he attended a Latvian school at the weekends. He went on to study engineering mechanics. He found his way into theatre in 1964 and joined the National Theatre in 1971. From 1981 to 1988 he was a lighting technician at English National Opera, and progressed to designs, including Verdi's *The Sicilian Vespers* and Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*. From 1988 to 2013 Ēriks worked at the Royal

Opera House. Many members will remember the care that Ēriks took to look after us when he programmed lighting for us at the ROH. His designs at the Latvian National Opera included *The Prodigal Son* by Romualds Kalsons and Verdi's *Nabucco*. He was lighting director for the Symphonic Music Concerts during the Latvian Song Festivals of 1998 and 2003. He is survived by his wife Lynne.



John Offord 1942-2026

ALPD and ABTT Honorary Member John Offord, founder and first editor of Lighting&Sound International (LSi) magazine and a well-known figure to many in the live entertainment technology industry, has passed away after a short

illness. Many members will remember John appearing at every lighting industry event and photographing everyone, most recently for ETnow.

Born in 1942 in Lewisham, John was destined to work in publishing. Working in his family's Eastbourne printing firm from the age of 16, he was running the business by 19. In 1972 he partnered with theatre producer Charles Vance, to publish the British Theatre Directory.

In 1985, John successfully tendered to create LSi magazine for PLASA. He served as Chief Executive of PLASA until 1997 and helped to grow the PLASA show. He went on to create Entertainment Technology magazine and etnow.com, and was publisher of Sightline and Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment.

Over a 40-year career spanning rapid transformation in stage lighting, sound, staging and effects, John was instrumental in building the news and information infrastructure that continues to support the entertainment technology industry.

In 2016, John received the Knight of Illumination 'Enrico Caironi' for Lifetime Recognition award.

He is survived by his four children Andrew, Angela, Adrian, Katie and his wife Lesley. 💎

“The year began with our annual collaboration with White Light at the New Technology Showcase.

A huge thank you to Stuart Porter and Dave Isherwood from White Light, and to ETC for their continued support of our Awards for Excellence, presented at this event. These awards celebrate emerging lighting designers and recognise Programmers and Production Electricians who go above and beyond. Last year’s winners were:

- Skylar Turnbull Hurd – Michael Northen Award
- Andrew Leighton – Anne Valentino Award
- Alex Bosworth – Fred Foster Award

Our industry socials this year were held at PLASA Leeds and the Edinburgh Fringe. Thanks to our corporate sponsors, these events provide invaluable opportunities for members to connect, share experiences, and discuss ideas. We would like to encourage more socials around the country, and to collaborate with corporate members at regional trade shows.

If you, as an individual member, would like to host a pub evening, coffee morning, or pre-show gathering, please get in touch. The ALPD is here to support you in making these events happen.

Our presence at trade shows such as PLASA and the ABTT continues to give ALPD strong industry visibility and provides support to both emerging and established practitioners. Thank you to all members who contributed talks and lectures at these events.

The ALPD was again involved in the Profile Awards. Special thanks to Jenny and Durham Marengi for co-ordinating these awards, which are designed to be accessible to all.

Under Rick Fisher’s management, theatre critics review work across multiple categories, styles, and venues, deepening their understanding of lighting design and its nuances. These awards also help raise public and critical awareness of our craft. This year saw the relaunch of Showlight, a premier symposium for lighting practitioners. We were delighted to restore Showlight Bursaries for two ALPD members to attend, with the expectation that they report back to the membership via Focus. The event also featured strong participation from ALPD members

presenting Theatre Craft talks.

At our final trade show of the year, we hosted a stand promoting lighting careers to the next generation. Many thanks to Josie, our Student Representative, for her invaluable support. These events, including career talks and lectures, provide

inspiration for students, and it is always touching to witness their enthusiasm, I would highly recommend presenting a lecture, if you are asked.

Our venue socials and talks

this year included:

- A tour of the Albert Hall, exploring how Cirque du Soleil safely manage the lighting of their performers, including aerialists, and how they tour and maintain lighting designs globally.
- A visit to the Royal Opera House, providing insight into their operations, from show turnarounds to maintenance.
- A pre-show talk at Glynedebourne, focusing on the lighting of a Children’s Opera by former Lumière awardee Danny

Vavrečka.

- A visit to Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, where lighting designer Jane Lalljee and the technical team demonstrated their approach to *Noises Off* in the round.

At the end of the year, it was an honour to

present Fellowship Awards to Michael Hulls OBE, Sarah Rushton-Read, and Gerry Amies. Thank you to Jason and the Lighting Lunch team for hosting such a lovely celebration.

The ALPD office remains busy year-round, supporting members with fees, contract

ALPD Social at the Northampton Royal and Derngate Theatre (see p11. Photo A.Friess)

ALPD Chair’s Report 2025

At January’s AGM, Johanna Town looked back at another busy and rewarding year for the association



issues, and event organisation. Behind the scenes, development of our new website is ongoing, with a planned launch in the first half of 2026. The site will feature curated photos from our archives—please send your favourites to Amanda. A new logo (love it or hate it) and updated fonts will accompany the redesign, maintaining the recognisable hand-written style with a modern twist.

The website aims to improve access to resources and information for members, producers, and managers, including a public face and dedicated members' pages. We hope it will make information sharing simpler and more effective for everyone.

Membership fees will remain at their current level. ALPD relies primarily on volunteers, the fees contribute to the efficient running of the office, events, and member support. Members wishing to contribute further are welcome to donate to the Lumière Scheme, host socials, support training initiatives, or contribute to office support. Even a small additional contribution will make a big difference to the work we can do.

Focus magazine continues, under the stewardship of Arnim, our editor. Focus contains not just news and reports to our members, but also many well curated

articles about the world of lighting. We always look forward to members writing about their experiences, showing their work and ideas, so please do keep these articles coming in, we can always help you curate the piece. Focus is still a paper magazine that is sent out to our members. To help with costs and Arnim's and Amanda's sanity the magazine has become larger and quarterly, we hope this means the quality remains the same in just fewer issues. If anyone would like to help with editing, or curating Focus do get in touch. The office also continues to support collaborations with other associations. For example, AAPTLE's website is now hosted by us, with Amanda attending their meetings on our behalf. We have also signed up to the PiPA Pledge. The FMTW Big Survey is regularly shared with our membership, and we are currently assisting them with a survey to identify future priorities.

SBTD has secured their venue for the next national exhibition, showcasing professional work from 2023–2027. If you are interested in getting involved in supporting the work for this event, please let us know.

We were unable to run the Lumière Scheme in 2025 due to Glyndebourne's production schedule, but I am pleased to

say the scheme will resume in 2026, still in partnership with Glyndebourne. The 2026 Lumière is Harriet White. Thank you to everyone who contributes their time and effort to make this possible—it is a lot of work, but absolutely worth it.

This year also saw the launch of Observerships, a simpler scheme allowing designers and production staff to share skills with members for short periods. Myself, Paul Pyant, and David Howe have already enjoyed fruitful collaborations through this scheme. Please check the website if you wish to participate or host.

Lastly, I attended an Equity meeting regarding the SOLT reply to our 2023 claim. While the derisory offer was more than disappointing, there were some excellent ideas discussed which I currently cannot share, except to say I have never seen Equity officials so cross. We hope to share a full response and action plan soon. It was inspiring to see so many lighting designers, who are forging successful careers, in the room on Monday and how passionate and angry they were. It reminded me why the ALPD and Equity exist, and why our collaboration is vital for the future of the industry. I would like to thank Jamie Platt and Zoe Spurr for their commitment to working on the Equity Designer Committee.

Looking ahead to 2026:

- In January, we will announce the first awards of the year at the New Technology Showcase. We encourage nominations for Programmers and Production Electricians who go above and beyond in their work.
- Our first member event of the year will be at The Royal & Derngate, Northampton, exploring *Top Gs Like Me*, designed by Rory Beaton. The event will include discussions on lighting a proscenium arch theatre transformed into a skateboard park, with kit on display from Robe.
- The ALPD are hosting a Technical Youth Theatre Symposium in February looking into co-ordinating youth theatres technical courses, into Further Education and then onto apprenticeships within the industry.
- Later in the year, we hope to include insights into *Hunger Games*, with Lucy Carter and David Ayton.

It has been another remarkable year for ALPD. Thank you to our members, Exec and Board members, volunteers, corporate sponsors, and our office team—particularly Amanda—for helping us support, inspire, and connect the lighting community.”

Johanna Town
Chair, ALPD 🍷



At the New Technology Showcase, we presented our 2025 ALPD Awards to: Ros Chase - Michael Northen Bursary, Chris Skinner and Oliver Thomas - Fred Foster Award for Excellence in Production Electrics, David Powell - Anne Valentino Award for Excellence in Programming. Keep watching our website for news of the 2026 Awards, and meanwhile, if you work with an outstanding programmer or production electrician who you feel deserves to be recognised - keep a note and nominate them! (Photo A.Friess)

The Profile Awards (TPA) are back, celebrating the best in professional TV and stage lighting design as judged by a nationwide panel of critics.

In association with the ALPD, the ABTT and the STLD, the awards will be presented on June 4th, at Alexandra Palace (handy if you visit the ABTT show) by a host of well known industry figures, many ALPD corporate members amongst them.

Organised by founders Jennie and Durham Marengi, the TPA also encourage students to participate, showing their emerging talents (see next page how to take part).

Durham Marengi: "If you are an ALPD member and wish to attend the event please contact jennie@profileawards.com and we will place you on the guest

list on a first come first served basis. Of the 250 guests at least half are lighting designers or their teams so alongside all our nominees there are a limited number of places available. If you are a company representative and wish to attend the event, although all the Awards are now sponsored, there is an Entry Sponsorship level that admits three members or guests of your company, again contact Jennie for

details, thank you."

This year once again the headline sponsor is Ayrton with Ambersphere sponsoring the drinks reception. The Theatre section of The Profile Awards is judged by eight of the UK's leading theatre, dance and opera critics chaired by David Benedict and this year the nine Theatre Cat-

PROFILE AWARDS RETURN IN JUNE

Student competition open for entries

egory Sponsors are Chauvet Professional, Elation, Encore, ETC, Fix8 Group, GLP, MA Lighting, SLX and Vari-Lite

Special Awards on the night include:

- The Richard Pilbrow Lifetime Recognition Award sponsored by Theatre Projects
- The Brian Croft Behind the Scenes Award sponsored by PRG
- The Student Virtual Lighting Design

Award sponsored by CAST Group of Companies.

David Benedict - Variety/The Stage - comments on this year's Profile Awards:

"From the inception of The Profile Awards the not-so hidden agenda with the theatre section – judged not by industry specialists but by critics – has been to encourage a wide range of critics to give lighting its long overdue recognition in reviews. There will never be enough writing space (or, indeed, productions granted a review) to write about every element of a show but it has been noticeable that previous judges have retained their new-found eye for lighting design and have often included lighting in reviews where previously they were unaware of it.

To that end, each judge serves a two-year stint with the panel refreshed by the arrival of three new faces each year. I remain in post as the chair and am joined this year by Sarah Crompton (Whatsonstage, The Observer) and Lyndsey Winship (Evening Standard) for dance; Mark Fisher (The Guardian), Holly O'Mahony (The Stage) and Dominic Maxwell (Sunday Times) for plays and musicals; and Alexandra Coghlan (The Independent) and Mark Valencia (Opera magazine) for opera."



Last year's The Profile Award winners. www.profileawards.com

How to take part at the TPA 2026 Student Virtual Lighting Design Competition (sponsored by CAST Group of Companies):

Durham Marengi: "At the end of March 2026 Lighting Design students and programmers from UK colleges will be invited to create a three-minute animation using the new release of WYSIWYG 2026 visualisation software of a light show to music of your choice within a detailed model of the Royal Albert Hall. You will be able to use the embedded orchestra and audience layout or make a staging and performer design of your own. The RAH model will

be provided by Durham Marengi and have a geometric truss structure with ten DMX universes of patched Ayrton lighting fixtures upon it. Though we prefer that entrants use the patched lighting rig within the WYSIWYG model you are allowed to change your preferred fixture type to other manufacturers and add SFX such as lasers, particle generators and atmospheric to suit your music choice. To help empower emerging talent, all participating institutions will receive a complimentary copy of WYSIWYG 2026 Perform Lite Educational Edition, providing students with professional grade tools to craft their lighting

designs and as part of the competition students will gain lighting design experience in a realistic, high-profile environment. Initiatives like this play a critical role in building skills, confidence, and a creative foundation that today's students will carry into tomorrow. Entries will be judged by the professional Profile Awards TV and Theatre nominees and the chosen Virtual competition student nominees will be published in May 2026. These students will receive an invitation to The Profile Awards event with the winner being announced live at the Awards at the Alexandra Palace on the 4th of June 2026. The deadline for



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Spring 2026 - p27

MP4 video entries to info@profileawards.com is the 30th of April 2026.

To pre-order the WYSIWYG 2026 Perform Lite Educational Edition, files of the RAH and the patched Ayrton lighting rig ask your course tutor to contact info@profileawards.com - Good Luck! 🍀



Last year our winner was **Shona M'gadzah of the University of Glasgow (right)**, with sponsor **Andy Mahaffey from AC Entertainment**. Pictures on the left are screenshots from her winning video, showcasing her skills as a pre-viz programmer.

Check out our previous year's nominations and winners in the 2024 and 2025 Awards sections at www.profileawards.com

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ALPD OBSERVATIONS

**Manu Agarwal observed Jo Town lighting
Noël Coward's *Easy Virtue*
at the Arts Theatre Cambridge**

Manu Agarwal reports: "The lighting observer-ship opportunity with Jo Town was awesome. Although I was only an observer, it felt like being a part of the team!"

The lighting team comprising Jo Town, Ed Locke and Claire Gerrens made it a memorable learning experience.

The insights provided by the team were very helpful for me as a person with only 2 years of experience as a technician in the industry. Jo introduced me to the lighting design production process and concepts like sections, frost and silk, focusing method, creating shades with colors and intensity and how to tune them according to the skin tone. Each attribute of an instrument like zoom, focus, etc. has a thought behind the way in which it has been applied. Any adjustments need to be considered. In Vectorworks, I learned how group numbers, channel numbers and circuit numbers are thoughtfully organised to keep the design and programming efficient. I understood that minor compromises might need to be made and how to accommodate technical reasons and last minute changes. I watched the rehearsals and understood the relationship and team work among a lighting designer, programmer and production LX. The lighting team was very kind and generous

in answering all my questions regarding programming on ETC Apex 5, lighting power circuitry and the fixture heads. In the end, I watched the first two shows and made notes from the perspective of an audience member and from different viewing points. I learned about the importance of critical analysis in design and discussed the notes with Jo.

I was surprised how Jo designs everything in her mind without any simulation, it is marvellous! I was also astonished how different times of the day were created on the same cyc by different lighting states.

There is no doubt that others can take away numerous insights but it depends on an individual. If they actively participate, then they will definitely enjoy and benefit from the opportunity. Many thanks to the lighting team and I hope that I get to work with them on a show in the future."

Interested to offer or observe? Members visit thealpd.org.uk/observation-opportunities 💎



Photos from left: Jo Town, Claire Gerrens, Manu Agarwal. *Easy Virtue* - the set on stage at the Arts Theatre Cambridge

The Lighting Programme is SLX's flagship initiative designed to support and accelerate the development of emerging lighting design and technical talent in the UK.

Originally launched in 2018, the programme began by offering final-year students access to free equipment for projects and has since evolved into a structured opportunity that removes barriers to entry and fosters long-term career progression within the industry.

The Programme is open to ambitious lighting design and technical students across the UK and provides real-world exposure to industry workflows, equipment, mentorship, and professional networks.

Purpose & Value

The Lighting Programme is built around a simple objective: to make the transition from education to industry more achievable and more informed.

- Support emerging talent entering pro-

fessional lighting careers

- Provide practical experience beyond academic study
- Open doors to industry networks and expertise
- Reduce barriers that can limit early professional development

By providing learning opportunities within a real industrial and production environment, the Programme helps participants bridge the gap between education and professional practice, equipping them with confidence, fluency in industry

tools, and insight into real-world workflows.

What It Involves

Participants in the Lighting Programme typically:

- Access industry-standard lighting technology and tools
- Receive structured guidance and peer-to-peer exchange
- Expand professional networks across suppliers and industry specialists

LIGHTING PROGRAMME

Myles Abraham reports on the ongoing development initiative by Bristol company SLX

- Connect with a wider network of suppliers

The Programme seeks to offer meaningful and supportive engagement giving participants a foundation that helps them contribute confidently in professional settings.

Why it matters to SLX

Access to professional lighting environments at an early stage is not always straightforward. The Lighting Programme reflects SLX's belief that practical experience, exposure and informed mentorship can make a significant difference to long-term career progression.

Through the Programme, SLX aims to:

- Help talented individuals gain exposure to real technical workflows
- Enable learning in a safe, collaborative environment
- Encourage diverse routes into lighting careers
- Strengthen the broader ecosystem of UK lighting professionals

It reflects SLX's broader commitment to industry development, inclusive access, and building future opportunity at scale.

All students over the years

Year 1: Ben Linwood, Georgia Wren,

Alex Silvester, Ryan Searle, Ashley Holdom
Year 2: Alex Hannah, Jess Brigham, Oliver McNally, Guy Knox-Holmes, Ciaran Lillis

Year 3: Daisy Simmons, Ewan Fraser, Rhannon Whitt, Olivia Charneux, Leo Wittwer

Year 4: James Callis, Jamie Burke, Nancy Strahan Sophie Schmidt, Tom Barge

Year 5: Ben Lucas, Ed Frearson, Eoin Beaton, Ghoti Fisher, Kassia Goosen

Year 6 (Current year): Abigail Skelton, James Knight, Jessica Ricci, Samuel Stacey, Toby Ison

Katy Lowe, Dry Hire Manager, SLX, comments: "We developed the Lighting Programme to open doors for emerging talent and help them gain practical

experience in real professional settings. It's about creating opportunity, confidence, deeper industry familiarity and providing a foundation people can build careers from."

About SLX

SLX is a B Corp technical production and hire company working across live events, performing arts, broadcast, sport, and experiential sectors. With decades of experience and a commitment to professional development, SLX supports the industry through innovation, capability building, and initiatives like the Lighting Programme.

Myles Abraham, Brand & Communications Manager, SLX. Email: myles.abraham@slx.co.uk Website: www.slx.co.uk

Photos from left: current student James Knight in the warehouse, Ghoti Fisher's production of Orlando and Ben Lucas Love And Information (Photos SLX)



Helen Garcia-Alton (she/her) is a lighting professional recently based out of Edinburgh, Scotland.

Since I was very young I have been in the performing arts. I sang in the chorus at my Venezuelan pre-school, and when I moved to the US my interests shifted to design. This led me to major in lighting design in college, Towson University had a big devised theatre program which is where I became enamored in immersive performance.

After, I attended the lighting design MFA program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I took intensive classes to hone my drafting skills, eye for aesthetic, and collaborative practice, while also managing to work on 38 productions as the designer, associate, or programmer. I even found a way to take a Millinery course so I could make my own tiara. Taking this course saved my thesis!

My thesis project was meant to be designing *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, set to open in the Fall of 2020. It never opened of course, instead, I designed 5 dioramic hats with lighting elements in them that were based off of the play *White Plague* by Karel Čapek. I created my own immersive installation with

a soundscape, and it became the first production to play before an audience post-lockdown at my university.

After graduating, I got an offer to apply to CNN as a lighting director, I applied and spent three years there. While at CNN, I was the lead lighting director on

INTRODUCING...

Helen Garcia-Alton is the first member, who recently joined our association, to be featured in this new series in Focus.



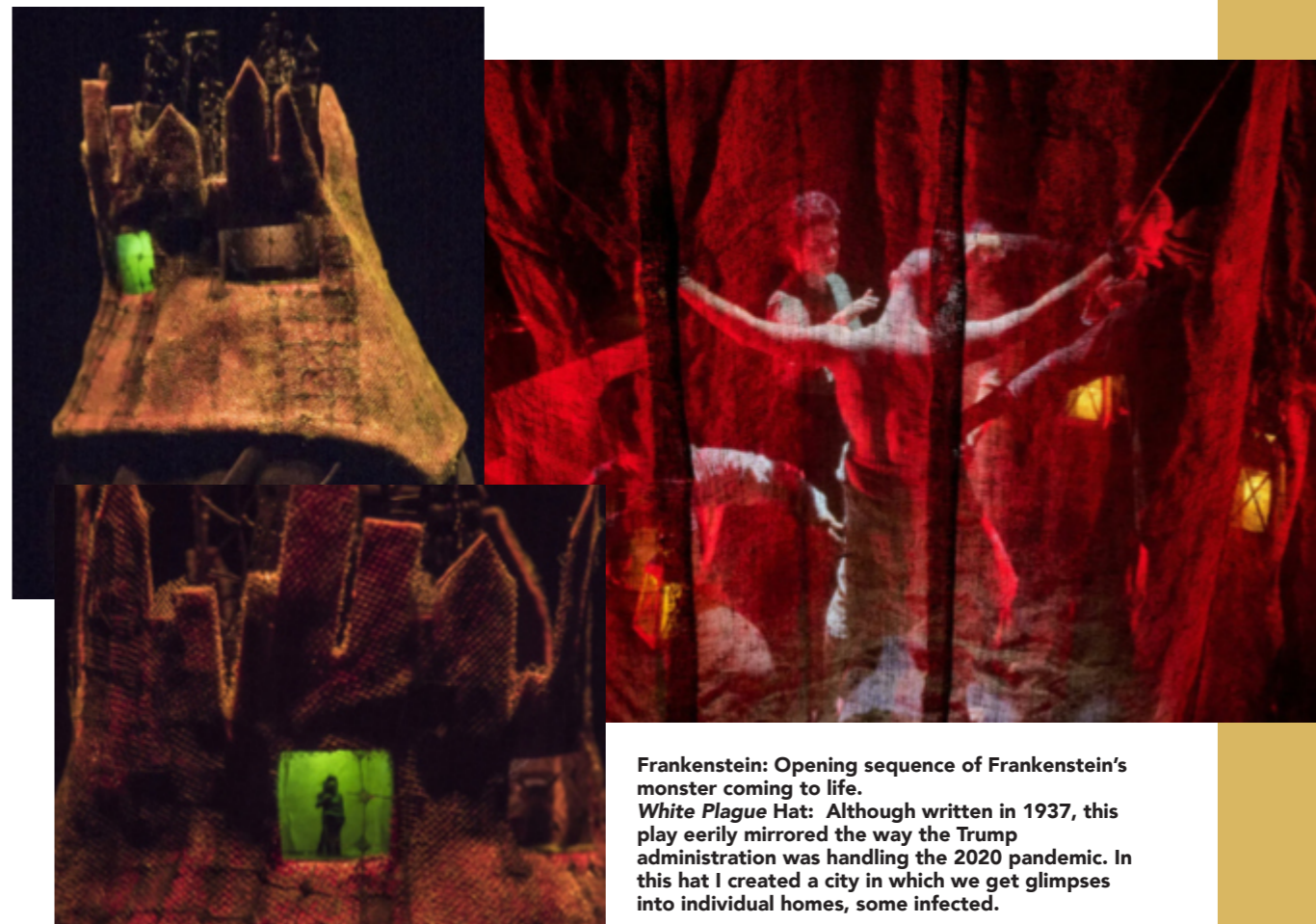
the launch of *LAURA COATES LIVE* and *The Lead with Jake Tapper*. I was a lighting director on the Republican National Convention in 2024, I lit the coverage for Jimmy Carter's funeral, Kamala Harris's 1st campaign stop with Tim Walz, Trump's second inauguration, and right before I left, I ran Shutdown America: A CNN Town Hall with Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

My time off was spent in the theatre.

Favorite designs include *Frankenstein* with NextStop Theatre Company, and *How The Light Gets In* with 1st Stage for which I received a Helen Hayes nomination for my design. Right before moving, I designed *Submerged! In the Company of Fish* an immersive experience at the National Aquarium with Submersive Productions, *FALLOPIA* a devised piece where we grew plants in a theatre, and *A Strange Loop* with a cast that was half hearing, half deaf. I also recently lit a dance film, *the sky is falling* that will premier in Paris at the Ethnografilm festival.

I crave more creative world building, and I am hopeful that as I search for opportunities to freelance in the UK that I'll find teams interested in having me. I am excited for this new experience, and if you have any tips, tricks, or friendship you'd like to share with me, drop me a line!

If you are new or recently joined the ALPD we would love to tell all the other members about you and your work. Email editor@thealpd.org.uk 🍷



Frankenstein: Opening sequence of *Frankenstein's* monster coming to life.
White Plague Hat: Although written in 1937, this play eerily mirrored the way the Trump administration was handling the 2020 pandemic. In this hat I created a city in which we get glimpses into individual homes, some infected.

This is the first in what we hope will become a long-running series of articles with practitioners sharing insightful and perhaps amusing insights into their first forays into design. So, without further ado, allow me to set the scene...

It is April 2013 in Winchester. I had graduated a little less than a year ago from the University of Winchester's undergraduate degree in Performance Management; a slightly odd mixture of stage management and technical theatre training combined with arts management teaching, including things like, funding applications, marketing and even customer care! Thankfully, I had been able to make contacts at the Theatre Royal Winchester and undertake a technical apprenticeship. I was balancing work as both a casual technician and box office assistant at TRW with freelance work across Hampshire and beyond. I was beginning to develop a strong taste for lighting so, when the opportunity to light local am-dram company SJ Theatre Productions' inaugural production of *West Side Story* came along, I was only too happy to accept. Nothing like lighting a major musical to test yourself eh?!



MY FIRST JOB

Joe Price remembers those hazy first steps into the world of booms and parcans

As this was well over a decade ago and I have completed over one hundred lighting designs since, my memory of the process is a little hazy. However, I was delighted to find some rehearsal notes I took in an old email, as well as the hand-drawn lighting plan! By this point I had relit a couple of small productions which, alongside my

casual tech work and the handful of lighting lectures delivered at university, meant I was not approaching this with absolutely zero knowledge. Nevertheless I was still surprised and almost proud to find evidence of a variety of colour washes (with different colour schemes allocated to the rival Jets and Sharks gangs in the show), numerous specials, a selection of gobos, birdie uprights and set highlights, sidelight booms, a mirrorball and even some audience blinders rigged on the

prosc booms!

It felt like the tech absolutely flew by, but whether this was actually due to limited sessions or just because I was constantly up against it and frankly drowning at times remains to be seen! I was indebted to the brilliant work of Beki Gregory, the in-house Lighting Technician who helped with lots of programming, especially things like effects for the various numbers, as well as somehow deciphering my utterly embarrassing plan, where the channel and colour labels seemed to swap orientation from fixture to fixture! One of the biggest regrets and subsequent lessons I learned was regarding channel numbers and grouping. No one had ever talked to me about groups before so, when allocating channel numbers, I just started with the audience left fixture on the front of house bridge and worked my way along each bar towards upstage incrementing the channel number by one, fixture by fixture, how methodical! Of course, the result of this in tech was the sight of me tearing my hair out trying to pull up channels 39, 42, 45, 49 and 52 to turn on my downstage reds in a hurry and inevitably hitting several wrong keys. I never made this mistake again.

Production photographs were naturally taken by one of the cast members' parents, but actually turned out surprisingly

well. I used them alongside images from a couple of other early designs in my portfolio when applying for a Theatre Design MA at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, which subsequently opened the door to the modest yet thoroughly rewarding career I have enjoyed to date. It has been a fun trip down memory lane putting this article together, so please do get in touch with stories of your first experiences in this crazy industry of ours! 💎



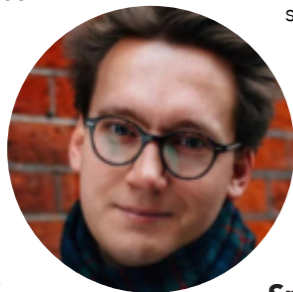
Hand drawn plan, the Jets in full flow and Joe getting through the mud on tour ca 2012



Focus Magazine asks lighting designer and ALPD member Peter Small how a drive for authenticity led to an almost exclusively tungsten rig for the London production by *The Lost Estate*.

Focus: First, tell us about yourself. How did lighting find you?

Peter Small: I'm interested in lighting anything. Buildings, cruise ships, theatre, opera, immersive experiences, jewellery galleries, fashion, dance - anything that involves shaping light. What excites me is the variety. Every project brings different collaborators, different architecture, different constraints. The process is never the same twice.



KEEPING IT REAL

Lighting jazz-age dinner show *58th Street*: Peter Small steps back in time to create an authentic illusion

I didn't come up through theatre in the traditional sense. I wasn't doing youth theatre or amateur dramatics - I grew up somewhere quite remote. My interests were in light itself: photography, art, design. That's still true. I'm drawn less to the production around the light than to its quality- its texture, its emotional register. I could light a stage, or I could light your garden, or design a sculpture to catch moonlight and reflect it into someone's

home. It's all the same instinct.

There was a formative moment at school. They'd hired a smoke machine for an event, and no one could get it working. I had a habit of dismantling things - famously my sister's Tamagotchi, to her horror - so I walked over and fixed it. Suddenly I was "in charge." By the time I left school, I was running lighting and

sound, hiring scrollers, experimenting. That sense of responsibility - and curiosity - never left.

I'm driven by the nature of light, not the novelty of technology. The latest moving light doesn't excite me unless it offers something genuinely different. Lighting is storytelling to form human connections. But it's also material - what the light is, what it does physically. That thinking ultimately shaped *58th Street*. Much to every-

one's alarm, I insisted on an entirely tungsten period rig.

Focus: Tell us about the show itself. Is it structured like traditional theatre?

Peter Small: It's theatre, dinner, concert, and social experience all at once, set in in 1930s New York. You're not watching a play in the conventional sense - you've arrived at Belle Livingstone's club (Belle was a real club owner during and after the prohibition and had a remarkable life, worth a google!). It truly is like being transported to another time. Belle welcomes you, the band is playing. The six-course menu arrives. There's conversation, characters, surprises, atmosphere. The evening swells and recedes naturally, peaking emotionally before resolving in a final celebratory crescendo.

It's immersive without insisting upon itself. You're not forced to participate - you're simply present in the world. The characters orbit you. The music and performances feel like they're happening organically. What's remarkable is how willingly audiences meet the illusion halfway. People dress beautifully - not in costume, but in their finest clothes. Dinner jackets, gowns, contemporary formalwear. The room transforms them as much as they transform it.



Lighting is central to that transformation. You're sitting beneath authentic period fixtures - Strand Lighting S Batten - gelled with carefully researched colours from Rosco and GAM references. Every cue could theoretically run on a resistance dimmer-board. The language of light belongs to the period.

We did allow ourselves one invisible cheat. The follow spots are actually moving lights from Ayrton using zactrack, hidden away where no one can see them. They behave like follow spots - but their presence never breaks the illusion.

And then there's the deliberate imperfection. We spent enormous effort making everything work flawlessly - then we spent twice as long making it slightly wrong. A colour change lands late. A fade arrives clumsily. It feels like an operator had a drink and missed the cue. That imperfection is authentic. It reassures the audience that this world is real.

Focus: Those period lanterns - are some decorative, or are they all functional?

Peter Small: The entire rig is functional. Every fixture you see is genuinely lighting the show.

We sourced original Strand S Battens from Jim Laws (Famous for running several periodic light schemes - and former FO-



CUS editor). They arrived as rusted shells. We photographed them, documented them, and sent them to Junction for complete restoration and custom modification - sandblasting, rewiring, structural repair.

The refurbishment cost thousands. But now they hang exactly as they were intended, illuminating performers and audience alike.

The colour palette was a project in itself.

Period research revealed a taste for saturated, sometimes abrasive tones - acidic yellows, unapologetic blues. American lighting, particularly, embraced boldness. When I attempted to source appropriate filters, many had already been long since discontinued. Seventeen colours were out of print. That was encouraging - it meant we were looking in the right places.

Even the footlights were rebuilt. Originally single-circuit open white, we converted them into multi-circuit colour units with custom magnetic gel holders. The modifi-

cations remain invisible, preserving the historical integrity of the fixtures.

Beyond the stage, the environment itself is luminous. Hundreds of practical bulbs - around 400 - line steps, conceal themselves in lightboxes, and form festoon systems. These practicals don't merely decorate - they shape the architecture emotionally.

Focus: Is maintaining such an authentic rig today not difficult?

Peter Small: Constantly. Lamp supply is a major concern.

Many of these tungsten lamps are no longer manufactured. We're drawing from dwindling global stock. Each lamp is handled with care - preheated gently, stored properly, never shocked thermally. But inevitably, they fail.

There was discussion about replacing them with LEDs. The economic argument is obvious. LEDs are

durable, efficient, maintenance-free. But the emotional argument is stronger.

We tested extensively - even ordering nearly 500 red-shifting LED bulbs from Philips for a full scale test. None were convincing enough. Tungsten behaves organically. It breathes. It warms and cools with a softness that no emulation quite captures.

When you've sat in near-darkness, illuminated only by candles, and suddenly bring the room to life around a trumpet solo, tungsten doesn't just illuminate - it reveals.

That moment depends on physics, not simulation.

Focus: What about control systems? Are those period too?

Peter Small: The control infrastructure is modern - carefully concealed beneath the illusion. Dimming comes from racks by Avolites. The primary console is from ETC, with redundancy built in. Much of the equipment was supplied through long-term hire by White Light, who were invaluable collaborators.

The moving lights - again, hidden - provide tracking functionality. Their programming is tightly constrained so they behave like period instruments. They're tools of illusion, not spectacle. Operationally, the show is executed through a cue



list. Everything appears manual - but is precisely cued and stage managed, so there isn't a busking element.

Focus: The whole venue seems to look authentically period. Was it always like that?

Peter Small: No - it was a blank shell. Everything was constructed. Floors levelled, ceilings built, architecture fabricated. The Art Deco environment is scenery - but structural scenery. Columns aren't decorative - they support lighting positions. Every scenic element participates in the lighting design.

I worked closely with my lead production electrician, particularly integrating hardware from City Theatrical. Nearly every fixture is mounted on adjustable drop tubes, allowing precise placement while maintaining period US-style rigging.

This kind of integration requires time. Planning began more than a year before installation. Every detail - from heat management to maintenance access - was considered.

Focus: How do you distinguish between lighting the environment, including practical needs around serving food and drinks to tables, and lighting performance?

Peter Small: They're layered systems.

First, there's the architectural lighting - the jazz club itself. Practical fixtures, concealed accents, projection effects from miniature profiles. Palm tree gobos fall across tables. Light exists to serve dining, conversation, atmosphere.

Then there's the stage rig - deliberately simple by modern standards. Three colours of top light. Follow spots. A room wash, various specials. Minimal effects.

This restraint was challenging. Modern designers are accustomed to limitless tools. Here, I had to think like a 1940s designer. If you want a special, you rig it. If you want drama, you achieve it through gesture, not technology.

The room lighting and show lighting operate independently but harmoniously. A character might "turn up the rheostat," and the room brightens. The illusion is seamless.

Focus: How does this compare to other immersive or entertainment projects?

Peter Small: The fidelity is extraordinary. Most shows have to compromise on authenticity, because productions can't support fragile period fixtures. Maintenance costs would become prohibitive.

But here, we could prioritise authenticity. The creative team, led by collaborators at Lost Estate, understood the importance of

getting it right - not approximately right, but truly right.

We conducted blind tests with TLE - presenting tungsten and LED sources without explanation. Tungsten was consistently preferred, even by those without lighting expertise. People feel the difference, even if they can't articulate why.

This project justified the investment. It's successful. It's extended. And audiences believe it.

Focus: Is the rig now fixed, or does it evolve?

Peter Small: It's both fixed and alive. The cue structure is locked for consistency, but we revisit the show periodically. Adjustments are made. Refinements introduced. The show breathes. It's not rigid theatre - it's closer to living architecture, like a real 1930s club.

Focus: If you could begin again, would you still choose tungsten?

Peter Small: Absolutely. It wasn't a romantic decision. It was informed. I visited archives. Examined original fixtures. Studied historical documentation. Calculated maintenance cycles. Authenticity wasn't nostalgia - it was design logic. And when you sit in that room, and the light shifts, and the illusion holds - you understand why. 💎



CREDITS

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Design & Build **Darling & Edge**
Couture **Susan Kulkarni**
Lighting Design by **Peter Small**
Associate Lighting Designer **Tyler Forward**
Lead Production Electrician **James Smellie**
Lighting Programmer **Phillip Burke**
Head of Lighting **Rivers Streeter**
Photos: **The Lost Estate**

58thstreet.co.uk

"Into The Woods was my first time to light a Sondheim musical. When Jordan (director) approached me a year before opening I was very excited to work on this infamous classic.

I had just worked with both Jordan and Tom (designer) on *Fiddler On The Roof* at Regents Park Open Air Theatre and at The Barbican and was keen to work with this team again. This was also my first time to work at the Bridge Theatre, so there was lots to discover.

Into The Woods is an incredible piece but it is a beast! The music is complex with glorious harmonies, the narrative is intense unfolding many stories and characters, and the problem solving is relentless. I like a challenge!

My starting point was the music and the various storylines, getting a feel of moods, themes, locations. Having the music under my skin so things are constantly percolating is a must. There have been many productions done of this show, so research was relatively easy to access. I then gathered reference pictures of my responses to the piece which I would then share with the team.

Before I came on board Jordan and Tom had begun collating images to start creating our world. It was clear very

quickly that light was going to be a major player in this design for many reasons. Act 1 is all about the cyclical play of night and day with numerous locations where order becomes unsettled. Act 2 is where the woods have become a chaotic wasteland with the constant presence of the unknown.

INTO THE WOODS

Aideen Malone reflects on her lighting design for the Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine musical at the Bridge Theatre



After my first meeting I kept thinking of Anthony Gormley's *Blind Light Fog Room*. This visceral playground of chiaroscuro had elements of the world we needed to create. All the images I was gathering were about a central concept of reveal and disguise, playing with light/shadow, and appearance/disappearance. Another central theme was the epiphany of many of the characters, e.g. Red Riding Hood's survival of being eaten by the wolf, and

Jack's discovery of a new world of the Giants. Tom was keen to represent these through light.

Tom and I collaborated closely for months to find a way through this journey through the woods. I have worked previously with organic set elements, but I have never worked with a design that is mostly

organic and relies so heavily on the build and the lighting design to make it work. Tom was worried there won't be enough foliage, and I was concerned that there would be too much. During this process it became clear that video would take the lead with creating the Giant and the birds. We agreed that we wanted to achieve an aesthetic where video and light appeared as one medium.

Roland (video designer) joined the project. Before rehearsals the whole creative team did some R&D to figure out how we were going to achieve some crucial elements of the show with video, light and atmospherics; mostly focused on the birds, the Giant, and the witch's death. Encore (special effects company) and the team at The Bridge worked



together to find the best type of haze/ smoke/fog needed for various moments. I learned a lot about atmospherics.

The prologue was quite a challenging start to the piece. The first 15 minutes happened downstage of the pros, within a black box, between 2 band platforms, with 17 performers, and with little height or depth to play with. The concept was that of a vaudeville performance where all the characters are introduced. Here I choose X5 compacts as footlights, ETC Lustr profiles as sidelight and Mac Encore Colds overhead. The cross light was heavily used here to pull the ensemble together. Initially I thought warm colours would work to highlight the vaudeville nature, but the cooler tones worked better within the black velvet environment and tonally for the mood.

This stark opening meant the wood reveal had a huge impact. It was such a memorable wow factor for the audience to see a three-dimensional scenic beauty with depth, colour, light shafts surrounded by darkness, and a magical space full of mystery and unknown. In contrast Act 2 was a wasteland where the trees became broken stumps.



Honestly the journey with the woods was quite challenging. The model woods were so beautiful, although I expressed to Tom that I thought we needed more gaps for lighting. The woods comprised of some tree trunks and pathways, but it was mostly foliage. So, we were relying on Richard (foliage maker) to achieve the model look. I felt the best approach was to create a palette of angles to be able to shoot through the trees at various angles around the space above head height. There were 6 ladders with X5 washes at 4m/5m/6m. Centre had to be kept clear for the various trucks. The rig overhead included Mac Ultras for punchy back light, Viper XIP's for shafts and textures, and Encore Colds for specials. We also had 2 goal post positions each side with XIP's and encores to shoot through Act 2 trees. Colour wise the prologue was mostly neutral cool, the initial wood reveal was warm and inviting, Act 1 fluctuated from warm to cool depending on mood, time of day, location, and style of performance (comedic or tragic), Act 2 was mostly a cold wasteland, where the Giant's presence hovered in the green putrid foggy air, but also had pockets of warmth for romance and

after the Giant's death, like a new fresh day dawning.

I worked closely with Roland to achieve a complex world of textures around our organic woods. It was a lovely to and fro process where we would balance out each other's pictures all the time. Very often you couldn't tell which was video or light. Tom was at the centre of this. Although the Giant was led by video, it was surrounded and supported by light, sound and atmospherics to achieve the large-scale impact of the Giant bursting through the theatre building and destroying everything in her path. The giant's arrival was initially loud footsteps and vibrating strobes over the auditorium before her large dark shadow appeared on the pros. So, it was a full team effort.

We used a Macula follow spotting system with two operators. We chose this system because of its intuitive operation for the ops and its ease to just decide and use it when and where we needed in tech. Ideally, I would have had three but budget did not permit this. So Lucy (Associate LD) worked pure magic to make the spotting look seamless alongside the operators Lydia and Amelia.

The biggest challenge of this project was the time we had to put this all together in the theatre. We had a week to

tech this complex large musical. I have never felt so pressured. We only had a week and half of previews. I lost a whole weekend of plotting because the foliage was delayed. So, I have lit this show 3 times. The first attempt was in pre viz with Nadene (Pre viz programmer) and Lucy, where our woods were taken from a 3D drawing which didn't really work in Capture, so Nadene created some magic to give us something to light through. This was a useful tool to make sure lights were in the correct place, which is important in a non-flying venue. The second time was in the theatre with Lucy and Will (Lx programmer) with the trees and a small amount of foliage where we got familiar with the rig and created some presets. The last time was the morning of tech where the foliage was mostly finished. Three times lucky I suppose, although it didn't feel like that back then. Huge thanks to Lucy and Will for all their patience. If I ever work with such an organic set again, I will scan the model to work with in pre viz.

I am very proud of the lighting design of *Into The Woods*, although my dog-walks surrounded by trees are still not quite the same. As we all know lighting design is a team game. I am so grateful to all involved." 🍷

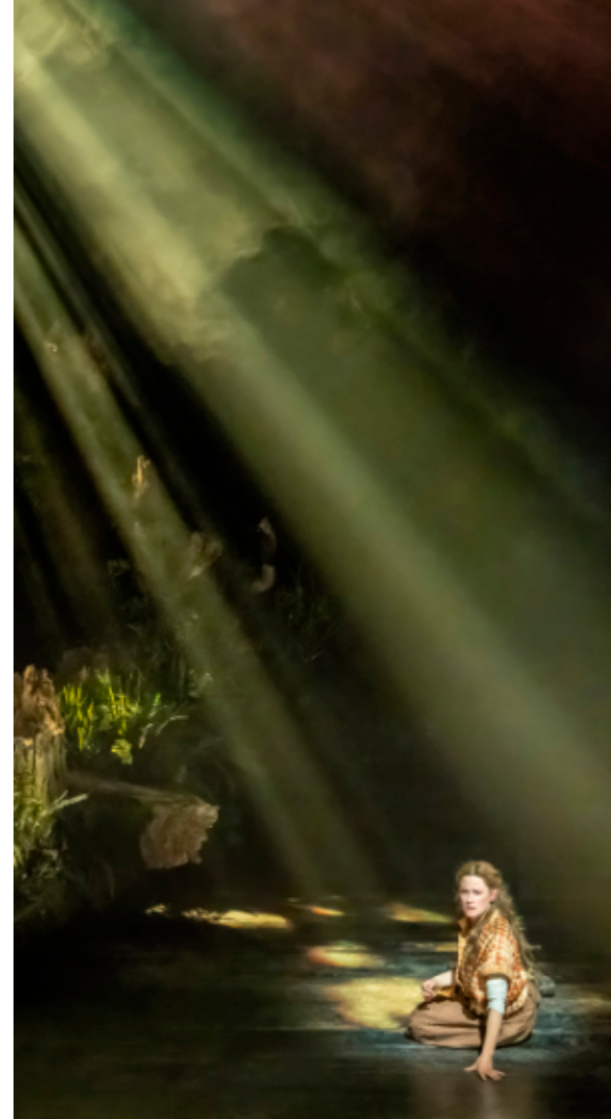
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Lighting Designer : Aideen Malone
Video Designer : Roland Horvath
Assistant LD : Lucy Adams
Lighting Programmer : Will Frost
Pre -Visualisation Programmer : Nadene Wheatley
Production Electrician : Adrian Hampton (Bridge Theatre)
Production Electrician : Michael Clay (Bridge Theatre)
Followspots : Lydia Ford Whyte and Amelia Tupman

Bridge Theatre, presented by London Theatre Company in association with Jamie Wilson Productions.

Photographer : Johan Persson



This transcript is taken from Aaron Porter's comprehensive talk at this year's ALPD AGM - we got many requests to make it available and print a condensed version here. The full talk will be available on our soon to be published new website!

"Today we're talking about how to protect your design intention, and why LED specification matters. The goal is to give you language and confidence to protect your design intent, regardless of which company you buy from. This is not a sales pitch - I work for City Theatrical; we have a wide range of LED solutions for designers to use. I'll use their products as examples simply because that's the range I know best. But the concepts translate across the industry. I want to help you save time in tech and reduce some of the frustration that goes along with LED tape.

I'll start with a statement: LED is the most used light source in modern scenic design, and probably one of the least intentionally specified. We've all spent a lot of time fighting with LED tape, loving it, dealing with it - but do we always take a moment to understand what we're specifying and how we're using that product? It

used to be a background element, a couple of strips here and there, but now in many shows it is the primary source of scenic illumination. We have LED walls instead of video walls, LED embedded in the architecture of the set, as the show floor, as sidelight, and sometimes actually illuminating performers. Its huge benefit is that it's flexible, small, and can be con-

"The most used light source in scenic design"

LED tape: Aaron Porter explains why specification and intent matter

trolled wirelessly or through wired systems.

Yet it's often specified simply as "LED tape warm white." Or worse, "I just need LED tape." When that happens, we get colour mismatch, poor dimming control, and flicker when there are cameras on stage -and all of that shows up in tech when it's hardest to fix, or results in wasted budget lines. At that point it's not really the tape that's the problem; it goes back to the original specification.

The four components of an LED system are the LED tape itself, the aluminium extrusion that houses the tape, the DMX driver (or dimmer), and the power supply. The driver controls how the tape dims and how it's divided into sections. An RGB tape needs a 3-channel driver, RGBW a 4-channel, and a 5-colour tape a 5-channel driver.

When specifying drivers, there are four questions to ask. First, how do you want to control the tape? If you want chases up staircases and individual sections flashing independently, that takes significant resource and programming time. If the whole staircase will always be used as one unit, you can simplify your control significantly. Second, who is the audience -specifically, will there be cameras on stage? LED dims by PWM (pulse width modulation), essentially switching on and off very rapidly, and how the driver interacts with a camera's frame rate can cause visible strobing. You need camera-compatible drivers if the tape will be captured on film or broadcast. Third, what are the physical demands of the application? How much space do you have? Does the piece fly, or is there water involved? Does the enclosure allow airflow? Dimmers and power supplies are essentially computer components - put them in a sealed box with no

ventilation and they'll overheat and fail. Fourth, do you need wireless? Wireless is a life-saver for costumes, but there are real risks: battery life, charging logistics, signal reliability. As an associate I once assumed every flying piece should be wireless, until a designer pointed out that at the end of every show the fly crew would have to bring in every scenic piece and pull out batteries to charge overnight. If you can wire it, you don't add that burden to the crew.

LED tape is a flexible strip of light-emitting diodes mounted to a flexible PCB, with cut lines at regular intervals -usually every 50 or 100mm - allowing modular installation. The tape defines the colour, CRI value, and brightness of the system. This is where binning becomes critical. LEDs are a manufactured product produced in ranges, not absolutes. Manufacturers test diodes and



group those within an acceptable range into a bin. Manufacturers with tight binning tolerances produce consistent colour throughout a reel and between reels -but that tape costs more. Manufacturers who accept a wider binning range can supply more product at lower cost. The result is the colour variation we've all seen in tech when we turn on the light boxes and some

Different types of LED tape employed at Waitress. Budget cuts forced the team to be more selective. Photos: City Theatrical

don't match even though everything shows the same values at the console. That is bad binning. Specification is protection: if you're using consistent, tightly binned tape and the show has multiple lives -a tour, a transfer, a revival -you'll have colour consistency as the production evolves. As more theatres embrace the Green Book and the desire to reuse materials, cheap tape is a false economy. It doesn't last, and you'll suffer colour inconsistency when mixing old and new stock.

The colour alphabet of LED tape

RGB, RGBW, RGBA, tunable white and so on -comes down to spectrum. A standard RGB tape has high peaks at red, green, and blue but significant troughs in between, which limits the colours you can mix. Adding colour channels fills those troughs. RGBA or RGBI tape adds an amber or indigo chip, giving you more useful spectrum between the red and green peaks, improving yellows and ambers. RGB indigo tape was developed specifically for theatre because designers wanted a deeper, richer blue for saturated blues, fuchsias, purples, and teals. Tunable white (a 5-in-1 tape with warm white, cool white, and RGB) offers the best overall spectrum. But there's no single best option - it comes down to how you're using the tape and what you're lighting.

For bold, saturated colours on scenery, standard RGB tape is perfectly appropriate and gives you better intensity because each colour element is larger within the diode. For pastels, skin tones, and subtle colour work, a 5-in-1 tape gives far better control. On a production of *Waitress* we initially specified 5-in-1 everywhere, but budget cuts forced us to be more selective. The neon lines at the top of the moulding were never going to need to colour-mix to a tungsten - they only needed to be deep, vivid colours to feel like neon - so RGB was fine there. The pie cases in the foreground needed to bring out the full variation of colours in the pies, so that's where we invested in the higher-quality 5-in-1 tape. The neon signs would only ever be one colour, so single-colour tape saved further money. Thinking about the use case for each element is a really economical way to approach the spec.

One important trade-off: as LEDs get brighter, you compromise low-end dimming. If you always go for the brightest tape, you'll always suffer at the bottom of the dimming

curve. There's less resolution in a dim from 100% to zero than in a dim from 30% to zero.

COB (Chip-on-Board) tape uses a string of very small diodes that produce the appearance of a continuous, homogenised



Tunable LED tape

line of light with no visible pixelation, even at close viewing distances. This is particu-

larly useful when a set element includes mirrors, where the audience might see the tape in reflection. The downsides are limited colour variety (usually single colour, tunable white, or RGB -RGBW COB is not yet widely available) and larger minimum cut lengths than standard tape.

LED neon is LED tape enclosed within a silicone housing. It produces fully homogenised lines of light at very close distances and is excellent for curved shapes, signs, and lettering. The silicone allows bending and smooth curves. However, neon is not particularly bright, because the light has to pass through the silicone diffuser -the lens appears bright but it doesn't produce much ambient light useful for illuminating performers or other scenic elements. Neon comes in different widths, bend radiuses, and top profiles: a rounded-top neon has a wider viewing angle than a square-top profile. For tight cursive lettering you need a thinner neon; for a thick border you might use a wider product -and on one show we used both in the same sign to get the right aesthetic.

Pixel tape gives individually controllable points of light along the strip. The dynamic textures, chases, ripples, and movements are where pixel earns its complexity -but pixel is only powerful for the audience when they can actually read that detail. If

the audience can't perceive the difference between pixel and standard tape, there's no benefit to the added cost and complexity. Pixel doesn't dim as smoothly as standard tape; new 16-bit pixel formats improve this but still aren't as refined. Pixel also adds considerable infrastructure: smaller cut pads make repairs more challenging, there is increased data running through the system requiring a more robust network, and both installation and programming take significantly more time. Precision pixel - where every individual diode is independently controlled -is appropriate for something like a roller coaster graphic where you need to read the movement along a track. Grouped pixel, where sections are controlled together, is often sufficient for light boxes, saves universes, and brings the cost down substantially.

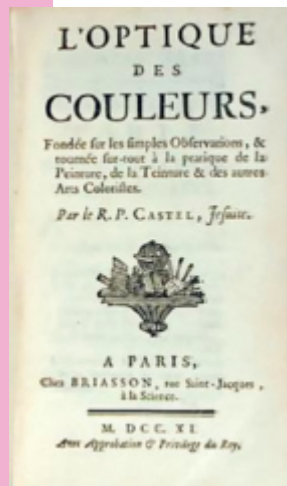
Extrusion houses and protects the tape, acts as a heat sink, and uses a plastic lens to shape the output. A low-profile extrusion offers minimal depth and you will see some pixelation or beading from close viewing distances. A deep-channel extrusion allows the light to mix before it exits, producing a more homogenised line. There is also smoked extrusion with a black lens that renders almost invisible when off. Extrusion can be custom-coloured to match scenery. Not all extrusion

is equal -different lens options give different beam spreads and diffusion characteristics - and for applications needing a very homogenised face without the depth, a more opaque lens can help.

On specification: even minimal specification is protection. Name the manufacturer if binning or quality is important to you. Name the product. State the groupings you need for control. If you're specific, you're protected. Work with your electrician to flush out the full system - driver, power supply, tape length, voltages -but even a note on a drafting saying "I want this tape in this location with this driver" gives you a foundation to build from. The goal today was to give you a few practical tools and the language to ask better questions, so that LED tape gets the same level of thought we give to choosing any other fixture in the rig.

Budgets are tight, and set electrics are often seen as an additional cost - but with a little thought about what you actually need and how the tape will be used, you can make better choices that give you control, better colour, consistent results, and predictable dimming. Quality tape, properly specified, future-proofs the show. I'm always up for a conversation and here to help you with my contact information: aporter@citytheatrical.com. " 

Offstage: This is the page where we are looking at ideas away from the performance space - exploration of colour, texture, luminance - whatever makes lighting people tick. Or just plainly odd stuff. We'd love to show your inspirational photos. Please email to editor@thealpd.org.uk



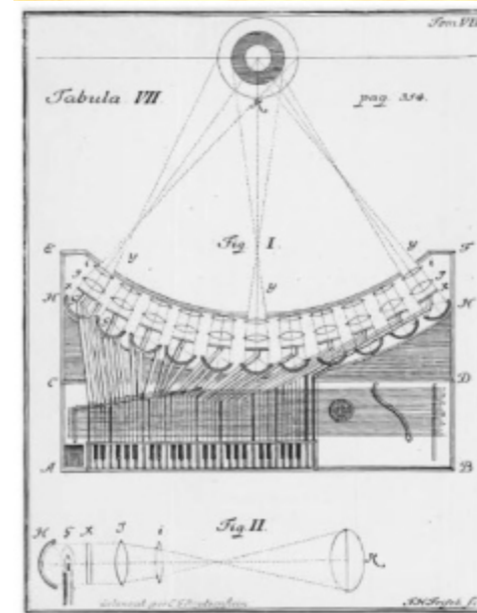
The Ocular Harpsichord

That's music to my eyes ...

Isaac Newton's work forms the backbone of modern physics, and is the base of everything ALPD members try to achieve. What you might not know: He equally invested his intellect into some more esoteric ideas. In the 1704 treatise *Opticks*, he proposed that the prismatic spectrum of the seven colours was somehow related to the seven musical tones of a diatonic scale. A diagrammatic wheel, with certain notes assigned to what he imagined as their corresponding colours, inspired French mathematician Louis Bertrand Castel, who invented a modified harpsichord along Newton's theories in 1725. According to Castel, he managed to build the instrument with sixty multi-hued lanterns rigged to be exposed when certain notes were played, a contraction which would not have been out of place at a psychedelic happening 250 years later: "The pressing of the keys would bring out the colours with their combinations and their chords; in one word, with all their harmony, which would correspond exactly to that of any kind of

music." Castel called the instrument the "clavecin pour les yeux" ("harpsichord for the eyes"), now generally named as the *ocular harpsichord*. He played it for visiting scholars, and baroque composer Georg Philipp Telemann, after visiting Castel, produced several musical pieces for it. They, and the instrument, are sadly lost.

German professor Johann Gottlieb Krüger proposed an improvement - where it gets even more interesting if you look at the latest profiles from Martin, Robe and Co. Castel's instrument captured the melody without the harmonic aspect of music. Krüger's idea was to have pitches appear not as coloured materials next to one another but rather as coloured lights superimposed upon one another (CMY flags anyone?), producing colour chords. Each key would activate both a harpsichord mechanism and a lever that allowed the light from a candle to shine through a coloured glass window onto a screen. The size of the window corresponded to the pitch, such that the lowest sounding pitch produced the largest circle of light on the screen, and higher pitches appeared as progressively smaller circles layered towards its centre. Apparently Krüger never built the instrument. Move forward a quarter millenia, and the ocular harpsichord is alive in any LX board connected to a profile or projector. 🍷



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FOCUS Magazine ISSN: 1364 - 9299
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