

August / September 2008

AGM Report Special

ALD #

FOCUS

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

In the LX store this issue:

ALD gets an audience with "Lord of the Rings" • "Knight of Illumination" winners •
AGM report • Dominic Cavendish reviews recent drama lighting... and much more!

ALD visits 'The Lord of the Rings'. Photo: Nick Moran. Report on page 26.

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Rick's Recollections

The recent ALD Annual General Meeting was a great success. The Executive presented its view of where the Association is and a strategy for the next years. Even on a busy May Saturday, there was a good turnout of members who were vocal in supporting and extending the proposals that the committee had come up with for the future path of the ALD.

It was both encouraging and challenging to hear members articulate what kind of organisation is needed to support them in their professional lives. Many members were supporting a more pro-active representative of LDs' professional interests in setting the actual rates of fees that should be paid and making sure that these were respected by other lighting designers, arguing that if we stick together we have the power to improve conditions. This goal depends on ensuring that all working lighting designers

are members of the ALD and we need your help to make this happen by spreading the word that the ALD is worth joining. Naturally we will all lose if people undercut each other.

It will take more work and more involvement of a wider selection of members, not just the existing Executive committee, to strive towards the aspiration of an ALD that is not only important to our members but a respected voice of the profession speaking for working lighting designers and representing their interests. There will be resistance along the way but I believe after listening to the members at the AGM there is the will to pursue this course.

The Executive will be addressing this over the next few months and your input is still vital to make this happen.

There is more about the AGM on pages 11-15 in this issue of *Focus*. Also there

is a report about two of the meetings that have happened over the summer; the first at the V&A design exhibition in London (which is coming to a close soon after you receive this issue). If you have not seen this show and can possibly get to galleries 103 to 106 of the V&A you will be delighted by the wide range of theatre design on display. Although the exhibition was due to run longer, essential maintenance work to the fabric of the galleries in preparation for the more permanent theatre collections display at the museum mean that this popular show will close on August 31st.

The other very popular meeting was held at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane and hosted by Paul Pyant and David Howe after a matinee of the epic musical *Lord of the Rings*. I am grateful for them making the show available to ALD members, and I am sure the discussion afterwards was of great interest. I would



like to encourage all of you to offer up other projects for ALD meetings. It needn't be on the scale of *Lord of the Rings*. To be worthwhile to your colleagues; sometimes the challenges and restrictions of the smallest show or other lighting installation can have as much to interest as the mega musical. Please let the office know if you are doing something that can be the topic of a meeting!

I will miss PLASA and the Michael Northen bursary presentations this year due to an extended period of work in the USA. Once again I am grateful to my colleagues on the Executive for keeping the ALD functioning on behalf of us all.

Regards, Rick#

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An LD in the country... An everyday story of lighting folk by Mark Jonathan

After 3 weeks in Leeds, a week in Birmingham and 10 days at the Royal Court, I've been in production at Chichester. Down here I breathe a sigh of relief that I haven't got to continue 'leapfrogging' between cities to get to run-thrus, and finalise rig plans in the odd spare days.

Usually, I'm desperately hoping that the effects of the previous evening's 1st night party won't affect my concentration or leave me dozing off in a run.....

Postcard from Chichester

This is my third consecutive year in Chichester and this year I'm joined by LDs James Whiteside lighting *Funny Girl*; Rick Fisher *The Cherry Orchard*; Howard Harrison *Music Man* and *The Circle*; Malcolm Rippeth *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Calendar Girls*; Paul Pyant *Aristo*; Nigel Hollowell-Howard *Toad of Toad Hall*; and I'm lighting *Taking Sides* and *Collaboration*. I was away and missed Rick and James

but managed to get down in time for the Pirandello. What a challenge that must have been for Malcolm as the stage design virtually completely enclosed the audience and excluded most of the rig with a massive ceiling and walls. Needless to say, it's a stunning production and much credit must go to the creative team. Meanwhile, *Music Man* dazzles and glitters in Howard's lighting - it's a real 'feel-good' evening. It's been great to be here last week because both theatres

have overlapped in production, a nightmare for the staff I'm sure, but fun too as we slip into each other's theatres to see how things are going and catch up in *The Bell* or *The Ship* for sustenance and the occasional glass of something to revive one.

An intense theatre festival in repertoire needs a keen and skilled lighting team and we are lucky to have Sam Garner-Gibbons, (head of lighting) at the helm in Chichester along with his deputy, Graham Taylor and lighting technicians: Oliver Boustead, John Delaney and Abigail Hennig along with James Smith who has been assisting Howard. The lighting team somehow manages to run between the two theatres and simultaneously manage the needs of all the shows, in rehearsal, production and Rep. We managed to collide for a photo shoot while I was in previews and Howard was

in a dress rehearsal. By the way, it might amuse you to know that while there is fair array of 'new technology' in the lighting rigs in both theatres I'm pleased to report that both the Patt 23N and the Patt 264 are still giving sterling service!

Friends in high places

While we were on a break I asked Howard if he thought I should write to the American Ambassador in London to 'have a go' about the even more stringent regulations that have been introduced for the visa interviews that we have to attend before we work in the US. It drives me mad. The latest tightening in the USA's fight to exclude terrorist attack is that we will be turned away if we come with a mobile phone or laptop or even a large bag. Previously, these items were confiscated at the guardhouse. Now, we are advised to leave all these

items at a railway station left luggage. I have to be at the embassy at 7.30am for 8am. God help those of you who don't live in London. Mind you, I shall be coming back from Chichester especially. Howard's advice to me is to 'get over it'... and maybe he's right. I mean, what if Homeland Security marked my visa and I was given a 'full rubber glove inspection' on arrival?

Packed lunches

Being terminally away, or even working 3-session days in my own home city, has reminded me that we either have to be very organised making cost-effective packed lunches or be lucky enough to work at a theatre where the catering is good and discounted for staff. Even so, inevitably, we spend a lot on meals away from home and on travel. It's interesting how variable the deals are that we get to help cover the costs of

living and travel away from home. Very few companies are paying a proper per diem. Many do provide overnight accommodation and some pay a fixed amount for accommodation and food regardless of the real costs. Avoid the latter wherever possible as I think generally we spend way more.

Thoughts on the AGM

At this year's ALD AGM we had some very interesting conversations with members about the level of involvement you wanted the ALD to take in areas that should be covered by our union. It's clear that members present gave the ALD a clear mandate to get more involved. We had wondered if all you wanted was a 'cosy club' but in fact members were questioning the effectiveness of Equity.

Should we change unions? Should the ALD represent members directly? I think we need to do a lot more research before we consider leaving Equity but it's been clear to us that while the union does provide a 'safety

net' and sets minimum rates it certainly doesn't have any real effect over what we actually get paid.

While we are generally paid way more than the minimum rate I think that there is a danger that this gives producers and managements a false impression that they are OK because they pay LDs above the minimum whereas the reality is that often we are hopelessly underpaid for the time we spend working on a production.

So, I have realised we need to get ALL the agents who represent us to put pressure onto managements to keep pushing for higher fees and to at least raise them in line with inflation. We have already held meetings with agents but our experience is that it's impossible to get all the agents to a meeting.

Agents' newsletter

The latest ALD initiative is to introduce an *ALD Agents'* newsletter. It's about to be emailed to your agents and we will send all professional members a copy as it's

essential that you discuss the current issues with your agents. Principally, I believe we need all agents to keep raising the issue of fees. I have had a number of examples of managements who have been offering the same fee for some years. Similarly, we need to ensure that managements that are paying a fixed rate for travel and accommodation pay rates that cover the number of days for which we are actually needed.

My hope is that if agents collectively push for higher rates then maybe managements may start to re-examine their budgets. We already know that it's better to work together, so we will be introducing the idea of the ALD fee database to the agents.

It's clear that the issues we discussed at the AGM need further discussion. How we progress as an association and establishing what is practical and affordable for



the ALD to do for its members is essential. We will be holding a meeting for professional members soon and you will receive further information by email.

Well, by the time this edition reaches you I know that some of you will be taking well-earned holidays and some will still be lighting away at various festivals. As I write this, some of you are packing for Edinburgh. I'm sorry I can't come up even though I have a show that is transferring.

Left to right: Oliver Boustead, James Smith, Sam Garner-Gibbons, Mark Jonathan, Abigail Hennig, Howard Harrison, Graham Taylor and John Delayney with Sparticus outside the Chichester Festival Theatre. Photo: John Leonard.

And finally...

Good luck to Nicki Brown, (Royal Court) who like many of you will be trying to do a re-light with very restricted resources, like no time and no lights...

Whatever you are doing I hope it goes well.#

'Hamlet' RSC Stratford, 2000 Lighting by Peter Mumford, directed by Steven Pimlott, designed Alison Chitty. "The lighting rig is entirely composed of 30 Studio Color washlights that tracked vertically up the walls from 1 metre to 7 metres and programmed by a Nomad flying system - the mechanics for that were built by Stage Technologies."



“Sixty seconds with ...” Peter Mumford

Sum up your career to date in a short sentence.

Long and varied and still good fun.

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

The Bacchae at Epidavros – such a fantastic location – and the buzz of doing a 2000 year old play in a 2000+ year old theatre – and the moon rising over the back of the auditorium around 1am, and then 10,000 people actually coming to see it.

Hamlet (RSC) – directed by Steven Pimlott. A great production and I think one of my most innovative rigs – Studio Colors programmed to travel up the side walls (on sliders).

Siobhan Davies Dance Co. *Eighty Eight* – first real use of Varilites with a UK dance company. As ever a wonderful piece from Sue and again the chance to be really innovative.

What were the worst and best moments of your career?

Don't really do worst/best.

Where are you now?

About to go to Edinburgh to light *Fearful Symmetries* for Scottish Ballet.

What is your favourite theatre/space?

I don't have one favourite – theatre is about doing new and different things all the time wherever possible.

Where/what would you most like to light?

A David Bowie concert or a Laurie Anderson show.

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

I've always tried to be fairly comprehensive in my work – so I guess I might veer towards directing or film if I couldn't light.

Where would you rather be right now?

I'm quite happy where I am – maybe a Greek island?

What is your favourite colour?

Blue, no green – er.. no, maybe deep yellow or a really deep primary red, no it's really green but not a yellow green – blue???

If you were a colour what would it be?

I suppose it would be deep blue.

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

The word 'gobo'.

Which part of the job do you enjoy most?

The point where the rig is focused/palette prepared and I can start to create and 'paint' with the light.

Which part of the job do you enjoy least?

Focusing generic f.o.h.

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

Antimosquito cream, cigarettes, lighter.

What keeps you awake at night? My mind – but not that often.

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

A noisy moving light (hopefully!).

What/who have been the major influences on your work?

Peter Stein's *Summerfolk* at the NT in the seventies. Jenny Tipton. Watching Anna Sokolow making a dance piece for Rambert as a student. Early work with Moving Being.

What's the most useful thing you have learnt as a lighting designer?

It's all about working with your eyes not about equipment.

How would you like to be remembered?

As an innovator. #



Peter Mumford. Photo: Clare Park

PLASA08 – Lighting Essentials

We asked PLASA's Ruth Rossington to preview what's in store this year for us

Building on last year's success

Last year's redesigned PLASA Show proved a great opportunity for the lighting design community to come together, and this year's event looks set to go one better.

The lighting technology industry's cycle of new product development has always been fundamental to its growth, and advance soundings about this year's PLASA Show (which opens at Earls Court on Sunday 7 September) seem to indicate that neither the ideas - nor the demand - are going to run out anytime soon.

In fact, this year's event will feature probably its most comprehensive overview of new and existing lighting products ever, with many of the key manufacturers actively sign-posting their intentions to revisit current product lines and to launch new ones. And we can expect a bumper crop because more manufacturers and suppliers

will be at the show than ever before, as will many of the industry professionals who work in the theatre, touring and events industries.

The natural consequence of this is that PLASA is one of the few shows that truly highlights the increasing convergence of technologies and – of keen relevance to those who work in the lighting field - the developments that are bridging lighting and video.

Development driven by designer needs

And this trend is not being driven by the manufacturers, but by the industry's most high profile productions and their designers, whose desire to take things to the next level is spurring on R&D departments around the world.

Take a look at the *Eurovision Song Contest* for instance: long a byword for production experimentation, especially under production manager

Ola Melzig, each Final has repeatedly technically outdone the previous one.

We've seen soft-edging massive multiple projections using Catalyst systems; large-scale motion control using CyberHoist systems; use of the mighty Syncrolite B52 Xenon automated searchlight (also popularised by LD Al Gurdon at the BRIT Awards), and the début of the LED video screen as a flooring set element, in this instance from Barco.

The integration of video and lighting was of course partly kick-started by the team that developed the Catalyst/ Razorhead system that included Tony Gottelier, for whom the PLASA 'Lifetime Achievement' award is named.

New lighting technologies

This trend will almost certainly continue as display technologies diversify and embrace both the emerging

flexible sheet-thin displays (oLED et al), 3D stereoscopy and – more distantly – holography, especially now that PC/MAC power and that of dedicated media servers is sufficient to handle the massive levels of real time HD video processing required.

Indeed, the general convergence of still imaging and video, where the consumer giants of Sony, Sanyo, Canon, Nikon and more flex their muscles and vast budgets, is set to be the next consumer (and, by derivation) professional technology battleground.

Projection developments

Lightweight giant video displays have also transformed the landscape – Element Labs' Stealth screen made its début at PLASA06 simultaneously with its first tour outing for Madonna. Martin Professional's take on this is already enjoying success.

As new screen technologies roll out, the ability to coat virtually any surface, flat or shaped, with full motion video displays will be next. After showing a 3mm thick glass-mounted oLED screen in Japan, Sony has already got this down to .2mm simply by grinding the glass thinner. The next move will be to apply oLED to flexible surfaces, a concept already in prototype form elsewhere. And then there's SED...and then...

Sustainable lighting

And running parallel to this creative curve are encouraging signs that environmental issues are making their way up the R&D agenda: most of the major lighting manufacturers now invest in the development of sustainable lighting solutions and, on a wider scale, the industry has already made its first moves with research such as The UK Music Industry Greenhouse Gas

Emissions report identifying where positive action can be taken and as witness by the example of Radiohead, whose recent tour placed green issues way up the priority list, from all-LED lighting to favouring car-pooling drivers.

Awards

Without doubt, much of this momentum will be reflected in this year's Innovation Awards, which are presented on the Monday evening of the show. For the first time we'll see the introduction of Gold and Silver Awards – the Silver to recognise products that deliver a major improvement over existing technologies and the Gold for those that bring something 'truly new' to the industry.

And nominations are also growing for the Gottelier Award, named in honour of the late designer and commentator Tony Gottelier, to recognise the industry's creative developers.

Masterclasses and seminars

Last year's Gottelier Award

winner - Tony Andrews of Funktion One - returns to the show this year to present the first industry Masterclass.

He headlines a growing programme of seminars and workshops focusing on industry technologies and issues.

Cirque du Soleil returns to PLASA to deliver a presentation on the *Challenges of Automation*, whilst the team from the Royal Shakespeare Company offers an insight into the issues they faced in lighting their new thrust stage. The ground-breaking Arcola Theatre presents a session on sustainability and the development of energy efficient lighting systems, part of a day of presentations hosted by The Theatres Trust. There'll also be presentations on industry skills and apprenticeships, led by the team from the National Skills Academy.

All of these sessions are free to attend.

There will also be number of 'paying' courses focusing on visualisation

software, including industry tutorials on the Vivien and WYSIWYG packages from Cast Lighting.

In addition to the much expanded seminar programme, PLASA has also put further investment into several high-profile feature areas focusing on the best of the new products coming to market and the

development of industry skills and qualifications, plus there will be the usual buzzy networking bars, all of which will be major features of the show. And for the first time there'll be a new Dealer Lounge to reflect the growing interest in the event from the industry's dealers and distributors.

You will have received details about ALD members' complimentary tickets enclosed with this issue of *Focus*. Don't forget to take a look at PLASA08 online. The website also contains pricing and timing information on the seminars, exhibitor listings, directions to the venue and a host of other useful facts. #

www.plasashow.com



Annual General Meeting

Young Vic, London.
Saturday 31st May





Thoughts from abroad...

Richard Pilbrow, the ALD's member #1 and President, sent his thoughts from the USA in this letter which Rick Fisher read out as the curtain raiser to the AGM.

Dear Rick,

I expect I speak for my co-President Robert Ormbo too in saying how impressed I am by the growth of the ALD. The magazine is really excellent and I always look forward to it. The sheer quantity of members is impressive, nay, scary! So, planning a future direction is challenging indeed.

Obviously, the status and opportunity open to the profession is greatly expanded. The range of activity in many different fields and around the world is pretty stunning.

So what's good and what's bad?

I'm pretty out of touch with the UK scene. However, I suspect that in terms of fees

and recognition things still lag way behind the US. Perhaps that's simple history. Lighting in the US took off in the late thirties and by the fifties, when we were only beginning, it was an established profession, accepted by the United Scenic Artists Union and management. Equipment budgets were, by UK standards, huge.

Of course, lighting in the UK took off. The huge explosion of subsidised theatre, headed by the RSC and RNT, led to quality at home and the big budget musical everywhere; Les Miz, Phantom and the 'British Are Coming' internationally. Probably more important, the music industry and industrial theatre exploded opportunity. A lot of diverse work opportunity, big fees and royalties for the lucky few... a new profession.

How many members today?

Starting things are always a piece of cake compared

to running them year after year. The dramatic change in the 'social life' of theatre has been the existence of organisations like ABTT and ALD. When I began, you got a job if you were lucky and/or persistent. But there was no means of meeting any of your peers except by chance. The Theatre Projects lighting team was a gathering out of necessity. It seemed that clustering together could both help find - and do - the work. We shared problems and opportunities. So meeting your peers seemed the highest priority.

The world's damn different today. Durham Marengi is probably lighting the Great Wall. 'Phantom' is probably paying something somewhere. Our Chairman is in the Antipodes. You can go to college and learn lighting. Whatever next?

Whatever next?

I suppose we all still feel that lighting is under-

appreciated and under-paid. UK fees are better and the gap to the US has narrowed (I think). But more is needed?

Equipment quantities are vastly expanded. Memory boards have changed the whole process. Does anyone know whether lighting is better? Is it making a greater contribution to the story-telling of drama, opera, ballet?

Standards of criticism? Still pretty woe-some? I think that informed criticism in *Focus* is really good. If we can't discuss lighting objectively and criticise each others' work constructively, how do we challenge each other to do better? The mainstream press are never going to say anything useful. Not being noticed may still be best. Lots of smoke and flashes will still get you a review.

Action?

It's very hard to believe that a real UK Union could make a worthwhile difference. The strength in the US came from the strong Union and several generations of the education system.

Is there any more formal support the ALD could put into the UK lighting education system? In the very long term that is how things improve. (But I have to admit I never had any). I also worry that formal education... David Hersey's phrase: "An MFA in Hook-Up schedules 1967-72", is uncomfortably close to the truth.

Being prejudiced, I still think the best way to learn is to do. The TP team's legacy of Ormbo, Bryan, Read, Hersey, Chelton, Eldridge, Bridge, Friedel, Kemp, a bit of Marengi and Levings (others too, don't kill me missing you off!) came from teamwork. Working together, sharing together... Maybe an ALD today is just a big and diverse version of the same?

Mentoring, training, meetings, formal and informal. Union presence. Information sessions on shows and technology. Meetings, meetings... *What it's about is networking.*

Love to you all,

Richard.

Reflections on the ALD AGM May 31st 2008

...quite a turnout!



Associate John Leventhall, Exec member for ALD development activities, and PowerPoint artist *exemplaire* sat quietly (well, fairly!) at the AGM and reflects on the proceedings here...

Small but perfectly formed

It was a packed house at the Young Vic (small room!) on a sunny May Saturday morning. The meeting was much better attended than the last couple of AGMs with over twenty professional members present amongst the thirty or so attendees. Quite a turn out! Opinion varies as to why such a throng willingly gravitated towards the sunlit meadows (not) of the Waterloo Road forsaking the siren call of gardens, patios and other relaxing situations, although the balance of opinion was that a) the Saturday timing allowed more professionals

to be there b) the main focus (pun intended) of the meeting was the AGM rather than being a side event at the ABTT show and c) the close proximity of beer (well that settles it!).

Important matters to discuss

The Exec members were nervous as the proceedings started. After nine months of planning meetings, one of which was a whole day, and trying to shape matters in the best interests of members, we knew we had a controversial bag of proposals to offer and despite the usual networking to take the temperature of possible opinion, we had no real clarity as to which way the meeting would swing when there was a critical mass of members in the room.

You see, friends, the task facing us was simple but the remedy was challenging.

Having totted up the ALD's achievements of the last few years in extending and improving services, increasing the collective strength of our voice as a negotiating body and generally striving to offer UK-based LDs more support to run a profitable and trouble free practice, the issue was how to keep up that momentum. The ALD is run by a modest cohort of practicing and busy members with limited time available to maintain and develop the Association's increasing activities.

However, their passion for trying to improve the lot of the LD in Britain knows few bounds – a case of the spirit being willing but the flesh a bit thin on the ground! The only clear way onwards the Exec could see was to get the association more firmly rooted, to extend the people resource available for the

actual doing of ALD business so as to develop the ALD into a body independent of just the willingness of a small number of active voluntary members to run it. The ALD needs dedicated resource and extended funding to get up to the next rung of the metaphorical telescope to get its show on the road. So, the issue was (and is!) how to provide ever more service and facilities for the members and to become a body which is truly representative of LD's opinion, serving the needs and demands of UK practicing LDs...and how to best go about that.

The strategy

Therefore the strategy which Chairperson Rick Fisher presented to the members recognised three options

1) Do nothing and be more of a cosy, social and

business network. We asked the members to reject this on the grounds that it delivered nothing more and, without increasing fees significantly, would lead to a slow decline.

2) Become a full professional association, regulating who can work in lighting design in the UK and specifying the standards by which work is delivered. The benefits of regulation are many, especially that producing managements would be obliged to use ALD members and pay the adequate fees laid down (or be unable to have light for their shows). Equally, it presents thorny issues like how does an LD achieve and maintain membership and can s/he practice without it? In this scenario the ALD would have to supply support in return for members' agreement to be regulated in the interests



Rick opening the AGM with a letter from ALD President Richard Pilbrow (see page 11).

of collective strength. Therefore insurance, legal, negotiating services, support in disputes, training and accreditation would all need to be brought into the spotlight. This option was rejected by the Exec because of its sheer scope, controversial implications of industry regulation (at the moment), concern that it was not yet evident that producers were calling for better quality LDs (which they should be!) and above all the likely cost to members being significantly greater than was thought to be consistent with the benefits of membership and their ability to afford this.

3) A middle ground seems sensible to pursue. This was therefore carefully developed for recommendation to the membership. After all, the Exec wants to offer you, the membership, something which you would clearly want and value in the short term as it means coughing up a subscription increase. The main components were: to provide seed corn through the next subscription increase, in the short term, for a measure of increased permanent staff resource; to establish a permanent base from which to work and to which members can gravitate more regularly

Reflections on the AGM... quite a turnout!



and frequently; to commence activity to gather funding from elsewhere to support the gradual development of the aims in option 2. Along with this, to maintain, of course, the threads of increased service through some improvements in the provision of professional advice, networking managements and agents and developing better PR for lighting design to improve (hopefully) the public and producers' perceptions of lighting design and LD's work.

The debate

With the prospect of a nourishing debate in view, we wanted to use as much of the meeting as possible to deal with the future of the ALD. So the traditional reports of the Exec and officers of the Association were abbreviated down to the

absolute minimum (which was a good thing too!). We were rewarded with a lengthy and committed discussion which followed the presentation of the strategic options and explanation of the chosen one. And what a surprise that discussion was!

Industry regulation

The most extensively discussed issue was the matter of industry regulation and the ALD becoming a full professional association. John Bishop summarised the opinion of those members who expressed their support for a vision of full regulation by clearly outlining the benefits of having a professional body behind you, providing well defined services when negotiating contracts, fees and riders. What surprised and delighted the Exec was the consensus which

emerged that full regulation was indeed a positive goal. It was even mooted that the ALD could become the agents for LDs.

Of course there was concern voiced by several members including Ben Roose, Colin Grenfell and Jon Clark that to achieve such a great aim was going to need some developing and we couldn't just rush into it because such an all encompassing change needs to be carefully structured and the future ALD would definitely need to be about professional practice and standards and should NOT seek to stray into regulating artistic standards.

Accreditation and regulation have to be fully fair, open and effective – which was agreed all round. After about an hour's discussion the meeting resolved to accept option

3 which represented good progress for the present but on the basis that option 2 was the true set of aims. This represented an amazingly clear call from at least the members in the room for the professional body which we have all talked about ever since the ALD was first formed. What do YOU think, reader? E-mail Andy Collier (editor@ald.org.uk) to get your views onto the pages of *Focus*.

Union representation

Another key thread was the discussion of the right union representation. Again the membership clearly preferred an independent body owned and run by and for LDs which could create its own rules and services tailored to LDs needs. Several voices such as the experienced ones of Tony Simpson, Johanna Town, Rick

Fisher and Mark Jonathan outlined the advantages and shortcomings of Equity. The meeting asked the Exec or a sub-committee to look into BECTU as our representative union and options such as an amalgamation of other practitioners such as designers, production elects or sound techs.

Whilst the latter was not very palatable, these groups have common ground as freelance contract-based practitioners. However, the ALD as an independent body, if not bound to other interest groups, would not be distracted by a variety of interest groups. It is not all of the production team that needs so pressingly to get producers to recognise the nature of the fee levels against the true value of LDs to the investment success of a production and appreciate

that ALD members, as accredited practitioners, were the only ones able to deliver what we deliver to minimise the risk to that investment.

In conclusion

And so we left the subject with a unanimous vote that a few quid more on the subs would get us started on that route and, from the membership present, a clear desire to make a firm stamp on the future prospects of more people earning a decent living out of lighting.

As we adjourned to the Young Vic bar, the conversation continued in knots and huddles for more than an hour.

As I walked back to Waterloo tube, I began to think about how these high ideals might become reality. There is SO MUCH to be done and so few people to

do it. The answer, members AND associate members, is all too clear. Bootstrapping! We, the members, have to volunteer and make things happen together! Working parties - That's how other professional associations, unions or institute work. For instance, some prominent professionals might come together and construct an approach to managements to press a standard (not minimum) fee structures and clearly define the time we actually devote to productions and how time is used. Another group could map out what good practice, professional standards and fair practices are. Yet another could make demands of every producer for adequate facilities at fit ups – Internet access, somewhere to store things, somewhere to work between sessions etc. This is where

Associate members could make a huge difference. Associates who are in UK occupations and don't have to be all over the world all the time, might find some time in their busy lives, as Andy Collier, Nigel Lawson-Dick, Nick Moran, myself and a few others do, to run those committees, report back to the Exec for steering and see to it that actions emerge.

So, Pros and Associates, what needs to be done was ratified at the AGM and documented in the strategy (see the last *Focus* issue and the website). The Exec is waiting and hoping for your help to develop some of these important strands. So, stand forward and volunteer! If you want to help, then get in touch with Ian Saunders (office@ald.org.uk). And to paraphrase a cliché - **“Your profession needs YOU!”#**

Observations on the best crop of recent lighting designs

by Dominic Cavendish

Dominic Cavendish is deputy theatre critic for the Daily Telegraph and founding editor of theatrevoice.com, the online audio resource for British theatre.

When I look back, I realise it was lighting that first got me hooked on theatre. As a school-boy, aged eight or so, and willingly roped into end-of-term productions, I'd gaze up during rehearsals at the rudimentary lighting-rig suspended across the assembly hall. I found the way the lights formed neat attack formations, and described patterns of intent through their positioning and the arranging of their shutters, thrilling. With the reckless ambition of early youth, I'd attempt to produce similar effects at home - in my bedroom.

Whatever torches - especially children's coloured torches - I could purloin would be greedily hoarded away. These would be wedged on top of cupboards to cast their feeble rays on to hand-made backdrops laboriously

created using stacks of Sellotaped-together pieces of cardboard, and tirelessly daubed with felt-tip pens. Scripts and speeches didn't come into it - the spectacle was the sum of it all.

My infant mind must have grasped, at some level, that it was lighting that made theatre a proper 'event'. The presence of electricity surging through circuits - the finessing of fade-ins and fade-outs - all that meant that this wasn't just people standing in a room, on stage or otherwise, chatting. We were in some different, mysterious, exalted realm. If I'd been able to rationalise it, I'd probably have decided that just as cinema exists through the medium of celluloid, so theatre took place in a dimension fashioned by lighting.

Various things happened

in the intervening years, between that early fascination and my current job reviewing theatre - chiefly regional theatre - for the *Daily Telegraph*. Firstly, lacking any obvious talent in visual arts, I put away those felt-tip pens. Secondly, I must have picked up on the supposed separation between the 'technical' and 'artistic' class in theatre; the more I acted, through school and university, the more lighting seemed to be the province of the backstage boffin - nothing to concern one's actorly vanity with, besides the need to stay in light, and preferably in the spotlight, as much as possible. And then, of course, there was the peculiar notion to be grasped that, in theory, if we took Peter Brook seriously, lighting wasn't an essential

component of theatre at all. I suspect that famous opening line - 'I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage' - has lodged itself in the collective skull, impeding acknowledgment in many a critic of the art that's literally staring them in the face. Lighting has been relegated to the level of an adornment in mainstream discourse about theatre - and I'm as guilty as anyone of having failed to train a focused eye on the great 'plays of light' that define our theatre.

Hardly any of the lighting designs in the shows that most caught my attention over the past few months got rewarded with mentions in the national press. Most glaringly, there was the case of Yasmina Reza's *God of Carnage* which notoriously suffered a power-cut on

its opening night, thereby depriving Hugh Vanstone of any credit for his contribution to the overall mood of the piece. While I'm sure Ralph Fiennes and co blazed away perfectly well under the working stage lights, the beauty of Vanstone's scheme was the way it managed at times to cool the blood reds of Mark Thompson's monumental chic interior and at other points to intensify the atmosphere of rage. And what did this add? Well, something rather profound - that, in just the same way that the parents are arguing over whether bad behaviour in children is innate or instilled by example, the adults are themselves subject to the environment around them, an environment that absorbs their latent impulses and magnifies them back at them.



'God Of Carnage': Veronique Vallon (Janet McTeer), Michel Vallon (Ken Stott), Alain Reille (Ralph Fiennes), Annette Reille (Tamsin Greig). Lighting by Hugh Vanstone. Photo: Alastair Muir



Mark Arends as Tom Wingfield in 'The Glass Menagerie' at the Manchester Royal Exchange. Lighting: Johanna Town. Photo - John Keenan.

on a balcony and, at the click of his fingers, a succession of cues picked out different parts of the claustrophobic family nest he yearns to fly from. At a stroke this presented the play as a work of projected imagination on his part - and made beautiful sense of the opening line: 'Yes, I have tricks in my pockets, I have things up my sleeve'.

From then on the shadow-play of the design never relinquished its melancholy grip.

Shadows, of course, are a crucial part of the designer's palette: and it has taken me an awfully long time to realise that it is, as often as not, through the absence of light, or at the least the contrasting relation of one lighting effect to another, that the lighting designer makes his or her mark and brings out the chiaroscuro of the text. Colour - those gorgeous



'Journey's End' at the Mercury, Colchester - Raleigh and Stanhope. Lighting by Hansjörg Schmidt. Photograph: Robert Day.

reds, yellows and green gels of my school days, say, or, strikingly, Jo Joelson's vibrant rasta scheme for **The Harder They Come** - are only one part of it (see *Focus* April/May 2008, page 17).

In Colchester in a stirring revival of RC Sherriff's World War I drama **Journey's End** at the Mercury, Hansjörg Schmidt gave us about as little lighting to go on as you'd

ever expect to find in a major rep theatre. The set presented an elongated narrow ridge of action - above which loomed a vast skyscape of cloud and darkness, alleviated only by a few splashes of fantastical colour, as the trench Tommies' flares did their work. The waning of light equated in a direct, visceral way with the snuffing out of frail young lives.



Mark Arends as Tom Wingfield and Brenda Blethyn as Amanda Wingfield in 'The Glass Menagerie'. Lighting: Johanna Town. Photo - John Keenan.

Making up, as it were, for lost production credits, I'd single out two regional revivals for praise. At the Manchester Royal Exchange in April, Tennessee Williams' **The Glass Menagerie** received a superb reading at the hands of Braham Murray which embedded Johanna Town's lighting design at its core; magically and magnificently, Mark Arends' Tom appeared



'Journey's End' at the Mercury, Colchester. Lighting by Hansjörg Schmidt. Photograph: Robert Day.



The Interrogation in Lyric Hammersmith's 'The Birthday Party'. Lloyd Hutchinson, Nicholas Woodeson, Justin Salinger. Lighting Jon Clark. Photograph: Simon Kane



Vanessa Redgrave in 'The Year of Magical Thinking' a play by Joan Didion based on her memoir. Directed by David Hare at National Theatre from 25 April 2008. Lighting by Jean Kalman. Photo: Brigitte Lacombe.

More darkness: this time in David Farr's revival of Pinter's ***The Birthday Party*** at the Lyric, Hammersmith courtesy of Jon Clark. As Stanley Webber had his glasses snatched off him during the sardonic interrogation scene of Act Two, the frail light around him wilted. The image of two men standing in

bullying proximity to the third - seated, hunched, cowed - with the audience forced like Stanley to squint at it all, lingers on, a permanent after-glow of nightmarish foreboding.

The best lighting sensation of my recent theatregoing experience? Jean Kalman's design for ***The Year of Magical***

Thinking at the Lyttelton. I missed the reportedly superlative staging of another solo, ***Random***, at the Royal Court, with its prolonged lighting diminuendo. The contrasting low-key success here was the way the lighting lent warmth to Vanessa Redgrave's cool, careworn face as the grieving author

Joan Didion - then suddenly withdrew it; the yellow shifting to the austere white at the point where Didion is thrown into a vortex of loss with a second bereavement. Redgrave became a ghost. A stark intimation of mortality passed across the actor and the audience; then the warm colour resumed, as if by

magic, and we were thrust back into the land of the living. I can't remember much of the script from that evening yet have found it impossible to forget that revelatory flash of nothingness. It was a permanent truth written in transitory light.#

Office Oracle

Latest news from Ian's production desk

TREASURER'S REPORT (presented to the AGM)

The financial year of 2007 – 2008 has seen the Association achieve a surplus of just over £9000. Although this may sound considerable for an organisation of our size, our subscription income only exceeded our expenditure by £800. That equates to just 16 professional members. We have however seen subscription income grow by 10% this year. The rest of the surplus was derived from non-subscription income. Over 50% of this was from the advertising in *Focus* and another 25% from bank interest.

In terms of expenditure, production costs for *Focus* continue to be our single biggest outgoing and this year it was just over budget at £14,000. We calculate that including all its expenses, it accounts for approximately

£20 of each member subscription. We have an ultimate aim to have the whole magazine in colour, but this is currently beyond our means, although we do have the ability to juggle with the colour/monochrome balance of individual editions depending on the content, due to the advertising income. I recently learned that the printers are still charging the same rate set four years ago despite paper having doubled in price over that time.

The majority of expenditure categories came in on budget or below, but there is no doubt that there is an inevitable creeping increase of costs from which ever area you wish to choose.

Once again I urge those members who have not so far paid anything for 2008/09 to do so as soon as possible to ensure their membership stays current. By far, the best

way to do this is to fill out a standing order form and either send it to the office or direct to your bank. Whichever method you choose, please include some way of identifying the payment, preferably your membership number, so that we can correctly assign the payment.

As I reported last year, I am constantly aware that subscriptions need to match outgoing. It is a delicate balancing act at times. The discussion about the future strategy and direction of the Association is covered in John Leventhall's piece on pages 12-15, but if you wish to maintain even the current levels of service, it is certain that subscription fees will need to increase in the near future.

We are already committed to some new and additional costs for the current year and therefore the budget

has been increased. We are becoming more reliant on the non-subscription income to bridge the gap, as fees have not increased since 2003. This need to happen to ensure the Association continues in the manner to which we have all become accustomed.#

2009 / 2010 Membership Fees

An important thing to note as a result of the AGM, is that the meeting approved the proposal from the Executive to raise subscription fees for the first time in six years. Therefore, as of 1st January 2009 the following membership fees will apply:

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Professional | £75 |
| Associate | £40 |
| Student | £25 |
| Non Profit Org | £20 |

Please note that if you currently pay your subscriptions by standing



order, you will need to change the amount it currently pays to match the respective fee of your membership category. A standing order is an arrangement between you and your bank; the ALD cannot change the details of such an arrangement for you. Please help us to avoid chasing members for underpayment by updating your payment prior to it leaving your bank.

Although we are frequently asked by members, the ALD cannot use the direct debit system to collect your payments as our bank informs us that our turnover needs to be in excess of £1,000,000.

Professional members who

Office Oracle

have reached retirement age may be eligible to apply for 'retired' membership for an annual fee of £25. If you believe you are eligible, please contact the office.

Subscriptions 2008/09

At the time of writing, the Association still has 100 members owing a total of more than £8000. All annual subscriptions are now overdue. If you are unsure whether you are fully paid up for 2008/09 then please contact the office as soon as possible to get up to date. If you know anyone who may not have paid their subs, please feel free to badger them until they do!!

Membership numbers up

Since the AGM at the end of May, there has been a noticeable increase in people joining, re-joining or requesting information

about the Association and its activities. I've spoken to a number of people at trade shows who are interested in the ALD and our increased profile.

Only through increasing the membership and participation in ALD events and campaigns can we move forward and strengthen the position and perception of both lighting designers and the discipline of lighting design.

If you know anyone who you feel should be a member and is not, or a professional lighting designer who is currently an Associate member and is missing out on the additional information and meetings specifically for those with Professional membership, please point them towards the website and the application forms to get them to sign up or upgrade and join us on this journey.

PLASA 2008

The annual Earl's Court trade show is nearly upon us and we are in the process of sorting out the final details of stand position, meetings etc. You should have received an insert in your envelope with this *Focus* giving you the opportunity to register as an ALD member for free entrance to the show.

We will be awarding the Michael Northen Bursary on the stand at some point over the four days. If you are signed up to receive ALD news via email, we will send details of this and other events for ALD members as and when we know them during August.

Sponsored Students' Scheme 2009

This corporate members' funded scheme for students studying at Conference of Drama School Colleges will

open again for applications at PLASA 08. The closing date for applications is Christmas 2008.

All current student members will be contacted at the start of September with an application form to fill in and return to the office complete with proof of student status in order to maintain their current membership beyond April 2008. *Please note that even if you are currently a member of the scheme you will need to apply again to continue your free membership through to April 2010.* If you do not, your membership will revert to a normal student category and you will need to pay the annual subscription for a student.

We would also be pleased to hear from our corporate members with ideas for meetings or experiences tailored specifically to the sponsored students.

SBTD Collaborators at the V&A

A final reminder that the V&A Museum continues to present the Society of British Theatre Designers' Collaborators Exhibition in Galleries 103 to 106. The ALD joint exhibit is present showing the work of a dozen members from various scales and projects from 2003 to 2007, as well as a handful of lighting designer exhibiting in their own right.

The closing date for this exhibition has now been brought forward by the V&A to **31st August** due to the need for building works in the Theatre Collections galleries.

#

ALD# STUDENT REP NEEDED...

Are you a student or graduating lighting designer who feels they would like to get more involved with the ALD?

If so, there is a position available. Your role would involve:

- Attending Exec meetings
- Setting up and running the Student Sponsorship scheme
- Launching the Michael Northen Bursary and organising the judging
- Running the student seminar at PLASA and any other seminars required
- Attending tradeshows

Please email the current Student Rep Mary Pope if you are interested in getting involved: mary.pope@ald.org.uk

WINNER of our page 10 AGM caption competition was, "Did Mike Robertson just say 'If the Devil should cast his net, dear...?'"

Dear Ian,
Just wanted to say thank you for organising the trip to Lord of the Rings.

It was a truly incredible experience and I am in awe of the lighting design team - how do you start to design something that huge?

Having the talk by them afterwards was a interesting end to a great afternoon.

Hope that we can have future trips to other shows.

Thanks again. All the best,
Alexander Lyon

Dear Ian,

Thank you once again for arranging the Lord of the Rings afternoon yesterday, it was most enjoyable and it amazes me that one is allowed to have so much time to get a show right!!

Again thanks and best wishes to all concerned.
Richard Thompson.

In the press

Susannah Clapp on Cheek by Jowl's production of *Troilus and Cressida* at the Barbican:

"The lighting designer, Judith Greenwood, steers the story and its significance through doubt, battle, intimacy, isolation, the large consequences of individual actions, the draining of hope. She creates yellow light mottled with shadow, and gold striped with bands of shade like giant lances; she makes pockets of warmth in the middle of darkness; she drains away the colour so that everyone looks spectral; in the final reckoning, she sends huge, roof-high shadows rearing up behind the actors. She creates an alternative narrative to the spoken words; she is a genius."

[but sadly not an ALD member... yet]

Dog and Pony Shows...

Notes from the ALD exhibition stand on tour by Nigel Lawson Dick



ABTT, London

At 7.30am on Wednesday morning, the far end of a largely deserted Assembly Hall did have some overtones of Calcutta – that’s the black hole one, not the *Oh!* version.

And with the most accommodating assistance from the hall staff in opening the front door for ease of access it took no time at all to do the get-in for the ALD stand and lo! the black hole suddenly became a welcoming beacon for many intrepid members of the ALD as well as a steady stream of those showing an active interest. And after our bravura performance at the door of the Café last year (“*No, madam, you go down those stairs for the Ladies!*”), the last minute change of location into the Hall was welcomed.

The consensus was that this year’s show had more of a

‘buzz’ with overall attendance numbers up. It was really good to see so many ALD members visiting – many Professionals as well as Associates and Students.

As a recruiting exercise this year’s show will, I hope, be a really strong performer. The special show edition *Focus* has attracted a lot of interest both here and at Leeds and Glasgow and clearly makes a good impact. We managed to re-engage some lapsed members – welcome back! – and to attract the interest of some Professionals. Add to that a steady flow of Students and Associates and we can reasonably expect that this year’s ABTT will have swelled our ranks by nearly a score – an old-fashioned measure maybe but a score would be quite a score!

And the get-out? No problem, thanks to an expert cohort who dealt with it with

aplomb - man (and woman) - handling all the stand materials a couple of hundred yards past grid-locked vans to my car. What a team!

PerformTech, Glasgow

The ALD stand travelled to Glasgow for this year’s *PerformTech* exhibition at RSAMD. Expanded from previous shows, this year the exhibitors spread through from the stage area into the Studio enabling over forty companies to attend. A good representation of our Corporate members was there and as ever there was an excellent welcome and hospitality from RSAMD and from the host companies, Black Light and Northern Light (both, of course, based in the Edinburgh area!).

The seminars included a presentation by Ritchie Reed on the Pacific range from Selecon; a versatile range

given the interchangeability of both tubes and lenses and the use of plastics for much of the body, not so hot as metal. Add to that the lower voltage versions with savings in power consumption and heat output – isn’t it interesting how blindingly obvious good ideas are when someone actually thinks of them!

The wonderful world of Euro-speak combined with a generous helping of integral calculus was offered to us by Mark White under the guise of a talk on the evolving discussions on side-lighting. We all, I hope, recognise the effects that side-lighting can have on our performers (and how about that 4k follow-spot FOH?) and can mitigate their difficulties as they plunge off stage from our artistic creation into a Stygian gloom. But the lighting designer wants to use all the tricks of the trade to create the evocative and

emotive ‘pictures’ that are the hall-mark of our art form – so some accommodation and guidance will be needed to ensure that the creative team can continue to create as they all would wish.

And last, but by no means least, Johanna Town talked about her journey into the lighting world and shared some of her experiences (including a green set lit with green lighting?). An engaged group of students (and a few old stagers too) then kept her busy with several questions about our world of light and shade – and in their coming search for work got some excellent advice, “Be honest, say what you can do but equally acknowledge what you don’t know”. And she emphasised what can be achieved by using the skills of all in the team so that each can learn from others. How right she is!#

Victoria, Albert, and the Lord of the Rings

ALD meetings in June: words and pictures by Nick Moran

At the end of June there were two very different meetings for members – one at the V&A for professional designers and design tutors used the *Collaborators* exhibit as a trigger for a lively debate, the other at The Theatre Royal Drury Lane on the creation of a single show that is about to close (in London at least). Each in their own way illustrating high points in contemporary design for the stage, and each also able to tell us a lot about how much the world of the professional designer working in live performance has changed in the last few years.

The meeting at the V&A

This was an Open Space event, organised by Michael Spencer (head of the theatre design course at Central Saint Martins) and Fiona Watt (freelance set & costume designer). As with any Open

Space event, the agenda is set by those taking part within an overall theme set by the organisers. Our meeting was in the “education space” behind the *Collaborators* exhibit in galleries 103 to 106. Our small but perfectly formed group (one of the “rules” of an Open Space event is “whoever turns up are the right people to be there”) raised questions including “what is scenography?” “lighting designer – collaborator or facilitator?” “what is an exhibition of theatre design for?” and “what is the point of an association of designers?” This last topic was discussed by Ian Teague (who sits on the Equity Designers’ Committee and the SBTd exec) and Kate Burnett, who is secretary to the SBTd and curator of the *Collaborators* exhibition. It seems that SBTd face many of the same issues as we do in the ALD, but with

less support from practicing designers and a much less active exec.

Most of the topics discussed were written up in note form in the breaks and posted on the wall above our coffee area, so even if you were not part of the discussion you could peruse the highlights and get details from those who did take part. These notes will be available on Central School of Speech & Drama’s CETT website (Centre for Excellence in Theatre Training) website soon.

Discussion strayed onto other topics too. One I particularly enjoyed included Anna Beach (a director who works primarily on devised performance) and Fiona Watt talking about the difficulty of designing for devised work. Anna, an enthusiastic devisor wished she more often had the budget to extend the

“thinking period” for devised work. Companies such as Complicite can plan a series of intensive workshops over six months or more, from which designers and makers can prepare work for production rehearsals. However, even with this way of working, those working on devised pieces know that some of what is designed and realised will never get on stage in front of an audience. How much does this matter? We could all see Fiona’s point when she said devised theatre was probably her least favourite way to work – “everybody else gets to have a great time and I get to buy it”. Still on the problems inherent in designing for devised work, our own Ian Saunders added that some directors seem not to understand the need for repeatable blocking when asking for accurate tight specials, or to appreciate that

IS THERE ANY POINT IN HAVING ASSOCIATIONS FOR DESIGNERS?
Yes - but what should it be?
In larger pieces, made forces have meant that designers are even more on their own track. Don't look up from it in order to be collective. Did collectiveness/community sense die with the end of mid-20th design poster - DESIGNER, ASSOCIATE, ASSISTANTS
Do we need an association all the more because of this?
AVAILABILITY TO TAKE PART?
The more we become small businesses, the more we might need organisation?
ACDT model - courses have a structure

moving lights may be able to do a lot, but they can't suddenly light the face of an actor who is now standing down stage of the fixture!

I added my personal bugbear, having to deliver a rig plan (and sometimes even focus the show) before you get to see a run-through. Combine this with reduced tech time and no lighting session and minimal budget and often all the LD can do is a relatively bland area cover. Unfortunately this is as likely to happen in work based on a script, and it is with devised work.

Victoria, Albert, and the Lord of the Rings

Lords of the Rings

What a different world in the land of the Hobbits! Anyone who has seen *The Lord of the Rings* at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane will know there is not a bland colour wash in sight, even though (as we learned) the script was nowhere near finished when the technical rehearsals started, never mind when the rig plan was delivered! By any measure, this is a big show, with over 160 moving lights, a triple concentric revolve in which two of the rings are made up of eight separate lifts, and more universes of DMX than I care to think about.

Paul Pyant, his associate David Howe and London assistant Dan Large gave us an eloquent introduction to many of the hows and a few of the whys behind the terrific lighting for this spectacular show. Unfortunately, for reasons mostly linked to the number of covers and swings on stage that

afternoon, the performance seen by members was not as spectacular as designed, and the complexity of the reset meant there would be no demonstration of the tricks. Despite all that, Paul and his team kept the 40 or so members enthralled, even with the lure of the free bar generously supplied by the show's main lighting contractor, White Light. (Roger Hennigan of White Light can supply an excellent technical dossier put together by David Howe – which we are unable to reproduce here, on account of our editor's dedication to his motto for *Focus* – more art less tech.)

Paul revealed that he was not first choice to light the show, and that his brief was along the lines: 'imagine a U2 concert lit by Jean Kallman!' Paul and the team praised the support of the producers, "We never thought we would get a rig like this, but they never questioned our choices".

Despite the support of

the producer, it was not all plain sailing, and both Paul and David admitted to many sleepless nights worrying about realising the design for the show. Many of the problems thrown up by the show were solved with the extensive moving light rig. Paul and David chose mostly high intensity sources and many of the show's looks appear to use only one or two units doing big shots across the whole stage, balanced by Paul's legendary attention to detail and the five subtly-used follow-spots. However some of the most eye-catching effects, including the disappearance of Frodo when he puts on The Ring, were pulled off with more traditional kit such as birdies and Source 4s.

It is fairly well known in London theatre circles, and beyond, that the tech of *Lord of the Rings* went on a bit. In fact Paul opened a revival of an opera at Covent Garden during the tech period. The



David Howe (centre) in full visionary mode, with Paul Pyant in the foreground, and assistant Dan Large

complexity of the staging is such that, coming back from attending a stage and orchestra rehearsal at the Royal Opera House one afternoon, he found the team in the same cue he had left them with at breakfast. That the team managed to keep up sufficient concentration to maintain the necessary attention to detail required to light a show like this is an achievement worthy of an

award in itself. And Paul – ever the perfect collaborator, was keen to emphasize the extent of the design team: "We even had a smoke designer – and jolly good he is too!" The lighting department also worked closely with the video design team. The most upstage element of the set is an LED video wall with a back projection screen and a full gauze in front of it to defuse the image. Paul was

able to discuss every aspect of the projected image with the video team, right down to colour tints and intensity. (The images are played back through a Catalyst media server, controlled by another lighting desk).

There was a strong hint that the whole thing may happen again, “somewhere in Germany”, and Paul and David are actually looking forward to the prospect. Playing with a well chosen and well maintained rig (Gerry Amis, Production Electrician and Steve McAndrew, Chief Lx at ‘The Lane’ got an appreciative name check from Paul and David) clearly inspires both of them despite the sleepless nights and the Hobbits.

Many thanks to Paul and his team for organising a memorable meeting.#



Reset going on in the background

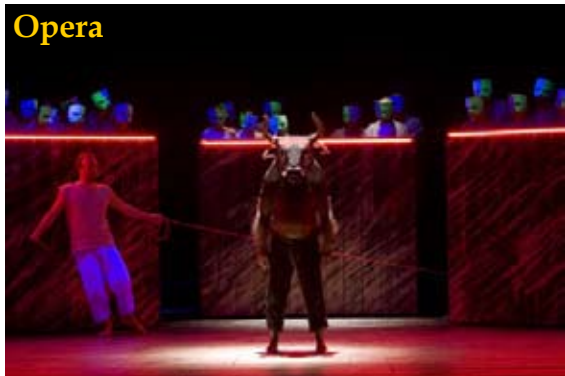
Clay Paky 'Knight of Illumination' Winners



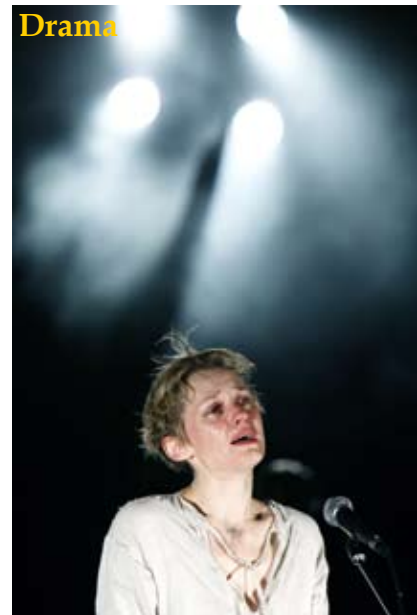
Dance: **Lucy Carter** for 'Chroma' at the Royal Opera House and her work with Random Dance. Her work was remarkable for the quality of light that added so much to the staging. Photo ©Johan Persson: Edward Watson and Alina Cojocaru in Chroma.



Musical: **Neil Austin** for 'Parade' at the Donmar. "He delineated space on a unit set creating different tone and atmosphere for each setting."



Opera: **Paul Pyant** for 'Minotaur' at the Royal Opera House. Johan Reuter as Theseus and John Tomlinson as the Minotaur. Photo: Bill Cooper



Drama: **Paule Constable** for 'Saint Joan' at the NT where her work "helped to liberate the play with its design. The lighting re-imagined to startling effect how the Olivier could be used". There were also very favourable mentions of her work on 'War Horse' at the NT and 'Othello' at the Donmar. Photo of Anne-Marie Duff as Joan by Kevin Cummins.



Rick announcing the theatre winners at the awards ceremony.

School's Out... Update on Matters Educational by Nick Moran



Skillscene

The ALD has been invited to join the board of Skillscene – a body set up to co-ordinate training and assessment for the technical theatre in the UK. Skillscene brings together employers, unions and others to speak to government bodies on skills and other professional development issues relating to theatre in the UK. I will be the ALD's voice on the board, and is possibly the only one speaking on behalf of the freelance community. You can find out more about the organisation at Skillscene.com and if you have anything to raise get in touch (education@ald.org.uk).

Training On the Job

As you have probably read, the much talked about National Skills Academy has received government approval.

The project will help to

support the government's Creative Apprenticeship scheme, one strand of which is designed specifically to train theatre technicians. This program envisages candidates working 4 days a week for an organisation and spending one day a week off-site training. Following a pilot scheme earlier this year, it is due to be rolled out nationally in September. Funding for the scheme is targeted at the 16 to 24 age group.

It is likely that CC Skills will have already contacted a number of theatres with a view to them hosting Creative Apprentices in technical theatre from the autumn. If you come across candidates on the scheme please do get in touch and let us know how you think it's going.

Undergraduate Training in Scotland

Queen Margaret's College in Edinburgh will no longer offer conservatoire training

from next year. Sources tell me that this will have a dramatic [sic] impact on the institution's ability to train students in lighting.

Meanwhile in Glasgow, staff working on the stage management course at RSAMD are facing an uncertain future in the wake of massive reorganisation plans which have been triggered by a mounting financial deficit.

It seems a shame that while funding and opportunities are being made available to train at one level, opportunities to train at degree level are potentially contracting, at least in Scotland. It would be useful if members could let us know if they perceive a drop in the standard of graduates from the Scottish institutions over the coming years.

And Elsewhere

Other degree courses, both general stage management and specialist lighting design or production, are continuing

to recruit well. From my own institution, (Central) there is growing interest in working in theatre on graduation rather than corporate events work or 'rock 'n' roll'. Several of our final year students have already had professional designs in London, and one will be joining the Lx department at Welsh National Opera next week.

Rose Bruford has a new head of their lighting degree course, ALD professional member Hansjörg Schmidt. Nick Hunt has been promoted to Head of the School of Design there.

The old Bretton Hall course (which became formally part of the University of Leeds in 2001) is now a BA (Hons) in Performance Design and is taught on the main campus of Leeds University. Scott Palmer and his colleagues have brand new purpose build facilities – so we wish him well with those.

Royal Welsh College

break ground on their new building over the summer – and according to lecturer Ian Evans it will be a welcome and long overdue upgrading of their production facilities.

Meanwhile at Central, they are finally knocking down one of the ugly pre-fab buildings that blight the top of Eton Avenue – but there's no building on site - yet.

And Finally – Assistants

This is something we have talked about at several meetings. I would like to form a small group to thrash out some guidelines for LDs, students and their tutors.

What would professional LDs get out of working with an assistant?

What skills should an assistant have? (calling follow-spots? Managing Lightwright? Just being a runner and note taker?)

If you are interested – please get in touch via education@ald.org.uk #

“Sixty seconds with ...” Rick Fisher

Sum up your career to date in a short sentence.

Lighting designer who started in fringe and now works in theatre, opera and musicals.

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

An Inspector Calls, because I learned how to light people differently and the light which was unusual looked natural.

Room, one of the first shows I lit because I felt totally connected to the performance when I ran it on a Junior 8 !!!!

Wozzeck at Santa Fe Opera, because it was a thrill to have so many wonderful lighting choices that it was just down to choosing which was the best one, a great collaboration of design, performance and lighting.

What were the worst and best moments of your career?

Worst: looking at the blank piece of paper and not knowing how to start, which still happens with each lighting plan. Best is being part of an audience which is transfixed by a great show.

Where are you now?

Home for a change but not for long.

What is your favourite theatre/space?

Cannot choose but any one that I have just finished in!

Where/what would you most like to light? Again I cannot say. I just love creating shows with inspiring people.

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

I think I might be working backstage in another capacity or maybe a producer.

Where would you rather be right now?

Would love to be beside the ocean.

What is your favourite colour?

I do like a deep green.

If you were a colour what would it be?

I guess is would be a version of eau de nil!

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

I would get rid of all the fake fire effects that we are forever having to do in stoves, fireplaces even fake candles etc., and have real flame on stage.

Which part of the job do you enjoy most?

I enjoy creating a new cue that solves a problem and tells a story.

Which part of the job do you enjoy least?

Drawing the plan.

If you were going to light a show on a desert island, what three things would you take with you? Some footlights, some cool correction filter, and a lot of gaffer tape!

What keeps you awake at night?

Anger at how lighting designers are often overlooked by our colleagues and producers.

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

A gobo.

What/who have been the major influences on your work?

Steve Whitson, who showed me that lighting designers can be a real part of a creative team and still be fun and silly.



What's the most useful thing you have learnt as a lighting designer?

How to help tell a story with light, I do not always know how to do it but I know that we all can.

How would you like to be remembered?

Good at what I do but also fun to work with. #

Rick is the last “Sixty seconds with...” interviewee in this series. Thanks to Paule for organising it, and to all lighting designers who took part.



*'Radamisto' by Handel at Santa Fe opera 2008. Lighting by Rick Fisher.
"Low angle side lights pick out people in conjunction with follow spots on a set
with a mirror finished floor designed by Gideon Davey."
Photo: Paul Horperdahl.*

'Salad Days', Jill Freud and Company. Set, Maurice Rubens; lighting & photography, James Laws. This is an example of a still image showing everything more perfectly in tune than I remember it! It was taken, unposed, at the tech. We subsequently had to cut the street light, as it was a distraction to the scene change, but this picture has convinced me to get it reinstated for the transfer to Aldeburgh. The gauze is about 6ft from the front of the stage and the street light is about 6ft upstage from the gauze.



Capturing the moment

James Laws continues the production photo discussion

In the June/July *Focus*, Mark Jonathan opened the question of production photographs and I know that others, including Nick Moran, are concerned that the designated stills person is most unlikely to record the production in a way that does justice to our lighting that we can access on a sensible budget. From a research and academic standpoint, Nick looks beyond this, to “the desire for a useful record of the whole stage, for future researchers”.

Let's take the *doing justice to our lighting* point first. The production photographer is usually hired by the publicity department and told to seek out the star of the show, make him or her look wonderful and thereby gain bums on seats. That is first base covered and it takes either an imaginative photographer who is visually and dramatically aware or big prodding from the director to get any further.

Sometimes the only official photos are taken at a specific photocall, where I've known the photographer to demand a full-up, and all for six monochrome foyer prints which are technically magnificent but sometimes lack freshness, due to endless posing and cheating of angles. Yes, sometime in the 21st century, this still happens.

If you're “lucky”, the stills are taken at a dress and then you have the problem that the man is in the stalls, when you're aching for him to try the circle because of the nice things you're doing on the floor. He doesn't know the piece and no one from publicity is staying on into the evening to say, “Watch out for the next bit, she throws water over him and, as they kiss on the bath mat, a lovely rainbow appears on the cyc”.

The outcome of this blissful ignorance is that the stills are mostly of close-

ups or small groups and the ravishing background that you've sweated blood over is nowhere recorded.

Mark quoted Andrew Ellis's e-mail concerning *access on a sensible budget*. £100+ for shots that you have had no control of is not a bargain on the fees that most of us command.

So, what can we do? Most of us have our work cut out to light the piece in the time given but I have an idea that might help. On the occasions when we have an assistant, we could maybe make it part of the selection process to ask the simple question, “Do you take photographs and can I see the best ones, please?” Your assistant will know the show, can be dispatched to the circle when you see fit and will probably understand a lot more about the way the scenery/lighting/costumes are working than the man with the Nikon in the stalls, who is rupturing himself on

the armrests of seat C8.

I rarely have an assistant LD but I do like to make time for stills. I take them for other LDs too and managements are hiring me to document the show during a dress, when I may take 500 shots and give them 100. Actually, with the advent of good digital megazooms and anti-shake lenses, it's getting to the stage where I'm wondering if sometimes, just sometimes, the photo that I (or others like me) take is a more stunning instant grab than any part of the visual array that can be appreciated by the audience.

Often, there are transferring and copying distortions too. The image that looks fabulous on your laptop may look mediocre in print unless everyone in the chain checks for cropping, colour drift, brightness and saturation. These were problems in the days of slides and prints and they are always going to be with us.



Nevertheless, we want to remember the highlights; we want to show the world what we can do and how atmospheric our lighting can be. I understand that the Internet will be going 3-D one of these days but, until then, decent 2-D colour stills are the best medium we have.

The ALD Rider gives us the right to take them. However, production photography should be more available to lighting designers than it is and we should be able to influence how our productions are recorded.

To use that influence, we should all be aware of the problems, possibilities and opportunities, when we or others set out to capture the moment.#

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The opinions published within Focus are not necessarily those of the ALD. E&OE. #

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welcome to...

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Paul Smith, Dubai (rejoining)

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New Malden, Surrey
KT3 4PH
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www.citytheatrical.com

Dates for your diaries

2008

31st August

Collaborators exhibition closes at V&A Museum

7th September

Sponsored Student Scheme Opens

7th – 10th September

PLASA 08 *

12th September

Deadline for *Focus* copy for Oct/Nov issue

25th December

Application deadline for the ALD Sponsored Student Scheme

2009

28th & 29th April

PLASA Focus 09, Leeds

16th – 19th May

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June

ABTT Show 2009*

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