

FOR YOU

ALPD#

The Association for Lighting Production and Design
www.thealpd.org.uk
October - November 2023
£5.00 / FREE to Members

**LIGHTING FIT
FOR A KING**
Bernie Davis lights the
Coronation of King Charles
and Queen Camilla

**FRINGE
BENEFITS**
Mark Fisher reflects on
lighting at the Edinburgh
Festival and Fringe

**IMPRESSIONS
FROM OLYMPIA**
New Talks, vintage lights
and meeting people at
PLASA London

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p2 Focus - The ALPD Magazine

Welcome to the autumn edition of Focus and a big welcome to Arnim, our new editor. Like me, Focus took the summer off, to re-group itself, to look to the future and the next move forward as a magazine.

Taking time off can be very regenerative, a time to take stock and dream. Many businesses now actually shut down for a summer break stopping all productivity and find their workforce comes back refreshed with bigger and better ideas for the future. Time off for a freelancer can be much harder, especially in this world of constant accessibility, we are always on call and often to someone else's agenda. A set designer starts work months in advance and a production manager engages with you on their own time scale. This can make juggling work hard and taking an actual holiday impossible.

Since becoming a freelance designer I have only had one holiday which didn't involve some kind of thinking time on a design, emailing, drawing in the spare moments and that was a holiday during Covid! I remember then how amazing it was, how much more I had enjoyed my time away and had my mind totally in the moment of the holiday and not

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elsewhere, I had time to reflect and therefore build ideas for the future. This year my holiday originally planned for 2020, was a three week break traveling into some of Canada's deepest wilderness. It included ten days on a remote island and then in the rain forests of the BC coast, a trip of a lifetime that I didn't want disturbed by forthcoming jobs. The three weeks before leaving I had kept free from production weeks to give me time to design my autumn shows, this schedule was all agreed with the rest of the creatives teams and producers, and went relatively well. I managed to design 75% of my designs and had all the hires and stage one plans in before leaving, though it never really lined up with anyone else's work load or summer holidays and was a little stressful when two sets were changed due to finances three days before departure! I had told all the shows I was going to be totally off grid from a certain date and any work or responses would just have to wait: to be honest I am not sure they totally believed me at the time!

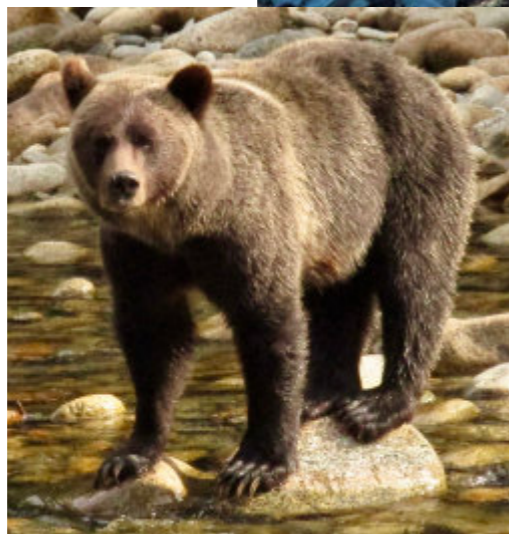
So why am I writing about this, at first I thought I would be writing about how nice it was not to deal with work emails and plan changes during a holiday, however what in fact struck me the most

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



Titlepage photo credit: Ima! By Recirquel at Edinburgh Festival. Photo: Balint Hirling. See page 8 for the article.

and what I think is important to share is how I noticed a change in me and my outlook everyday. Being without a phone was totally liberating, the holiday itself of course was amazing, but not having my phone in my hand 24/7 for 10 whole days, because of no signal or wifi, was totally freeing; I felt liberated from work, from social media, even from the news in all its guises. It felt great to be removed from all of the pressure of being hot off the mark regarding work emails, I couldn't worry about what I was missing because it was impossible to know. I was not being lured into social media and how that can take up time and emotions. What was interesting but hard to explain was I had to be in the world as just me without news, without social media stories, without looking at other people's reported lives. I was totally independent as me. I found that without the distractions of my phone I was part of every moment of the day, whether it was a step through the pine tree, the rain on the roof of the tent or engaging totally with a bear walking towards me. I had more time to sit quietly and watch the sun go down on the shore line or to be in a full conversation around the camp table with a beer, but for 10 whole days I was my own person, untouched by a world that



isn't always good for you. I suppose some would say it like a yoga class or a meditation session or a run, and yes it is, but as each whole day past it made that feeling last longer, I felt stronger and I felt more present with my family and friends, the world



around me and even my work.

So, as we move into another busy autumn and darker nights and our thoughts reach out to the next break away, consider leaving your phone and communication devices at home, I can highly recommend it.



New App to search, list and share Equipment

A new equipment management app, Lumolist is being offered to ALPD Members with a discount on the paid versions.

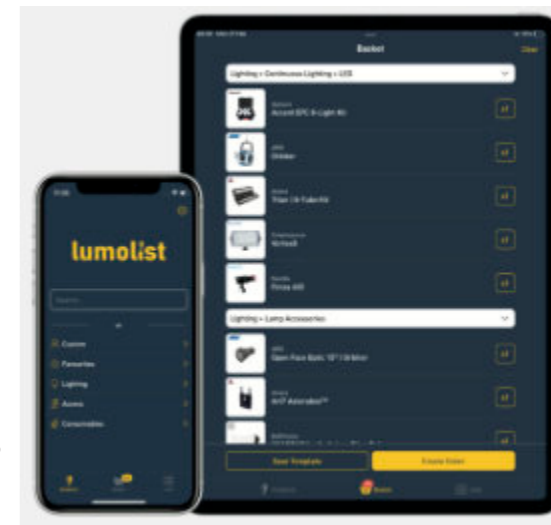
Developed originally for Film, TV, and Cinematography, Lumolist now aims at the theatre and live event industry, as the platform's adaptability aligns with the nature of live events. It provides an organised, comprehensive catalogue of lighting fixtures, rigging solutions, and lighting consoles from prominent brands within the industry. Thousands of products are neatly organised and accessible across devices. Each item includes an image, along with key specifications, making comparison and selection an efficient process.

Integrated list-making functionality enables customised equipment lists for various projects, streamlining planning and execution of lighting arrangements, managing rigging solutions, or planning

data & distribution. Once you've put your list together, you can save it for later or add delivery, pickup and contact details.

Lumolist generates a clear and concise pdf document to share with production colleagues or rental companies for quotes

The offline functionality guarantees all information when connectivity is limited. The app, available for free on iOS with the option for additional premium features, caters to professionals as well as students and trainees. Supporting newcomers to the industry, its offering a user-friendly platform that aids in identifying and acquainting themselves with equipment and its various applications. #



ALPD members qualify for an exclusive discount on the annual Lumolist subscription, which includes a 1-week free trial. This offer can be accessed by visiting: tinyurl.com/memben30

News and information from the ALPD office by Amanda Laidler

DATES
 Prolight + Sound 19-22 March 2024
 PLASA Focus North 14-15 May 2024
 ABTT 5-6 June 2024
 PLASA 1-3 Sept 2024

Awards Deadline Approaching!

Our Awards for Excellence 2023 are still open for applications and nominations, but only until midnight on 31st October. The Fred Foster Award for Production Electricians and the ALPD Award for Excellence in Programming are open for NOMINATIONS. We've made it even easier to nominate by making an online application form available.

To nominate for the Fred Foster Award, visit: tinyurl.com/fredfo
 Or point your camera at the QR code right.



To nominate for the ALPD Award for Excellence in Programming visit: tinyurl.com/alpdaward
 Or point your camera at the QR code left.

ALPD - AGM

By the time you read this, you should have received formal notice of our AGM, taking place on Saturday 4th November at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. We are planning a morning seminar with an agent, and maybe an accountant, to speak

about the life administration of being a Lighting Designer and to take questions. The AGM will follow in the afternoon after some lunchtime refreshment. More details will be available in Bulletins.

Website Survey

Sometime this month you should be notified of a survey about our website. It is due for a rebuild of its platform and we will be taking this opportunity of updating it generally. Do fill out the survey, and give us your views on the website so that we can make it work for members. It also serves as a platform for us to offer news and information to members of the public and to producers and employers.

Benefits for Members

We are always trying to add to our list of Benefits for Members and discounts on products. If you have any thoughts about benefits you would like us to research, do let the office know. Or if you are a company or corporate member, maybe you could offer a benefit? The newest addition to the list is Lumolist, offering 30% off their paid product (reviewed on page 5 in this issue.) The Benefits list can be found at tinyurl.com/memben30 #



A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Professional members
 David Lewis, New South Wales
 Jonathan Cox, Salisbury Northampton
Associate members
 Ben Heywood, Basildon
 Sam Lanning, London

Associate
 William Larsen, Minnesota

Affiliate members
 Stanley Olden, Greenford

Student members
 William Webster, Michigan
 Owen A Davies-Webb, Plymouth

Student (Sponsored)
 Rohan Green, Bingley
 Yu Hu, London

We congratulate ALPD Fellow Howard Eaton on being this year's recipient of the Gottelier Award.

A special award which recognises the invaluable contributions of the people behind the products that have changed our industry over the decades.



Congratulations also to ALPD Equity Rep Zoe Spurr on arrival of a new family member

Son Rafe is currently the centre of attention: "I will not complain again about lack of sleep during tech!" says Zoe. You can read about Zoe's experiences as a pregnant Lighting Designer on page 30.



Mark Fisher Creative Lighting at the Edinburgh Festival and Fringe



During the pandemic, many technical crew left the precarious world of theatre in favour of more secure commercial work. Some never came back. Anecdotal evidence from the Edinburgh Fringe suggests their institutional knowledge left with them.

The world's biggest arts festival is where many get their first experience. That remains the case. With 3,553 shows in 288 venues, the 2023 event offered as much opportunity as ever – at least, for those who could afford the living costs.

What has been in short supply for the past couple of years are the experienced crew to share their knowledge with the next generation. Last year, I heard of someone operating a lighting board in a major venue having never previously touched one. First-timers are muddling through and it could take years to catch up.

Thankfully, apart from reports of chaotic get-ins at the start of the festival, little of this was evident to audiences. Far more apparent, on both the Fringe and the Edinburgh International Festival, were the creative achievements of skilled lighting designers.

ALPD member **Lizzie Powell** had some entertaining challenges lighting **The Grand Old Opera House Hotel**. Isobel McArthur's

The Grand Old
Opera House Hotel
(Photos by Tommy
Ga-Ken Wan)



idiosyncratic comedy at the Traverse Theatre began like a bedroom farce then flourished into a mini opera. It was about old-fashioned passion asserting itself over soulless modernity, as an opera-loving hotel worker ushered in musical ghosts from the building's past.

Working on a set by Ana Inés Jabares-Pita that was as wide as it was tall, Powell had to suggest the institutional uniformity of a modern chain hotel as well as the baroque excesses of the old opera house that lay beneath. For variety, she surrounded the all-beige hotel bedroom suspended in the middle of the stage with an LED strip, creating a frame that changed colour from lurid pink to cool blue as the show progressed.

When the past tried to make a comeback, the lights flickered and the building rumbled. The wall fittings and

ceiling lights could have been in any hotel anywhere, but behind the doors, through the windows and in the climactic operatic duet, Powell suggested a world of colourful excess.

Above the stage for Geoff Sobelle's **Food** in the Edinburgh International Festival was an enormous chandelier that looked grand and imposing until you



noticed it was made up not of crystals but the discarded remnants of plastic cups. It was an appropriate image for a show about consumption, not just the food we put in our mouths, but also the land,

processing plants and networks needed to get it to us.

To call it a stage is misleading; rather it was a massive dining table complete with white tablecloth around which some of the audience sat and where Sobelle, taking on the role of waiter, served us wine and, for a few, an inedible selection of food. Setting his own slow and steady pace, Sobelle held the attention beneath **Isabella Byrd's unshowy lighting**, whether circling the table as a short-tempered sommelier or, thanks to sleight of hand, appearing to eat a banquet in minutes.

The greater demand on Byrd came in the final part when the performer hauled away the tablecloth to reveal a flat landscape of dry earth. He crawled on top, digging up a herd of buffalo hidden in the soil and, gradually, with the audience's help, building a landscape of oil wells, factories, shops and houses, the light shaping and defining the space as it evolved.

Coincidentally, lighting designer Christoffer Gulløv had an identical task on an even larger scale in **Dark Noon**. Like the final part of **Food**, this bold and surprising Fringe show took place on a flat square of red earth. And like Sobelle's show, it created a vision of an expanding

US civilisation by erecting ever more shops, houses and factories as the show went on. Depending on your position in the three-sided Edinburgh International Conference Centre auditorium, you became increasingly reliant on the live projections on the screen on the back wall because the life-size buildings appearing on Johan Kølckjær's set blocked the view.

In a production co-directed by Denmark's Tue Biering and South Africa's Nhlanhla Mahlangu for Fix & Foxy, Gulløv's lighting needed not only to focus our attention on particular areas of the stage when it was empty, but also to keep track of the set as it emerged from the American plain one wooden shack at a time.

You might have said Biering's script told a familiar tale, repeated in endless westerns, in which European settlers claimed land from the people of the First Nations, exploited its natural resources and transformed it into the industrial economy of today. This it did, but what made it disarming was the cast, all but one of whom were black South Africans. Wearing blond wigs and daubing white paint on their faces, they undermined the orthodox story because they clearly were not the all-white American heroes we are used to. For outsiders to tell this story

made it strange, unfamiliar and politically subversive.

Out at Murrayfield Ice Rink, the Hungarian dance-circus company Recirquel welcomed the audience into a circular tent-like space for **Ima!**, a meditative piece of solo choreography (see title page). The canopy over our heads had been punctured with holes of varying sizes to create the effect of a starry sky when lit from above. It was a simple but effective set-up that allowed **lighting designer Attila Lenzsér** also to direct narrow beams of light across the space, shifting dynamically to present the dancer as a moving sculpture, floating in a depthless cosmos.

Directed by Bence Vági, the piece was repeated several times a day with a changing set of performers who occupied



OommoO (top, Photo Meg Cowan), **Food** (Photo Iain Masterton) and **Dark Noon** (left, Photo Søren Meisner)



the central space both horizontally and vertically by combining dance and aerial techniques. It was physically impressive and had a dreamy new-age appeal, but despite a title that translated as “pray,” the show was only amorphously spiritual and too slick to carry a deep emotional punch.

As ever, imagination counted as much as sophisticated kit. **Ontroerend Goed's Funeral**, for example, was about the absence of light. As the title suggests, the Belgian company's Fringe show was on the theme of death. It was a secular ceremony in which the audience became a congregation gathered to acknowledge our impermanence. Setting an appropriately funereal pace, Alexander Devriendt's production began in the foyer with a run-through of the song we would sing at the end. Processing inside, we were guided along a corridor set up around the perimeter of the playing space. On our way, we shook hands with the audience members ahead of us as if they were the bereaved.

Sitting on log stools, we gazed through two sets of gauze curtains into the scarcely lit central space. Pretend candles added the minimum of illumination as the actors shared fragmented memories of the departed. With the curtains drawn

back, we were invited to walk in a spiral around the stage until we reached the central alter lit directly from above by **lighting designer Sarah Feyen**. In turn, we threw handfuls of confetti into the air, the flakes catching the light in poetic tribute to the dead.

A show about the dying of the light could end in only one way and, here, we were plunged into darkness simply and movingly. Having lit a candle in a glass jar, a performer placed a second, upturned jar on top. The candle flickered for as long as the oxygen lasted, transfixing us as it dimmed, until the moment it burnt itself out.

Finally, a quick mention to Lula Berhane, who operated her one-woman show **OommoO** using MiMu gloves, the wearable tech pioneered by singer-songwriter Imogen Heap. On stage at Summerhall, Berhane used a beguiling set of hand gestures to trigger sound, projection and light cues. Her Afro-futurist exploration of life as a first-generation UK immigrant seemed all the more otherworldly because of the magical technique. 🍄

Funeral (left, Photo Ans Brys)

MARK FISHER is a freelance theatre critic and feature writer based in Edinburgh and has written about theatre since the late-1980s. He is a theatre critic for The Guardian, a former editor of The List magazine and a contributor to publications all over the world. He is the co-editor of the play anthology Made in Scotland (1995), and the author of The Edinburgh Fringe Survival Guide (2012) and How to Write About Theatre (2015) – all Bloomsbury Methuen Drama. (Photo Lotte Fisher)

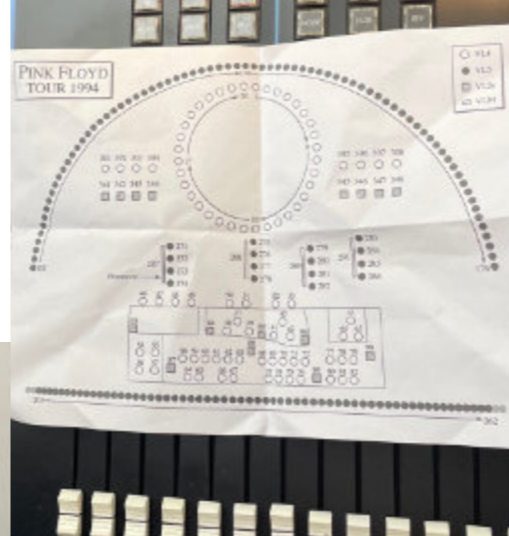


Vintage Lights, new talks and imaginative demos at PLASA

Numerous educational events and exhibitions had been added again to the main show of presenting (and selling) new equipment and services. Here is a small selection.



Top L-R: Ed Jackson, Andrew Liddle (LD New Order and OMD), Andrew Voller, Marco van Beek (head poking out), Emma Charles (all formerly VLPS London) at a Vari*Lite Artisan "No effects engine and paper strips for displays"; (right) Mike "Oz" Owen, his 1994 Pink Floyd plan, and a VL2 and VL4. Far right John Wright, (formerly Strand where he built the prototype MMS console).



Classic Gear Live

by Rob Halliday

I don't know about anyone else, but I had the best time at PLASA 2023 – though if there was anything new and exciting launched someone should tell me as my fun was from being in the back corner on the stand we called Classic Gear Live.

More art, less tools – yes, I know the ALPD tagline, but come on. To be able to get hands on with some of the tools that defined their eras – from the classic-of-classics Patt 23 to the Sil 30 to the MMS desk to the mighty Vari-Lite Artisan console, VL2 Spot and VL4 Wash: that's a thrill. On many levels, but particularly when you start either joining the dots through history (that 'mark' button on your Eos? It started on that Artisan), or wondering why we've sometimes lost functionality along the way (a sharp cut on one side of the beam with a soft cut on the other, as the Patt 264 could achieve

but today's fancy new lights can't...), or noting that in terms of form those two Vari-Lites aren't really all that

different from the mass of new moving lights elsewhere at the show, and the VL2 can still change colour quicker than most of them.

But also: gear is nothing without people, and it was a privilege and pleasure to have guests on the stand who made, sold or used those products back in the day and were happy to share those memories, those stories. Alan Luxford and John Wright of Strand. Don Hindle and John Schwiller of CCT. Paul Johnson from Jim Laws' Historic Stage Lighting Collective. Mike Walker talking about the Cadac mixing console we also had (sound I know, that's OK!) Andy Voller and Mike 'Oz' Owen talking about the Vari*Lite gear, Oz casually dropping his lighting plan from the 1994 Pink Floyd tour that so many still cite as a formative influence on their work onto the console. It was particularly fascinating watching those two as they stood before a console they probably haven't used for two decades: as their hands reached out to the keys the muscle memory kicked in, like pianists re-discovering their instrument. Plus the many others who appeared – it felt at

times like we had most of the gang from Vari-Lite London from around the mid-1990s there!

And people kept coming, and talking, and asking questions and wanting to play. To keep the real exhibitors happy, we did keep reminding them they were meant to be there shopping for new gear. But if the old gear was more interesting – well, hey, maybe that’s a challenge to the makers of the new gear: top that!

Boundless thanks to all who helped make this possible, including the student gang – Allie, Georgia, Jacob, Annie, Zihaire Oscar and Matteo who set it up, packed it away, in between protected, and by the end quite knowledgeably answered questions about it all. Philip Parsons of Steeldeck who gave us another classic for it all to stand on. Dik Welland and Jim Laws for saving this gear when no-one else was interested in it. And White Light for being our marshalling point for getting it into and out of the show.

We’ve been asked to do it again next year. It’ll be the same, but different – there are a million ideas of what to show, so stay tuned for information. But one idea I will mention, in case anyone’s contemplating a wardrobe clear-out before next September: classic swag, particularly t-

shirts from long-lost suppliers. Turn up in your oldest and finest and we’ll see who has the rarest or can get us the furthest back in time!

See what you missed: tinyurl.com/plasacollect



Introducing the new Historic Stage Lighting Collective

By James Laws, ALPD (and former Focus editor)

In early September this year, Classic Gear Live brought retro enthusiasts of all ages on one of the least commercial stands ever seen at PLASA.

Rob Halliday had assembled a quantity of well-chosen theatre lighting and touring sound kit from the last half of the 20th century and he invited people who understood it, and in some cases created it, to chat to visitors.

The recently created Historic Stage Lighting Collective (HSLC), represented by Paul Johnson, was there for one of the days, to support their contribution of 3

landmark UK profile spots. Paul: “I got to the stand at 10. Stopped talking at 7, had a really good and very interesting day. Everything on display they found interesting and visitors were split quite evenly between newbies and nostalgia.

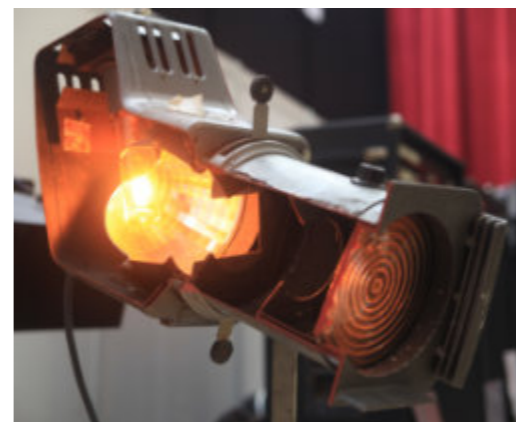
One comment was very interesting - the black painted 23 provided by White Light. The visitor identified the paint over the sticky residue from gaffer, probably used to hold a gobo frame lever in the correct orientation - he felt that sort of thing was real history memorialised.”

HSLC brought a Strand Electric cutaway of that perennial favourite, the Pattern 23, the earliest UK Profile, as exhibited by Strand at their King St. HQ in the 1960s.

Rob Halliday introduced the eminent American Lighting Designer, Ken Billington, to the CCT Repertoire Silhouette. Its shutter magazine-swapping concept revolutionised changeovers at the NT in 1976.

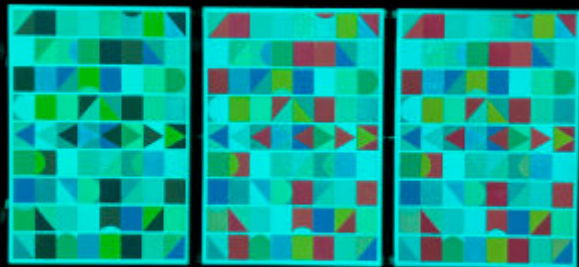
HSLC was created to demonstrate the way stage lighting worked and to show its context. Classic Gear Live is an ideal platform for this so, thank you Rob and PLASA; we hope to be back next year. If you would like to follow HSLC on

Facebook @HistoricStageLX or X (formerly Twitter) @HistoricStageLX



Paul Johnson of the Historic Stage Lighting Collective (left), Strand P23 and P263 showroom cutaways, Rob Halliday showing the special edition NT Silhouette to Ken Billington (right)
Photos A. Friess, P Johnson, R. Halliday

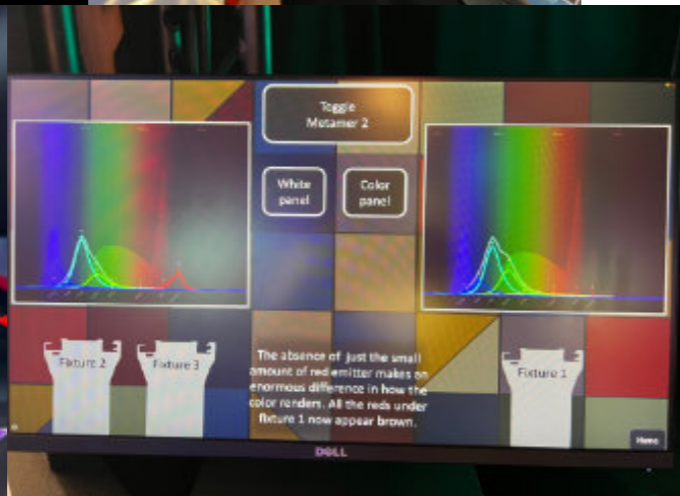




ETC Metamer LED Colour games

On their stand, ETC presented a gallery with three 'fairground' games, demonstrating additive and subtractive colour mixing and the problem of metamerism - a perceived matching of colours with different spectral power distributions.

Meaning: three LED profiles seem to output the same light steel colour, only for one to turn all the reds into brown, say in a costume or set (see picture top left). Highly educational content disguised as fun? Physics teachers were fascinated, teenagers recoiled in horror. Apparently the Source4 flower pots were not available as swag. Shame.



Durham Marengi The greatest Show on Earth

The first British lighting designer to light an Olympic event, the ALPD Fellow entertained a full house with tales of, literally, olympic proportions, and fascinating insight into technical details. From running over budget by mere millions being "part of the experience", lighting sessions deep into the night in empty stadiums, when absent athletes and set had to be replaced by cardboard and parachute silk for focus (and to project the choreographers cheat sheets onto the whole stadium floor), to only two hours rehearsal with a fixed, Chinese labeled, rig for the Beijing handover "with all stadium floods on full - moving the faders up and down made no difference." And then there were the doves. Lots of them. "Experienced athletes brought newspapers to cover themselves against droppings, and the incident in Seoul, when the released doves found a convenient

perch - which turned out to be the Olympic flames." Add a leafdrop (5 million leaves, turning the floor to a slippery mush), missing overhead LX positions "when sudden firework rendered the image perfect for camera - planned, of course" and the politics. "90 percent of my time is spent on politics and meetings, and 10 percent on the actual lighting." It certainly focusses the mind, when the boss' name is Putin. "The pressures on the executives - the appearance of the lighting in the VIP box was paramount". And apparently the boss was kept unawares about that failed ring opening, thanks to a quick switch to dress footage. Looking back, and given the amount of stress and hair raising situations he encountered over the years, would he caution his younger self not to embark on this career? "Absolutely not. I don't regret a thing. I would do it all again."



ALPD Sustainability Working Group - PLASA seminar

by Tom Lightbody

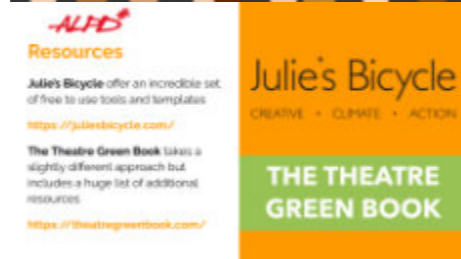
A scheduling clash with Tim Routledge's Lighting Eurovision talk meant a slightly limited turnout in Theatre One, but nevertheless there was an engaged audience of Designers, Manufacturers, and Theatre Department HODs who listened politely and engaged intelligently in the Q&A.

I often feel when talking about Sustainability that I'm telling people things they already know, but I was delighted to have received feedback following the talk that some of the concepts I had outlined were totally new to people. It's proof that Sustainability is something we need to keep talking about.

In particular I was struck by how many people seemed interested in Carbon Literacy Training (CLT). Personally I have found CLT extremely empowering - to the degree that without it, I probably wouldn't have agreed to stand on a stage on my own to talk about Sustainability for 45 minutes.

I would encourage members to take advantage of the arrangement we have with the SBTB, who run theatre specific CLT courses around the country. ALPD Members are entitled to a discount; keep your eye on the members newsletters for details of future courses.

My thanks go to the ALPD Sustainability Working Group, and in particular Daniella Beattie, who contributed to the seminar despite not being able to be present on the day. If you're interested in joining the working group, or if you have any burning sustainability questions, just email tom.lightbody@thealpd.org.uk #



A surprise meeting of Ken Billington and Hawaiian LD Bob Harmon at the ALPD stand (top), cold feet at MDG fog, a short stroll to bridge 30 years between vintage VL2 and the newest profiles (left) and finally, almost a PLASA tradition by now, the entertaining Robe show. Photos A. Friess

Imagine a 4 1/2 hour long opera with multiple ballets in it. That is *Les Troyens (The Trojans)* by Berlioz.

This was to be performed by Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Choir and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique in 5 different concert halls, including the Berlioz Festival, The Grosse Festspielhaus in Salzburg, the Opera Royale at the Palace of Versailles, the Berlin Philharmonie and finally at the Royal Albert Hall for the BBC Proms.

The format is that the orchestra and the choir are on stage, there is a movement director, Tess Gibbs, who works with the maestro to make the opera come alive by moving the principals through and in front of the orchestra and inhabiting their characters with limited props, and some staging for the chorus as well. Along with some 'hopefully' enhanced lighting it makes up for a pretty wonderful evocation of a fully staged opera without sets and costumes.

Sounds good? Well the challenge for the lighting is that each venue has a distinctly different lighting specification usually more geared up to a classical orchestra concert with some down light on the orchestra, often a stationary orchestral shell limiting many angles and a few



Rick Fisher

Lighting a radio concert

RICK FISHER at the court of the sun king: "Part of the Palace, built a little later than the main part of Versailles, but very much built as a private theatre for the royal family. Being able to light up the theatre with the lights they have set for the various parts of the architecture was a great pleasure."



specials and nowadays a few moving lights. We only arrive on the day before the concert (or in the case of the Proms at 8:30 for a 4pm concert) and often there are other concerts taking place in between any rehearsal and our performance.

The goal is to make each show work with the unique qualities and opportunities of each hall so often a few singers portraying messengers, ghosts, offstage fanfares are placed in new positions in each venue.

The controls vary between MA2 and ETC desks and the programmers are more used to lights up and lights down, not the 100 lighting cues I had envisaged to shape the orchestra and drama to support the limited staging and provide visual interest. We never rehearsed the entire opera in any venue apart from the first, as it was too long to fit even into extended sessions for the musicians and singers. I would work with the local programmer to write as many cues as we could possibly create often up to house opening. Aided by two follow spots which I called while following the 540 page score, and calling lighting cues—the stage management help I was promised was more needed back stage to cue on singers and wrangle the offstage activities.

Thank goodness for the willingness of the local team to engage with and begin to enjoy the slightly chaotic process, thanks

for their English skills and their enthusiasm for doing more than was usually asked of them. All for a long one night concert before we headed off to another city and country.

The joy of this is that even creating simplistic cues, by merely lighting areas when used and darkening them when not used, it makes a great impact on the audience who feel that they have seen a staging of something pretty hard to stage. It benefits from a cool patient head and the acceptance that if something is wrong there is not too much you can do but put up a sub with some more general cover and no one is the wiser. There is not much time for subtleties of level and I tend to only get a warm and cool version of light (if I am lucky) on the chorus and principals. If possible I am allowed to add colour to the orchestra (as long as they can still read the dots with the lit music stands) and for public moments in the opera, I would find different aspects of the auditorium to light up even if it was just the concert shell.

The music wins in this and with some glorious singing and orchestral playing and a great team of performers on stage and back stage, we delivered truly enhanced concerts in 5 fantastic and different venues culminating with a night at the proms where my lighting was certainly enjoyed by the audience listening in on Radio 3! 🎵

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LD Lucy Adams is sharing the experience of her recent three month work placement, where she was able to gain skills on-site as an assistant lighting designer. Lucy's placement was made possible via this year's Design Lumiere Scheme. More info about the Lumiere Scheme can be found here: tinyurl.com/lumierehis



Over the last few months the ALPD has given me the opportunity to work with some incredible lighting designers via the Lumiere Scheme.

I assisted Mark Jonathan on London Children's Ballet's Snow White at the Peacock Theatre, and then shadowed him remounting Sleeping Beauty at the Royal Opera House (Photo below). I also had the chance to assist Ken Billington on Crazy for You at the



Gillian Lynne. Through all of these opportunities I met and worked with some incredibly talented, generous and funny people and learnt heaps. With Marko I called followspots for the first time, learning how to communicate with follow spot ops and how to create and update cue sheets. It was also my first time working on a ballet so it was really interesting to see how Marko lit each scene in a proscenium arch space with very little set - I was surprised how gobos became integral to his design. This carried on with Sleeping Beauty where he used a lot of gobos to bring depth to the scenic cloths. Shadowing him at the Opera House was incredible; to see how they change the space so quickly in a rep format, and then the detail Marko puts into his designs was inspiring.

Crazy For You was my first experience working on a big West End musical and it was amazing to work on a show with such an accomplished designer as Ken Billington. The job was worth it for his incredible stories alone, but I also had the privilege of seeing the precision and beauty of his design. It was also brilliant to be working with Dale Driscoll, Ken's associate, to see how the workload of the show was shared between them and how important that working relationship can

be. I was calling 3 followspots on this show and was so grateful to have worked with Marko beforehand and to have a chance to put my new skills to good use. I used SpotTrack for the first time under the expert guidance of Dale and Rob Halliday who was programming the show.

The culmination of these few months was attending Glyndebourne for the day to watch Rick Fisher plotting Semele and then watch a run through of part of the opera. This also gave me the chance to meet the wonderful Lumiere, Danny! To be given the chance to visit Glyndebourne and see how tech runs for an opera of that scale in such a beautiful building was the perfect close to this experience.

All of these jobs have given me the chance to be in spaces I otherwise may not have made it into without the help of the ALPD, and in particular Charlotte Burton who runs the Lumiere Scheme with a huge amount of care and generosity. I can't wait to take the skills I've learnt onto future projects, this scheme has shown me the many different ways you can be involved in a production and I'm really looking forward to more associate and assisting work in the future. 🍷



Lucy Adams (right) with (from back left) LD Ken Billington, Rob Halliday, Dale Driscoll and LX team members at the Press-night of Crazy For You.



This short piece is a call out for members' thoughts for a collaboration that I hope will be useful to the lighting teams we want to help with the Surviving the Death of Tungsten (SDOT) project.

One of my key early influences was an article by Francis Reid about where and why you might put each of the first ten or so fixtures in a lighting rig for a proscenium stage. It may have existed as a standalone article, but a version of it became Chapter 8 in The Stage Lighting Handbook entitled "First Steps in Lighting Design".

After making clear the need for a scale plan and section, and knowledge of the beam angles of potential fixtures, Francis started out placing the first fixture in the centre of an FoH bar, at a distance where its beam would illuminate the whole stage. Next step is to move this single fixture to a 45 degree front light position and symmetrically match it from the other side of the auditorium. Gradually we get backlight, (3/4 from Stage Left – still so often my go-to) then additional light for faces upstage, and then colour to add variation. In 6 tightly written pages there is a wealth of thought and experience that

I'm sure helped many folk making their "First Steps..."

So how about updating the idea for the LED and moving light era? Where did you put your first moving lights? For me – following the lead of David Hersey and Nick Richings, I put moving wash lights with continuous colour change and zoom as Pipe Ends to push colour onto stage without too much going onto faces (Mac 600s and Vari*Lite VL4s). First time I had moving profiles they still had colour

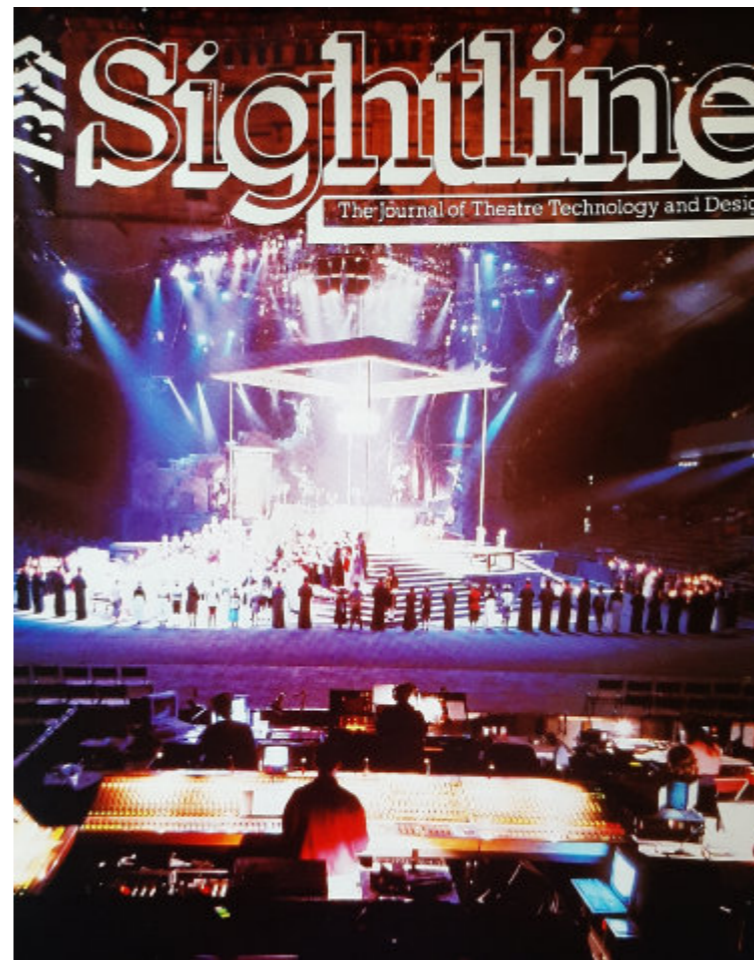
wheels and fixed beams (Vari*Lite VL2s) and the producers wanted to see "what they were paying for" so mostly they went on upstage bars to do air lighting, with the occasional re-focusable special further down stage. But all this was in an era when the light coming out of most movers was not really what you wanted on faces (Vari*Lite VL5s excepted).

So over to you. Where would you advise folk to put their first few movers? Their first fixed LED profiles or wash lights?

Some of the LD students at Central were heavily influenced by Paule Constable's lighting for "Oceans at the End of the Lane" – copying her use of a pair of moving profiles with framing shutters on the centre line – one on the advance bar and one upstage. Others have prioritised high side positions in line with the down stage edge or "Hendy-Rail" (after Mark Henderson) just above audience heads (it takes a lot of care to balance intensity there.)

Sometimes there is little choice – as Francis pointed out in his article – and you rig the fixtures where you have positions. Sometimes static or moving LED fixtures go onto positions with limited access, where there is a wish to reduce the risks associated with working at height rather than where they might work best for an LD, but lets assume for once that even on a smaller scale, the LD gets to choose what goes where. 🚧

First Steps In Automated Lighting Design (In Homage To Francis Reid)



So please, share your thoughts – as an email to Focus, or even as a full blown article to update Francis. If you would prefer to contact me directly, please put SDOT in the subject line and email nick.moran@alpd.org.uk. Pictures and plans would be great too, and I promise to credit every contributor. Over to you!

Author **NICK MORAN** (photo right) serves as the ALPD Treasurer. He is also a lighting designer, educator at RCSSD and has published acclaimed books on lighting design. Photo left: The author facing the opposite problem, programming a rather large moving light rig in Earls Court and "wondering which lights did I put where!" (Editors note: He's the one in front of the Vari*Lite Artisan, with a single muff headset - between the stage and the ENORMOUS Cadac sound desk.)



A new committee has recently been elected. I'm once again on the committee so will continue to be a voice within Equity to make sure lighting designers are heard through the Union.

Two of us on the committee were due our babies around 3 weeks apart - something in those backstage water pipes it seems! We will be carrying on with our committee duties whilst looking after our babies, feeling it's important to keep in touch with updates and negotiations. I will still be here for you as a committee member and as Equity Rep for the ALPD, but in a slightly more remote way, and with a slightly slower response to emails - apologies in advance!

Various situations were brought to light whilst being pregnant, and no doubt more will surface now the baby is here - so I wanted to share some of these thoughts with you. It often feels the industry is not suitable for working families with young children (well, any age children!) So I've been looking for positive examples of great practice and want to hear yours too, as well as negative situations that have arisen and can be an action point for Equity and ALPD in future. Moving forwards with the next two

years of committee aims, we want to connect more with organisations like PiPA, and continue to strengthen existing connections with associations to ensure progress made for parents and theatres is shared and known to all.

My experience whilst being pregnant and working has been fairly good throughout. Producers, production managers and stage managers have been brilliant at checking in and adapting to my changing needs. I've been able to attend all my appointments by making sure they're booked early in the day in

order to then travel to work later on. Also an additional scan at 13 weeks was sensitively supported by all involved, so I felt relaxed with the appointment and could take time after to recoup and get back in the right headspace for work.

The one big problem I faced was uncomfortable production desks - at The Garrick Theatre you "can't" take the seats out, or after investigation it costs a lot of money to do so, meaning a more ergonomic seating position wasn't viable.

The offer instead was a wooden board across the seats. There was a lot of embarrassment and apologies given from staff members and producers, but nothing changed. To try and avoid the inevitable bad back and neck, I bought an inflatable cushion for each of my team, and a back support for myself in the hope it'd extend the seat back just high enough for a bit more support. I should also add, you can't get massage treatment until after 12

Navigating Directing and Designing whilst pregnant

An Update from Zoe Spurr and the Equity Director and Designer Committee 2023 -2025

weeks, and I was already living in a lot of pain from frequently bad seating positions. The options I bought were OK, but if I'd be there any longer than a week and a half I would have really suffered.

So who's responsibility is this? The theatres? The incoming producer? How much notice should be given for this to happen? I was only around 11/12 weeks pregnant at this point, so couldn't have given anymore than 8 weeks notice of a request for seats out, is 8 weeks enough?

Can budgets, time and schedule be flexible enough to allow for this to happen? The ALPD have already had many members flag the serious implications of uncomfortable production desks, pregnant or not. In extreme cases I've known people be hospitalised with bad backs caused by terrible work stations in tech. Something needs to change - comfortable working space should be standard on every show. So if you want to feed in/share experiences/help the change then please get in touch with either Equity via the committee email address

directorsanddesigners@equity.org.uk, or with the professionals working group at the ALPD **professionals@thealpd.org.uk** who are keen to tackle this issue - but need more voices and support to do so. The working group is always growing and looking for new members, so if you feel you can be positively involved and donate some time to help solve this ongoing issue then we would welcome you with open arms! The hours penned in to production schedules are also a huge barrier for pregnant people and people with children - those long days plus travel time become increasingly unachievable when you have a family to support at home, and childcare also becomes harder

to come by and potentially even more expensive to cover such unsociable hours. Working as a pregnant woman was tiring - I deliberately reduced the amount of jobs in the calendar, and finished working 10 weeks before my due date. Financially I lost out, especially as statutory maternity pay is shockingly low - and this also means I will have to return to work sooner to make up for that income lost. The impact of this is paying for childcare costs much sooner, and less time spent with my baby as they grow through those important early months.

Now baby Rafe is safely here, the next step will be navigating working life with a baby, I'm keen to hear stories of successful practice and ways we as Exec Members can support parents and carers alongside PiPA. We also continue to support the need for change within our industry to better accommodate those who wish to have families (or just a life....! Very keen for everyone to benefit from positive change in future!). There are already exciting movements around a 5 day working rehearsal week, and the Equity committee are feeding in thoughts to how this could extend into tech without meaning more time away from home/families, and not financially crippling everyone with travel costs too. 🍷

Lifewire is the section in Focus looking, each edition, at a different aspect, like health, budget and finances, or equality. Tell us what you want to read about. Next edition will look at mental and physical wellbeing - we would love to include your contribution!



... and hello from Baby Rafe!

It is a poorly kept secret that big royal events such as funerals and coronations are planned as an on-going process for years, as the former is inevitably going to happen at short notice, and the latter will almost certainly follow on.

I have been lighting events at Westminster Abbey for over twenty years, and in some ways every visit has to be used as another chance to advance the design for these 'future events'. Although not the largest of churches, if you add up the nave, the choir, the transepts, and the altar area the Abbey still has about 2,500 square metres in floor area where guests will be, and every part needs to be lit. My first design used largely par cans, about 300 in total, mostly with quarter blue correction to help bridge the colour gap between the warmth of the altar candles and tungsten chandeliers, and the cooler daylight that comes in at so many levels depending on the time of day and the time of year. Most of the lighting was rigged in the triforium about 17m from the floor, with a more intimate level being created at the top of the columns around the choir and the altar at a height of about 9m. The design gave pretty good face

lighting in most areas where people might sit, as well as the obvious processional routes, altar and pulpits. There was included in that design a limited amount of architectural lighting – the organ pipes, the altar screen, the organ loft, and end walls to give distance to wide shots. Much of the rest of the building was lit by some limited internal lighting on the ceiling and the ambient daylight. This approach had worked well for years and for many events including the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton in 2011, and I was quite happy with it apart from the fact that it was all tungsten and somewhat heavy on power. It required 80 socapex cable runs at an average of 80m each, to four separate dimmer stations at four quarters of the building, and four significant power supplies to feed them. It took three days to rig and two days to focus, and was not cheap.

BBC Events had regularly asked if I could get the cost down for less-important

occasions, but the problem is – what can you leave out and how much does it save anyway? Fixtures don't get cheaper than par cans if you measure light output versus weight and cost to hire, and you still need desk and dimmers, and rigging crew and transport. A few lights off one section would make little difference, yet I still felt there could be another option. Then in 2016 I was asked to light a 'Somme Vigil' service for the centenary commemoration, which was a night time event where a bit of theatre was required with zoned areas

changing to night as candles were extinguished, ending up with just one candle by the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which itself was then extinguished as the final moment of the very moving service. I decided to light it mostly with LED wash lights – a

mixture of Mac Quantums and Mac Auras which I knew would be bright enough for a night-time service. But while I was doing it I took the opportunity to try a focus and colour that could work during the day, and

Lighting the Coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla

By Bernie Davis



THE CORONATION

my light meter told me they delivered what I needed.

This experiment allowed me to make a new design for a regular daytime service, but it needed to be no more expensive than the tungsten version so the nave ended up with sixteen Mac Quantums replacing almost 100 par cans. With similar substitutions throughout we were able to light the whole of the abbey for about half the cost of the tungsten version, and were now drawing less than 15kW per side of the triforium. This was a massive saving that could then be developed for the future. A bonus I had not anticipated was that when we returned with a similar rig I sat at the lighting desk on the abbey floor during the rig with the show file from last time, and as heads came on line I only had to make sure the modes and addresses were right, and the pan and tilt directions were as before, and the heads went back to focus. Any additional heads could be focused while the rig continued, and by the time the rig was finished the last head was focused, and we were ready to rehearse. The new LED rig was a little basic but it was ready for developing further as it was clearly the way we had to go.

About that time BBC Events had a little shuffle of people leading up to the royal

funeral, and Nigel Catmur was asked to look after the Abbey and I was asked to look after Windsor, which made sense as I was the only person to have lit St Georges Chapel at Windsor for many years, but inevitably it would mean that the Coronation that would follow the funeral would surely be lit by Nigel. However, when the details of the Coronation were announced there were far more other events than had been anticipated. A programme of 'Light Up The Nation' projects called for lighting at a series of Landmarks around the UK, and Nigel was quite rightly needed for the concert at Windsor, so I was delighted to be asked to return to Westminster for the Coronation. Nigel went to a lot of effort handing over where the development of the LED plot had got to, and we enhanced it to meet the additional demands of the Coronation.

The Coronation service is very different from other ceremonies, and one of the biggest differences is that the action around the high altar is not facing towards the congregation or across the altar as at a regular service, nor around the steps to the altar as happens at weddings. For this Coronation service a 'Theatre of Coronation' was built from the crossing at the transepts right up to the altar. Two

thrones sat at the crossing, and two 'Chairs of Estate' sat to one side of the altar pavement facing the central Coronation Chair, which itself faced the altar, all helping to emphasise the religious nature

of the Coronation service. To get pictures of that part of the ceremony cameras had to be in places we would not normally use, including one rigged on the top of the altar screen itself. Without these we would



The lighting gallery - hidden away in St Paul's Chapel. LD Bernie Davis (right) and programmer Rob Bradley.

have been looking at the backs of heads at the essential crowning moment.

Eight additional Aura XBs were added to the plot just in the altar area so they could be programmed to cover each element of the ceremony.

Further additional lights were added to cover the two orchestras and various choirs, as well as the usual reading points. The main orchestra was located in the organ loft which ended up somewhat full, and we had to add a couple of our spare Auras just to help them. There was even a choir of the King's Scholars from the local school who were placed in the triforium where they could only be seen on camera, so of course needed their own lighting rig. During the course of the service the aisle changed from being an orchestra location to a processional route, to a place for soloists during the service, and then back to a processional route at the end, and the use of moving lights let us optimize each of these different situations.

The final design used 148 Mac Aura XB washes, 40 Mac Quantum washes, 38 LED Source 4s of different types and lenses, 14 Super LED DeSisti f4.7 fresnels, 12 ColorSource Pars, 16 Colorado Q40s, and a small collection of Gemini panels, and

Sola4+s and Astera equipment, all driven over 12 universes.

The Abbey house lighting has been updated in recent years and now has a comprehensive lighting installation for the ceiling and for key architectural elements. They have also changed all the light sources in the chandeliers to full colour changing, and the control for all of this can be picked up on its own universe by our lighting desk. I was fortunate enough to get the services of Rob Bradley, a lighting programmer who learned his skills with some of the best TV LDs such as Mike Le Fevre and Dave Gibson, and he was everything I could have hoped for. The desk was a Road Hog as Nigel had the last Abbey event already stored and patched on one and it was easier than starting again. I thankfully had Giles Hiscock as the vision supervisor looking after the cameras, as he is one of the very best in the business. Giles brings good humour and artistic understanding to a job that by its nature can be deeply nerd-based. And I say that as an ex-vision supervisor.

Our lighting control area was in a side chapel of the abbey just behind the shrine area east of the high altar, where we were able to have the main and spare desks, two large monitors with Multiview displays

giving us 32 of the total of 38 cameras in and around the Abbey. We also had the usual switchable monitors and comms panels.

For me one of the most important considerations for an event like this is that it is not a TV programme and should not be seen as such by the guests, Moreover it is an event with people who will be very sensitive to anything they feel is not to their liking or is uncomfortable.

With pretty well all the fixtures being colour tuning I had to choose the colour point we would start from, and I decided to set the colour of the general lighting by eye rather than on camera as that is what the guests would see, I could then fine tune it for camera if needed. With Rob's help we set the chandeliers so they looked bright and sparkling at the right time of day, then set some of the Quantums to look good on faces against the chandeliers. Once I was happy Rob then copied that colour to all the face light fixtures. The lights that lit architectural features were then coloured to give depth and richness to the pictures, either warm or cool depending on their location. Giles then fine-tuned the cameras during rehearsals.

It might seem obvious to set the lighting colour by eye, but I am not sure I have ever done that quite so deliberately before.

I will not fade lights up and down as freely as I would at a non-public event, but we were able to make the best of every location used by simply cross-fading from one set-up to the next in a way that I am sure no-one in the service would have noticed. The biggest operational change was when the King left the altar via the north door to the shrine area behind, and one of the remote cameras took a close shot of him at a moment where there was no light facing him – the nearest lights in my rig were 9m above or else from even further behind him. I managed to hide a small soft light at the base of the camera, but it was in danger of being seen by some of the cameras at other times, so we had to just fade it up as the King walked towards the door. A piece of gel on the front made it all but disappear when not on, and careful timing meant he would not see it come on, so it was never in shot when lit.

The complexity of the whole event, and especially the installation build for the Theatre of Coronation, meant we did not have a simple build period. But the event

Credits

Broadcast Production

Company: BBC Events

Lighting Crew Chief:

Mark Gardiner

Lighting Contractor:

ELP White Light

Client Manager:

Darren Fletcher

Lighting Programmer:

Rob Bradley

Vision Supervisor:

Giles Hiscock

OB Facilities: EMG

Photo Credits

ROYAL Coronation

Jonathan Brady /

Press Association

Archive photos: With

kind permission of

Holophane Ltd

All other photos:

private

The Coronation

Lighting Crew

(Left to right)

Mim Spencer

Leslie Fazi

Rob Bradley

Jim Allan

Bernie Davis

John Murray

Alan Dolan

Will Smith

Paul Tibbles

Mark Gardiner

Mark Steeds

Jordan Narey

Dave Genge



BERNIE DAVIS is a freelance TV Lighting Director who worked for BBC Outside Broadcasts for many years before leaving to pursue a freelance career. His credits range from the BBC Proms to Robot Wars, from the Mercury Music Prize to Grange Hill, and from The Olivier Awards to Songs of Praise. One of his specialisms is the re-lighting of stage productions for broadcast and streaming, and in that capacity has worked on many productions from The National Theatre and Covent Garden, to Sadler's Wells and Glyndebourne amongst many other venues. He has also lit state occasions from Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral and Windsor Castle.



production company were extremely helpful, and my lighting crew worked carefully with them such that everything was ready to rehearse within five days of being on site. For the next three days we had copious music rehearsals – more for the orchestras and the choirs than for us – followed by a full event rehearsal. Throughout rehearsals Rob continually created cues to get best balance for each situation, although none of these rehearsals were at the correct time of day so the effect of the sun had to be allowed for, and in May that can be considerable and very different throughout the building. My crew kept up with any changes and additions, negotiating with Abbey staff and with security for access times, and it has to be said that everyone has learnt over the years how best to manage these events and I could not fault the efficiency.

The schedule had built into it a buffer day between the dress rehearsal and the event day, which is so sensible as it means you can address all those last minute jobs and still get an early night leading into a very early start for the day itself. The transmission started at 07.30 as the first guests were admitted, and the occasion built to the point three and a half hours later when the King and Queen arrived at the west door for the start of the two hour

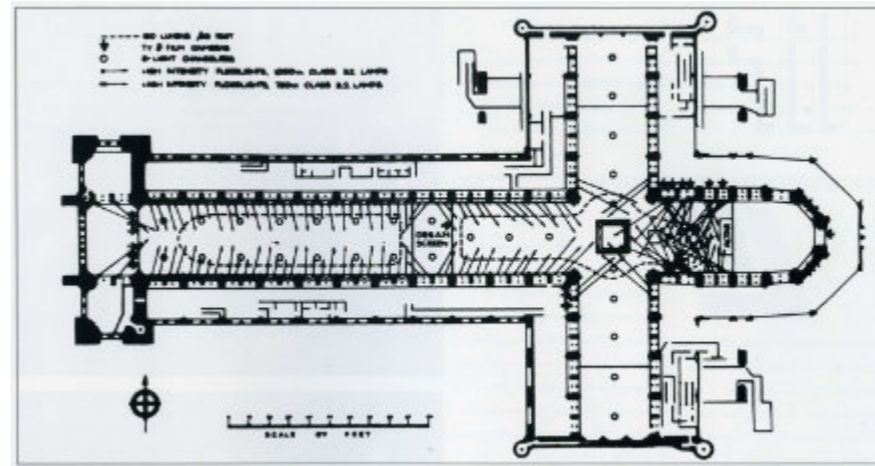
service. No intervals or comfort breaks here!

It was decided that the Coronation would be covered with the latest Ultra High Definition cameras in High Dynamic Range mode, which brought its own series of problems to be addressed. We had to be sure that the pictures where we were lighting matched where Giles was monitoring, and these had to match the processional truck and presenter studios. This was all the more complex as normal High Definition had to take priority as that is what by far the largest audience would be watching. Weeks of research went into camera settings and down-conversion tables to ensure this happened. And that is why we have the best vision people!

I did a little research into previous Coronations, and the TV service was kick-started in 1953 when Queen Elizabeth was crowned. The event was lit by Holophane Ltd, a company specialising in architectural lighting, and for the cameras in use they had many times the light level we had, delivered by a series of bespoke chandeliers and lighting 'projectors' This was without doubt a great achievement at the time, but the guests must have found it very bright.

There was a moment the day after when I was sitting at home watching the concert from Windsor which Nigel Catmur was lighting in such a spectacular way, and I had to take a breath and think back to the 1980s when I was still lighting local theatre and I met Nigel at The Kenneth More Theatre in Ilford. Nigel had just become the Chief LX, and we started a friendship that has lasted since then. Now we had two national events on the same weekend where one was lit by me and the other by Nigel, and I had to ask how did that just happen? 🍀

Lighting plan for 1953 Coronation, raising the zones of importance to a high level. The Nave, showing projectors at high level and bespoke chandeliers at a low level. Courtesy of Holophane Ltd



For this Focus edition, we are lucky to have two comparable case-studies about lighting in a cathedral. The events could not be more dissimilar. Though they are both steeped in ancient rituals and tradition, their purpose and realisation are at stark contrast. So, after the unobtrusive, but essential lighting of the coronation, now read how Aaron J Dootson designed for the dramatic scenes of old and new testament, staged as a Mystery Play, at Chester Cathedral.

Unsurprisingly, a medieval cathedral has no infrastructure for placing modern lighting. Just to get the lights up at the right height, and distributed over such a large set, that's already most of your equipment and budget spent. A lot is about logistics, with artistic considerations coming second.

We had a scaffolding and truss structure along the 30m runway, with additional stage over the steps of the altar, and a large scaffolding portal the other end. Once we've got audience in the seats it's only 2 meters depth playing space - a long and thin runway, 40 meters area in total. But the staged space is natural to the cathedral layout, and dramatically

useful.

Trussing was a bit of a last minute decision, although the original plan of lighting from up high would of been a great position using tank traps, boom arms and placing the units over the ledges, it became clear speakers would be in the way, so LX had to drop to the same level as sound. It did save some time as trying to get heavy movers up tiny medieval staircases, with absolutely no damage allowed to happen, so would have been a bit of a job given time and personnel. So, a new plan with trussing got employed. Had it been like this from the beginning, lighting would have turned out a bit different, but the rig was designed and hired a long time ago. Positions were rigged lower than originally planned on the ledges, and blending along the long stretch was therefore compromised - well, I think we just got away with it.

The result was nine goalposts in total, of which seven were for lighting. Kitted out with 16 Ayrton Perseos doing the

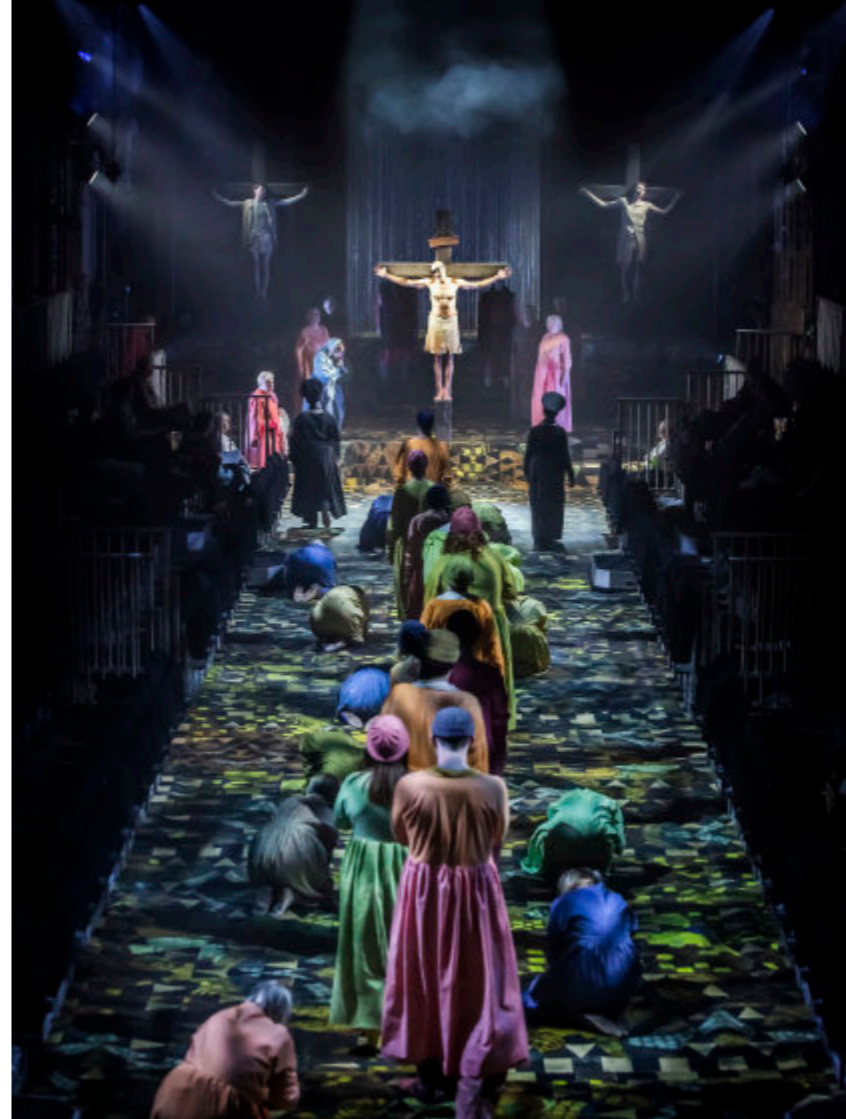
heavy lifting, switching between washes and textures throughout the 18 scenes, 18 Mac Auras, 8 Colorsource 50 degrees, a mix of 19 Source4 profiles, 15 SL and X4 Bar 20 battens, and finally 30 Source4 Pars flooding the back of the Gate. 6 exterior washes also lit up the stainglass windows

from outside, taking over from the daylight at a certain point. This sounds like enough kit, but the plan shows: once stretched over 40 meters it's not, just 5 'FOH' positions

each side. All the general coverage was done with movers to allow for maximum use and variety for the many scenes. Generics were used mainly for backlighting and to add a bit of punch and cover my back. And we had a bit left to play with uplighting parts of the cathedral at some moments. The parcan wall was at the end done with Source 4 Pars, mainly because White Light advised that costs for CP bulbs in ordinary cans had gone through the roof and they might not be able to supply enough spares.

The Chester Cathedral Mystery Plays

Aaron J Dootson



In a cathedral, you can't control light levels coming through the windows. Some matinees suffered from this - but they had to work with the evening plot, there was no time to adjust. I was a bit worried to give everything away early, that lighting would have not so much impact in Act 1, than noticeably more in Act 2 - but this cathedral is fairly dark even during the day, and we had full lighting potential throughout Act 2. That change from Act 1 to Act 2 I really enjoyed, it felt like a really different space, once the daylight had disappeared. And this perfectly suited the nature of the play, with the narrative getting much darker towards the end, crucifixion and all.

Colour choice: I have my go-tos, we had some really nice colds for angels, contrasting with the warm sunrise from the pars. The costume department had to dress so many people, some costumes only arrived at the last moment and we had to take a guess on colours. Thankfully the cathedral eventually allowed haze, after it turned out that the smart smoke detectors they thought they had, actually didn't exist. And perhaps surprisingly, the cathedral had nice beefy power, 125A in the basement, making the power aspect of a temporary theatre easy.

The Mystery Play is a true community



effort with over 300 people participating, even in the principal roles, with around 150 on stage, A real commitment needed with 6 months of intense rehearsals, a week of tech, and a 3 week run. The initial planning started 5 years ago, and I started the lighting plan around 4 years ago.

After Covid, planning had to start from scratch, and it turned out that nobody was at the Cathedral anymore with experience of the previous Mystery Play. But everyone put a lot of effort in to make it happen, especially the Vergers (laypersons assisting with the order and services in the cathedral) who were really helpful.

I really enjoyed lighting this, and you just have to accept that it's much more tricky than in a normal theatre, not just because of the age and fabric of the building, but also because it doesn't stop being a working church: The normal schedule of the cathedral had to continue, with daily prayers, concerts and services interrupting built and technical work. The show had to be 2.5 hours, to fit the matinees in between two times of prayers. We only had the company three hours each evening of the tech, so we stayed until late, often two o'clock in the morning, plotting for the next day. We had to stand in for principals to get plotting done, and than often it was

Early scenes in Act 1 had to be adjusted for daylight, still filling the Cathedral, with open whites later replaced by more saturated colours





barely visible in the daylight, and you have to use your imagination what it would look like at the right time. So yes, it was tricky. But standing in this vast space in the early hours in the morning, centuries old, and having it all to yourself to experiment with beams, haze, colours, felt like a real privilege. How often can

you do that? So I felt very grateful to be able to be part of the Mystery Plays. In times when participation in churches is dwindling, these shows were sold out. And on the back of Covid, it makes you think this is what community is about, getting everybody together, and making great work. 🍷

CREDITS

Director: John Young
Designer: Jessica Curtis
Production Electrician:
Will Harris
Associate LD: Nathan Storm
Hire: White Light
Photographer: Pamela Raith

Aaron J Dootson hails from Bolton, and graduated from Wimbledon College of Arts. He won the Off West End Award 2023 for Best Lighting Design for 'The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me'



The Association of Lighting Designers, trading as
The Association for Lighting Production and Design
Redoubt House, Edward Road, Eastbourne BN23 8AS
For correspondence: PO Box 801, Banbury OX16 6RS
www.thealpd.org.uk - office@thealpd.org.uk
Company registered in England & Wales no. 10079797

President: Richard Pilbrow

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students@thealpd.org.uk

Meetings: Briony Berning (lead) meetings@thealpd.org.uk

Education: Sofia Alexiadou education@thealpd.org.uk

Equity: Zoe Spurr equity@thealpd.org.uk

Bectu: Alex Fernandes bectu@thealpd.org.uk

Diversity: Simisola Majekodunmi diversity@thealpd.org.uk

Co-opted committee members

Paule Constable, Tom Lightbody, Jai Morjaria, Peter

Mumford, Joseph Ed Thomas (firstname.surname@thealpd.org.uk)

Focus Magazine ISSN: 1364-9299

Editor & graphic layout: Arnim Friess editor@thealpd.org.uk

Assisted by Sam Waddington, Amélie Friess, Amanda Laidler:

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Quick 'Hello' from your reps

This time from Jamie & Zoe, your ALPD Equity reps and members of Equity's 23-25 Directors & Designers Committee. Both of us are freelance LDs and work with Equity to guide, advise, prompt and steer the union towards negotiation outcomes that directly benefit lighting designers. Do feel free to reach out to us via the ALPD equity@ald.org.uk, or directly via our own email address, or on Instagram or Twitter! Designers negotiations with UK Theatre / SOLT are currently ongoing, so we hope to be able to update you with some very positive news in the coming months! In the meantime, if you want to keep track of what the Equity D&D Committee are up to,



then subscribe to the newsletter and pop along to the committee's website page. tinyurl.com/equitydd

Jamie has just lit a revival of 'That Face' at the Orange Tree Theatre, is currently at Hampstead Theatre on 'Octopolis', and soon off to Asia to open the international tour of the production 'The Last Five Years'. For Zoe see page 30!

It's light, Jim, but not as we know it

We love to share your photos about lighting and light. But: They can't involve a lightbulb, a button labeled 'Enter', anything with a plug or your best flightcase. Instead please send us your favourite inspiration, a nature phenomenon, an artwork which gave you an idea for your show, and a short description.

Photo right: A new x-bar from GLP? Lasers? And look at that haze. Well - non of this is true. Mexican artist Gabriel Dawe's work investigates the visible light. However the medium is sewing thread, art resulting from a childhood frustration: His grandmother forbade him to learn needlework. Connecting fashion with architecture, Dawe challenges society's expectations for men. Photo: Plexus No. 19 at Villa Olmo, Como, Italy



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