

August/September 2010

Bumper 40-page issue!

ALD #

# FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers

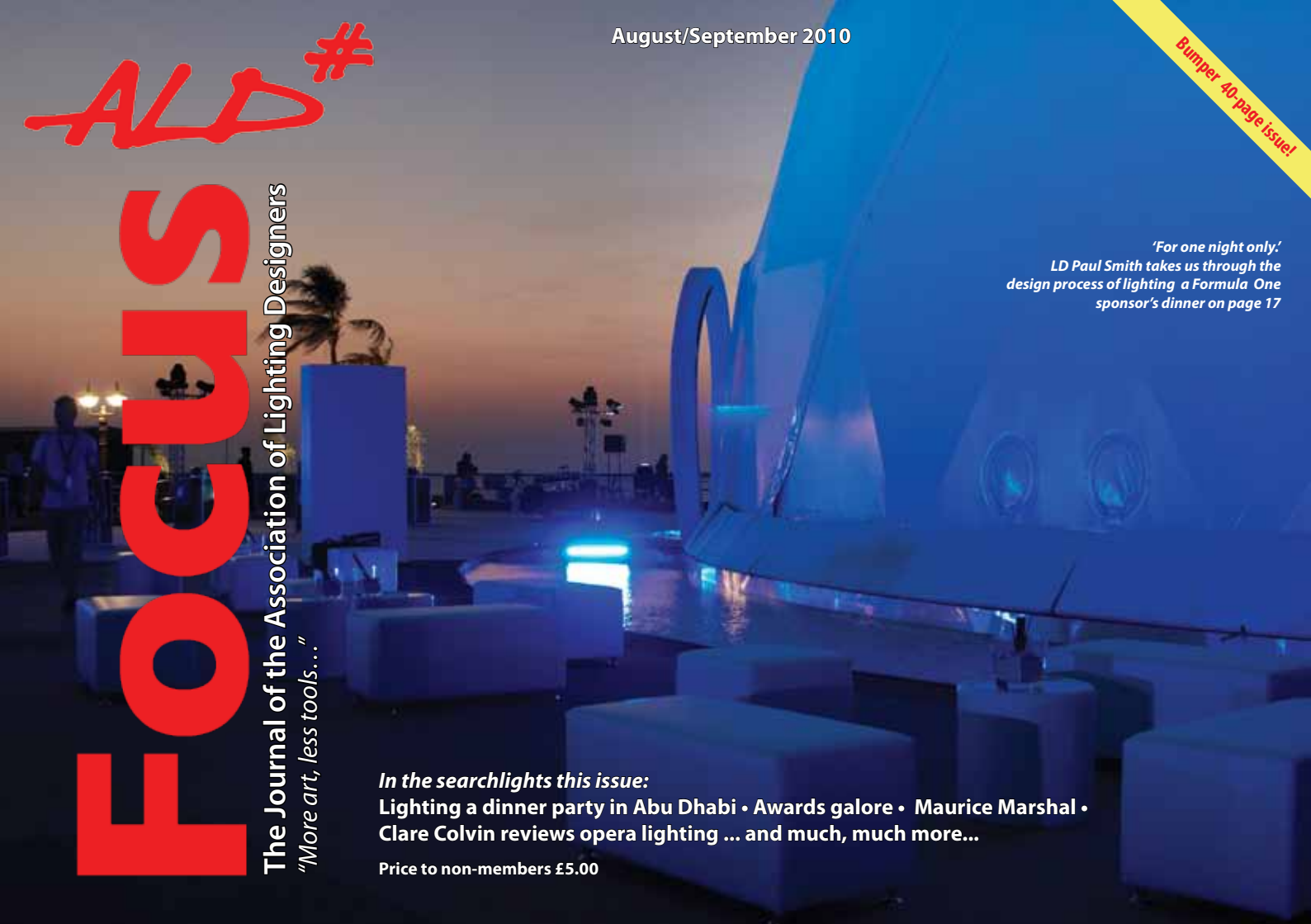
*"More art, less tools..."*

*In the searchlights this issue:*

**Lighting a dinner party in Abu Dhabi • Awards galore • Maurice Marshal • Clare Colvin reviews opera lighting ... and much, much more...**

Price to non-members £5.00

*'For one night only,'  
LD Paul Smith takes us through the  
design process of lighting a Formula One  
sponsor's dinner on page 17*





GREETINGS FROM THE WEST END, MARK!  
 HERE AT THE ADELPHI ON "LOVE NEVER DIES"  
 WITH PAULLE CONSTABLE & NICK SIMMONS.  
 GREAT TO BE BACK (WE DID "OLIVER" ON  
 THE WEST END TOGETHER LAST YEAR AND  
 A BUNCH OF SHOWS AT THE NATIONAL).  
 THEY'VE ALWAYS GOT GREAT IDEAS FOR NEW  
 FEATURES, SO IT'S A LEARNING EXPERIENCE!  
 BESIDES THE HUGE MOVING-LIGHT RIG  
 (WITH A BOATLOAD OF ETC REVOLUTIONS),  
 I CONTROLLED TWO HIPPOPOTIZERS FOR  
 LIGHTING AND TRIGGERED THE VIDEO  
 HIPPOS AS WELL. LOTS OF FUN!  
 - EOS

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# Rick's Repertoire

Welcome to this bumper *Focus*. Thanks for contributing and keeping other ALD members informed about what you are doing. Sharing information and experience is why the ALD was founded in 1961, when lighting was not really considered a part of design, and stage design was still being credited as 'décor'. The ALD is looking for ways to celebrate its 50th birthday next year and the incredible vibrancy of the lighting design industry. Please give us your ideas of how we can do this.

It is August, and PLASA will be upon us very soon. I am particularly looking forward to seeing members of the ALD on our stand this year as I have been out of the country continually since June.

In fact, since the AGM in May I have been lighting plays and operas in four different countries this summer season, the US,

Japan, Korea, and of course the UK. The international nature of lighting design (which if it were more easily quantifiable would surely qualify for a Queens' Export Award) was brought home to me when looking at the nominations for this year's *Knights of Illumination Awards* generously sponsored by Clay Paky, which will be given out for the third year in September. Many of the nominees are frequent visitors to the UK, just as this year's Broadway's Tony Award nominees were 50% UK-based lighting designers including Neil Austin who won for his work on *Red* originally produced at the Donmar.

It is an interesting fact that you often are as likely to end up working on Broadway if you have been asked to light a 'Fringe' show at the Chocolate Factory, Donmar, Edinburgh Festival, or even a touring company such as

Kneehigh. All of these are exporting work to Broadway and touring the US and the world. If the collaboration of the show turns into something that people want to see, the market for the performance is just as likely to be international as it is to be within the UK.

One of the most common calls I get as Chairman of the ALD is when such a transfer to NYC is being planned and the many perceived complications of working either on Broadway or the bewildering list of acronyms to describe the levels of regional and producing houses in NYC leads to US producers to try and break up the creative team that created the hit show in the UK. All sorts of excuses have been given to me from producers such as the cost of the visas, the resistance of the 'local design community' to UK based designers and of course (drumroll and evil

sound effects) THE UNION!

I am really pleased to tell you of a recent motion passed by United Scenic Artists (the lighting design union in the US) which will be fully published in the next edition of *Focus*. This new motion has created a special entry into the American union for Professional Designer members of the ALD and even better, a clearly laid out rate (much less than the standard initiation fee) for joining the Union so UK designers can not be denied benefiting from the success of their work in the US by producers searching for excuses to break up the creative team responsible for the show.

This is a wonderful early 50th birthday present to ALD members from our American colleagues.

I look forward to seeing as many of you at PLASA as possible.

Regards, Rick 🍀



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# To Tweet or not to Tweet?

A maiden *Focus* twitter from the Exec's newest member...**Tom Dexter Scott**

I spent the best part of an hour explaining twitter and its usefulness to the ALD Exec. Within the first five minutes I realised that Twitter was harder to explain than I thought. The explanation that it can be used as an immediate tool to get news to people was not enough.

Nevertheless, the Exec has decided to run a trial twitter page that can be located at [https://twitter.com/the\\_ALD](https://twitter.com/the_ALD). We will be using it to post links and news from the website, or other organisations that maybe useful or interesting, to our members. For those who do have a twitter account then please do look us up.

## What is twitter?

For those who don't have an account already, the twitter home page explains it in more words than this edition will allow, but basically it's 140

characters of text informing followers of activity. You can communicate between your followers and 'hashtag' words (to categorise and index information). That way people around the world who are not following you will be able to see your tweet by searching that hashtag. I was very sceptical at first but now I'm addicted and it does have power. William Hague tweeted that the Lib Dems were coming back for more talks at the last General Election before officials in either party knew. But at the same time it can be dangerous, like the tweets coming from the private talks at the BA Strike. So we do need to use it sensibly.

## Why we need a new forum online

I know we have the Blue Room, but no one is using it. The question is will you

use a forum, one which had headings and special discussions about jobs, producers, travel, and most important of all, about pay? When I was starting my freelance career (not that long ago), I walked straight in to a deal where the producer offered £150 for each re-light week of 3 days in total (travel to and from venue and fit up day), £50 a night for accommodation and £180 towards travel for a seven-week tour. I knew no better.

I wish that I had been able to talk to other members in an open way to discuss what they were getting paid, and what deals they were receiving when on tour, and re-lighting. A good re-lighter is a designer; I know from my recent outing for Paul Pyant with Enjoy that the bugbear of making FOH work was time consuming. It's not just a case of pointing a

light in the general direction and popping in the show disk. Producers need to understand the value of those who recreate the work of the LD, and this is a fight for both the LD to demand a re-lighter, and a fight from people like me to demand the right pay and respect that our role deserves.

## Support for relighters too

I feel that having a forum suddenly opens up several avenues, and different groups within the ALD can talk about the topics related and relevant to them. Not all of us are struggling with West End producers; some are struggling with smaller rep houses. I lit several shows for one based in Greater Manchester where after 3 years my fee was raised to £800 all in. Speaking to Will Evans, I know that those younger members of the



professional body are earning their bread and butter with re-lights. Having a discussion forum to share views and technical issues while on tour can only lead us to being stronger. I would love to know what people think about other theatres, and how they solved FOH, H&S issues, but also what people have to put up with. I've just turned down a show for £500 for another in London that paid slightly more and had the support you would expect. I recommended one of my ex-students who took it on for £350. Why the producers have paid him less I am not quite sure but this must be an issue affecting more than just him and did anyone do anything about it? If so, what course of action did they take?

#### **What do you want?**

The key point is do you want

a forum? What topics do you want to be discussed? We need to talk about our industry and we need to do it together, I feel this way we will become stronger. Let the ALD know what you think. As Mark Jonathan said when we met to discuss this idea, "It's not what the ALD can do for you, but what you can do for the ALD." We are not a union, we're an association, a collective. We should be sharing our knowledge and tales of the job and maybe with a forum more members will be encouraged to get involved.

#### **ALD North**

I also spoke to the Exec about setting up a northern office for us to discuss the issues that affect us. This should not be seen as a separation or departure from the ALD, but a way for people to air thoughts and opinions and

meet up. One of the biggest concerns I have about being a budding young LD is my distance from London. A forum plus a 'Northern Branch' would help connect ALD members. We miss out on the discussions in the pub, or at the production desks and we need to involve more members. I am shocked that in Manchester there are only five. Greater Manchester has a vibrant theatre and entertainment scene, as does Liverpool, which has just six ALD members. Are these low numbers because people feel that the ALD is a club, which won't benefit them? There is no point in me saying what the ALD is, or does here, as you are all members, but I would like to hear from northern members as I want to get a dialogue going, which I can then feed back to the Exec. Let's organise meet ups, and arrange them

when we have some other members in town. Let's have demos of equipment, for those who can't make it to London.

I have now started talking to people in Manchester and Liverpool. However, the feedback so far is that it's not worth joining as they're not designers. How can we fight our cause if we can't even convince those who already work in the industry? I will be putting some ideas forward to the Exec on how we can encourage those who don't see the association worth joining, as they are programmers or assistants. But I would like to hear from those members who are not designers and why you thought it was worth joining. You'll find a flyer in this issue of Focus explaining the benefits of Professional Membership for non-LDs. Please pass it on.

I feel the best way we can move on is to talk to one another, spread news and issues, and hopefully people will see that they are not alone. Designers are struggling with Equity or producers and so maybe members who are having to fight just to have a board operator, or a stage manger feel that this is not news worthy to the association. But who knows maybe there are many more members who have to fight the same battle. I've just come off a show where there was no SM team and am about to start one that is paying £100 towards travel. I've told them they will see me twice for that much on which they've agreed. Now I have an email and a contact detailing seven dates when I have to be in London. I am not the first, I won't be the last. Let's start talking. 🍷

# 3<sup>RD</sup> KNIGHT OF ILLUMINATION AWARDS

"...THE ONLY AWARDS EXCLUSIVELY DEDICATED TO PROFESSIONAL LIGHTING DESIGNERS..."

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**Knight of Illumination  
Award 2010 Nominations  
Theatre Category: Play**



**Neil Austin** for **JUDGEMENT DAY** at the Almeida

**Jean Kalman** for **THE WASTELAND** *[right]*

**Peter Mumford** for **SUCKER PUNCH**  
at the Royal Court *[top]*

*August / September 2010*



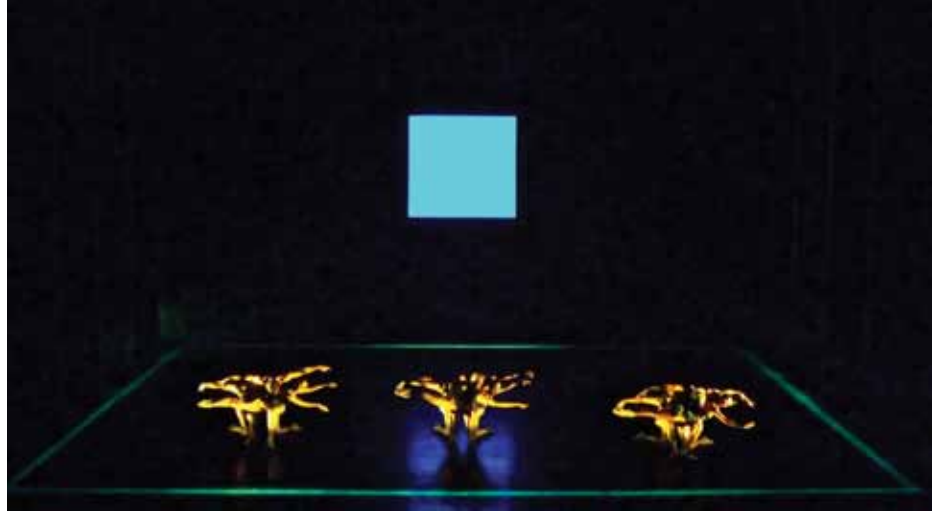
**Knight of Illumination  
Award 2010 Nominations  
Theatre Category: Dance**

**James Ingalls for L'ALLEGRO for Mark  
Morris at ENO**

**Peter Mumford for E=MC2 for  
Birmingham Royal Ballet *[top]***

**Michael Hulls for AFTERLIGHT *[right]***

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**Knight of Illumination  
Award 2010 Nominations  
Theatre Category: Opera**



**Peter Mumford for ELEGY FOR YOUNG  
LOVERS for ENO at the Young Vic [both]**

**Mimi Jordan Sherrin for THE GAMBLER  
at the Royal Opera House**

**Olaf Winter for TRISTAN at the Royal  
Opera House**

*August / September 2010*





## Office Oracle

### Latest news from Ian's production desk

#### 2010 / 2011 Subscriptions

At the time of writing, the Association still has over 200 members owing a total of approximately £16,000. This is made up from those that have not updated their standing order to reflect the increase in fees and those who have just not paid!

All unpaid annual subscriptions are now overdue. If you are one of those members owing money then you should have received a letter informing you of the fact. If you are in ANY doubt whether you are fully paid up for 2010/11 then please contact the office as soon as possible. If you

know anyone who may not have paid their subs, please feel free to badger them until they do!!

If you are a member who has not made any contribution to your subscriptions then this is the last issue of *Focus* that you will be receiving.

#### Attention Student Members!!

You are about start the new academic year. Do you have your term time address on our database? Do we have the correct one? If you graduated this summer are you moving away from your study area?

We frequently receive post returned to us as 'Unknown at this address' during the autumn. If you have moving over the summer, please ensure that you update your information on the website directory or contact the

office. An incorrect address can result in you not receiving membership renewal notices, and places the continuation of your membership at risk.

#### Sponsored Student Scheme 2011

This corporate members' funded scheme has previously been open to students studying at Conference of Drama School Colleges. However in the last year, the executive have reviewed the eligibility criteria and have now decided to open it up to all Higher Education students studying on a course that has an element of Lighting Design being taught on it.

The 2011 Scheme will open for applications at PLASA 10. The closing date for applications is Christmas 2010. Forms will be available on the ALD stand at the show.

All current student members will be contacted

by email at the start of September with an application form to fill in and return to the office complete with proof of your student status and tutor's signature in order to maintain their current membership beyond April 2011.

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 2012. If you do not, your membership will revert to a normal student category and you will need to pay the annual £25 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.

#### New Exec members

Tom Dexter Scott has joined the Exec and is going to be setting up a Northern Branch of the ALD from his base in Manchester. If anyone has any thoughts as to what and how we go about helping him out can contact him at [dexter.scott@ald.org.uk](mailto:dexter.scott@ald.org.uk) or [ald.north@ald.org.uk](mailto:ald.north@ald.org.uk) which routes to him.

As explained in his article on page 4, he is also going to be helping us out with the new ALD Twitter feed which is now up and running and can be found on Twitter @the\_ald

The decision at a recent meeting was to use it on a trial basis as a method to raise awareness of the ALD and make announcements and impart news. If anyone has anything to post there is a dedicated email that sends to both myself and Dex who have access to the account: [twitter@ald.org.uk](mailto:twitter@ald.org.uk)



**Ken Billington with his first ALD membership card..**

... personally delivered by our Special Envoy David Howe.  
(New members please note that joining the ALD does not necessarily guarantee personal delivery by Mr. Howe).

Also I am pleased to announce that Mary Pope is going to help Will with the meetings portfolio. If you have any ideas, offers, requests or preferences for meetings or social events, please contact Will and Mary via [meetings@ald.org.uk](mailto:meetings@ald.org.uk).

**Gongs all round!**

ALD members have been spectacularly successful this awards season. We reported that **Neil Austin** won best lighting 'for excellence in New York theater' for *Red* at the 55th Annual Drama Desk Awards in the last issue of *Focus*.

Neil then followed the Drama Desk Award by winning the Tony Award for

Best Lighting Design of a Play again for *Red*, which was a Donmar Warehouse production that transferred to Broadway. Other nominees in this category included: **Neil Austin** for *Hamlet* and **Mark Henderson** for *Enron*.

The Best Lighting Design of a Musical Award was won by Kevin Adams for *American Idiot*. Other nominees included **Nick Richings** for *La Cage Aux Folles*.

The awards ceremony took place on June 13th and a full list of all the winner can be seen here: [www.tonyawards.com/en\\_US/nominees/winners.html](http://www.tonyawards.com/en_US/nominees/winners.html)

**Howard Harrison** and **Andy Voller** have been nominated for best lighting

design at the 2010 Stichting Musical Awards in Holland; Andy for *All Shook Up - Love Me Tender* and Howard for *Mary Poppins*.

More details at: [www.stichtingmusicalawards.nl/101/gala-2010/nominaties/](http://www.stichtingmusicalawards.nl/101/gala-2010/nominaties/)

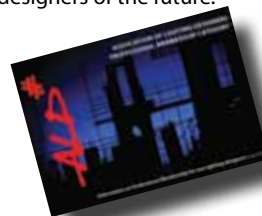
The 55th Annual Village Voice OBIE Awards were presented on May 17 in Manhattan. Design and Music category winners included **Malcolm Rippeth** (lighting), Gemma Carrington and Jon Driscoll (projection design) for *Brief Encounter* (Kneehigh Theatre/St. Ann's Warehouse).

**PLASA 2010**

A reminder that the ALD will be at PLASA 2010 in force and we would love to see as many of you as possible this year. And we have a special gift for every member visiting (no, it's not another lanyard).

The Michael Northen Bursary Awards for this year

will be very special. The previous ALD prize has been renamed to honour Francis Reid, and will be awarded by Francis on MONDAY 13th September at 12.30pm. So please come along and support the winners who will be the great lighting designers of the future.



**More Professionals!**

To support our drive for new professional, non-LD members, we have inserted a copy of our new membership flyer into this issue of *Focus*. Please pass it on to a fellow professional who you think should be a member but doesn't consider themselves as a 'lighting designer'. 🍀

**Meetings**

**Edinburgh Social drinks!**

Social drinks for all people lighting at the Edinburgh Festival and Fringe will be taking place on **Monday 9th August** in the 'Broadway Bar' (VIP!) at C Venues on Chambers Street in Edinburgh. Kindly hosted by C Venues and ALD Member Hartley T A Kemp and sponsored by industry lighting companies. It'll all kick off at about 9pm but come along anytime you like.

This event replaces the 'last Friday of the month' social drinks in London for July and August but rest assured the ALD will be back in the Coach and Horses on Friday 24th September!

**Future meetings:**  
look out for a visit to *Hairspray* somewhere in the regions this Autumn!

*Will Evans*



## IMPORTANT NOTICE

The ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH THEATRE TECHNICIANS has **temporarily withdrawn** the 'GUIDE TO ACCESS FOR WORK AT HEIGHTS IN THEATRE' Code of Practice.

This follows the withdrawal of the Manufacturer's Instructions containing a section on moving an occupied Tallescope, consequential upon actions by the HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE.

The Manufacturer's Instructions are reprinted in the ABTT Code of Practice.

Whilst believing the method contained in the Code of Practice to be safe, the ABTT strongly recommends that an occupied Tallescope is not moved until this matter is resolved.

# The National Design Exhibition

.... it's sooner than you think, says **Nick Moran**

This is an invitation to contribute to the ALD's exhibit at the *National Design Exhibition* in Cardiff next Spring; we have a framework and now we need some content.

Hopefully it has not escaped your notice that time has flown by, and next year there will be the latest incarnation of the National Theatre Design Exhibition. In 2007 it started in Nottingham, and eventually finished up at the V&A, where it was the most popular special exhibition of 2008. Next year it starts in Cardiff, and some time later, (mostly) ends up in the V&A.

Some time ago the ALD Executive decided to make a single exhibit designed to show something of the process behind the creation of lighting design for the stage. Simon Corder and I are proposing an exhibit based

on a production desk, backed with a 'mood board', a sort of scrapbook wall. Both will be filled with **your** photographs – but no production shots (they are the focus of the rest of the exhibition). We want

**a) photographs of light** for the 'mood board', and

**b) photographs of the ephemera of the production process** for the production desk.

The idea is to create something that shows the variety of inspirations we use (beginnings) and the variety of ways in which we make those inspirations present on stage.

So possible examples of photographs for the mood board might include a secretly taken mobile phone shot of ½ of your favourite Caravaggio, a thoughtfully composed sunset, or the front wheel of a bike against a street light. Examples of photographs for

the production desk might include a shot of a coffee cup or an ash-tray(!), the biggest production desk set up in theatre history or a view of a lighting plan on your knees in the stalls, the smiling face of your favourite production electrician, or your favourite work-light. But no production shots please!

We aim to print more or less everything that gets submitted – and curate something out of that in early January (probably in Cardiff).

We hope to put out a more formal call in the Autumn, which will include details of formats to make sure we can print your work and some guidance on captions, which we think are probably optional – but start snapping now please!

If you have ideas, early submissions, want to be part of the design team contact **nick.moran@ald.org.uk** 🍷



## On Parade

### The ALD on tour with Nigel Lawson Dick

The problem with slimming is that it can become a habit – or so our event organisers seem to think. We coped pretty well with a broom cupboard-sized space in Leeds and looked forward with some relish to expanding back to our normal shape and size in Westminster. But a couple of days before the show, some

gremlins got in the works and by get-in on Wednesday morning we had been shrunk again!

So it's a good thing that 'LD's do it on the hoof' and a quick rejig saw half the kit back in the car and our slimmer style on display.

The location of the ALD stand, in the bowels of the Royal Horticultural Hall, is

not the most helpful and whilst it is apparent that the exhibition upstairs was reported to be 'heaving' on the first day we were a tad thin on the ground for visitors.

Mind you, our members certainly know how to seek out the stand and it was good to have steady stream of them dropping by, meeting and catching up. Even if we can't always find too many new recruits it is great to see some old(er) ones and, on this occasion, to tempt back into the fold some who have strayed away for a few years. And on the Thursday the recruiting side picked a bit with a number of potential members – and several students who will surely join us in the autumn; the temptation of free membership is more than most can resist.

As always it is great to have active help on the stand and Ian and Andy and John all provided sterling support – enabling me to sneak off a bit early on Wednesday to do some multi-tasking; deal with Box Office that evening for the current show at my local theatre and then zip on to a rehearsal for *Hay Fever* which I am directing (and lighting but it's an open air production so the lighting design is not exactly taxing).

Apart from the problem of actually getting my cast all together at any one time some time before opening night (and I am not sure that's going to happen) the main thing is some pretty active prayer – for fine weather. By the time you read this the first four days in July will be a distant memory; but even so, spare us a thought!

See you at PLASA. Nigel 🍀



August / September 2010





## Maurice Marshal, MBE 1934 - 2010

**A**LD Fellow and co-founder of Stage Electrics, Maurice Marshal died on 10th July 2010 at the age of 76 following a courageous battle with cancer.

A lifelong passion for the technical side of theatre saw Maurice pursue a dual career as a partner in Stage Electrics and also as chief electrician at the Northcott Theatre in Exeter, where he launched the careers of a number of the country's top stage lighting designers and technicians. His services to drama and his commitment to training in theatre resulted in him being awarded an MBE in 2009.

Recently, with the onset of illness, Maurice has helped create the current management structure to ensure that the company continues to thrive without his guidance.

His long-time business partner David Whitehead said: "Maurice was a private man with strong beliefs and principles who stuck with

them throughout his life. He had a talent for developing individuals and would go out of his way to help others. He remained actively involved in Stage Electrics right up until the time of his death."

Born on May 8th, 1934, Maurice grew up in Exmouth, attending Exmouth Grammar School. On completing his education and after a brief spell in farming, Maurice joined The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers where he qualified as a tank mechanic.

Maurice left the army in 1955 and began working for an Exeter television and radio shop, before establishing his own business, M.M. Electrical Contracting. When local stage lighting enthusiast George Waldren retired he left Maurice his stage lanterns and MM Stage Lighting was formed. In 1967 Maurice joined the electrics department at the Northcott Theatre in Exeter as second electrician.

In 1973 he was appointed as the theatre's chief electrician, and six years later he started Stage Electrics with David Whitehead. Branches were quickly established in Exeter, Plymouth and Exmouth and originally equipment was moved between the towns on local buses. Over the years, his philosophy of prioritising individual customer needs and responding to them has helped the company develop into a market leader.

Whilst at the Northcott Theatre, Maurice established a two-year apprenticeship scheme for theatre electricians, persuading the changing theatre management to stick with the scheme. 56 trainees went through the apprenticeship, and many becoming members of the media and entertainment Union BECTU they became affectionately known as the 'Northcott Bros'.

Many trainees went on to become leading figures in international and national

theatre. Maurice himself was lighting designer on a number of Northcott productions which transferred to the West End, including *Abelard and Heloise* which starred Diana Rigg.

### From Stephen Wickham:

Back in 1979 I was Head LX at the Hoe Theatre in Plymouth (long since demolished) and I would often drive across Dartmoor to visit Maurice in Exeter and hire gear for shows. He was a lifeline for me then and always went out his way to help me with whatever strange request I had.

Maurice was so generous with his time and so supportive to me as a young LD. He gave me the knowledge and encouragement to make this my career.

He will be sadly missed but always remembered.

Regards,  
*Stephen Wickham.*  
Sydney, Australia.



*Hugh Vanstone and Maurice Marshal hold Maurice's ALD Fellow plaque, presented in 2006. The three Northcott 'Bros' are from the left: Scott Maxwell, James Hewlett and Dominic Jeffery.*

**M**a remarkable man: clever, witty, humble, totally unselfish and, above all, a brilliant teacher. It was my privilege to be one of the 'Bros' under his tutelage and I have him to thank for my ability to ride a theatrical storm and get a show on. I hope these personal memories will add colour to the fascinating obituary found alongside.

I don't have a head for dates and times but let's say I was thirteen years old, or thereabouts, when I first set foot backstage at

the Northcott Theatre as a weekend casual in the Elex Dept. My first impression of Maurice was as a mysterious wizard who knew all the secrets of theatrical magic: how to make things appear and vanish; to shift the weather from sunny to stormy at the flick of a switch.

His appearance was slightly puzzling, his preferred work outfit being a white shirt with blue cotton jacket and trousers that looked as though they could belong equally well to a railway engine driver or Chairman Mao. And always with sturdy

black boots, which often bore heavy scuff marks from when he had 'dressed' the brace on a flat that was in the way of a lighting boom for example.

I eagerly soaked up all he had to impart, not just about lighting, but the very essence of how to get a show on. The strategies that are very hard to expound that can spell the difference between triumph and disaster.

From the start he could see that I was obsessed with lighting design and of course I was desperate to have a go. I don't know what kind of insanity led him to this, but in 1982 he allowed me - at the tender age of seventeen - to design my first show: *The Deep Blue Sea*. He kept a careful eye on my progress but allowed me to make some classic mistakes. I decided, for example, that it would be a brilliant masterstroke to do an entire area coverage

in Cinemoid 152 and 156 (doubled up). Needless to say, it looked like mud and lasted ten minutes before melting and dribbling out of the frames. Much hilarity and egg on face. Lesson learned. That's an example of the remarkable faith he put in his trainees and his generosity of spirit, since he often put his head on the line to allow others to learn.

Although generally a cheerful and reasonable soul it was far from unknown for the foibles of the artistic hoi polloi or a wayward Bro to drive him to utter despair. This would result in what was known as a 'frost', and in this state he was best avoided. In an extreme case (a permafrost) he would be rendered incapable of normal speech, instead reduced to a sort of whimper, with "Oh, dear God" faintly heard interspersed with invocations

for the director to get on with Act Two, or whatever had caused the anguish!

His telephone manners were impeccable and he would always say when leaving his name "Maurice with an E, Marshal with one L". Woe betide anyone who added an extra I to his surname or worse, wrote to him as Morris as in dancer!

In November 2006, nearly 25 years after Maurice let me design my first play, he asked me back to the Northcott to light - guess what? - *The Deep Blue Sea*. It was a pleasure to work with the brilliant team he had trained, and I think he was pleased to see that I'd learned a few new tricks too.

His huge contribution to training will be his greatest legacy, so on behalf of all the ex Bros, thank you Maurice, your spirit lives on in all of us, and we're much the better for it. 🍁

# Memories of Maurice

by Hugh Vanstone



## “You can trust me... I am a Doctor.”

### The RSAMD honours Francis Reid

On July 6, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama held its Graduation Ceremony where Academy Principal Professor John Wallace conferred an Honorary Doctorate on Francis Reid.

On announcing the Awards, Professor Wallace referred to Francis and three others similarly honoured as, “...pioneers of teaching and performance and I am excited about their commitment to the Academy. It is only fitting that the Academy should honour them in this way.”

#### Francis told *Focus*

“The actual graduation was conducted with old style academic, rather theatrical, style. Graduands and their friends were met at the entrance to the academy by a piper. The organ boomed out in accompaniment of a rousing chorus of *Gaudeamus Igitur* and led by a kilted mace bearer, the Chairman, Principal, Vice-Principal, Registrar and the two honorary doctors robed in all their finery processed with due solemnity to the platform where the graduating students were already assembled.

After my sponsor, Technical Production Course Leader Ros Maddison, had summarised my life backstage (getting a laugh with the tale of my first production meeting with director Hilton Edwards, “Lighting, old boy, is like sex - its fun to do but a bore to talk about”) I was duly bonked on the head in the traditional way with the Principal’s cap – none of the simple handshake that tends to be favoured by newer universities.

“Then a student performance of music of my choice: surprise, surprise, an aria from Handel’s *Alcina*. After the ceremony we processed out, had a photo call and joined the students and their guests for champagne prior to a decent lunch.

“A thoroughly dignified but enjoyable morning – especially for one who failed to graduate after studying science at Edinburgh University for four years and who has recently discovered that the only comment in the massive tome that records the arrival and departure of pupils at his old school reads, *Slowish brain, very industrious in class, quiet manners, exemplary conduct!*”

Congratulations Francis! 🍷

*Focus* – The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers – “More art, less tools...”

# Pinspots for Dessert

LD Paul Smith is invited to dinner in the desert.



In mid July of last year, I was in an oh, so familiar position for most of us. I had finished off one quite lengthy theatrical project, and was contemplating where the next cheque might be coming from. I was therefore somewhat relieved to see the number one of my longest standing clients – Nick Groves, owner of In-House Productions in Dubai – appear in my mobile’s caller ID window.

The basic gist of the conversation was a) What are you doing between now and mid November? b) Can you make it to a production meeting tomorrow, all day? and c) Would you mind signing an NDA? In short the answers were a) Not a lot, b) Yes, and c) Probably. Thus I found myself in a lengthy production meeting talking about a very large gala dinner.

The basic premise was that the venue was to be a custom-built geodesic dome, standing on a floating pontoon in the middle of the manmade bay that



encircles the beach around the Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi. It was to be hosted by one of the Ferrari F1 Team sponsors, Mubadala, one of the world's largest investment companies and a client for whom I had previously designed corporate events. This event was to be held the night before the inaugural Formula 1 Grand Prix in Abu Dhabi and my brief was pretty open, with the only client request being that each table was to be pin-spotted to highlight the centrepiece; beyond that, it was up to me.

In terms of any other limitations, I was asked only to ensure that there was enough light for TV cameras,

for the sake of a DVD for the guests and the company's marketing department, and that there was to be an assortment of acts with a live Arabic/Western 20 piece fusion orchestra on stage, and probably an aerial act. There would be 34 tables of ten. That was that for the brief. So far so good then.

I've done enough events in tents in my time that I knew that builders and owners of tents fear the hanging of anything from them. On this occasion both the supplier and the manufacturer of the structure were present at the meeting, and so we talked through its weight loading capacities. As predicted, the news was not good.

Despite its immense size (35m outer diameter) it was designed only to support its own weight, and not the additional three or four tonnes of lighting and rigging that I had arrived at with a quick initial plot in my head and a rough guesstimate of the equipment weight. Something needed to be done, and a big, ugly, boxy ground support was out of the question as it was important to me and the client that the clean lines and curves of the structure were maintained throughout. Throwing a multi-legged square ground support in the middle of the room would kill seats, sightlines, setting, and the atmosphere, and

somewhat defeat the purpose of the dome in the first place. While I had expected, at first glance, for this to be an expensive project, it was the dawning realisation that we were going to have to build a custom ground support structure that bought this fact home.

In consultation with Dubai Artistic, our rigging supplier, and the Middle East offices of Eurotruss, I fired away a quick CAD sketch of what I was looking for with the simple question, "Is this even possible?". Fortunately for me, it was; and a few days later I was emailed a CAD drawing of a potential structure, which was basically a semi spherical ground support with 12

legs, and three under-hung concentric circular trusses. Also important to me was that it was made from FD34, which meant that it would interface with the existing trussing that Dubai Artistic had in stock. This may seem like a trifling concern to many, but if we were making them buy a structure that would most likely be used in its entirety only once, it needed to have some long term use to both them and us. To that end, Eurotruss even ensured that the 12 legs would make complete circles if then used as standalone pieces.

Having gotten the technicalities of exactly how we were to hang the equipment out of the way,



I could now focus on what exactly I wanted to do with the kit.

The time had come to open up WYSWIYG and start roughing in the venue, the ground support, initial set design, and the all important seating arrangement. My second dawning realisation was that while I knew this was a big venue, *it really was a BIG venue*. The first fixture I dropped into the plan disappeared. I was zoomed out to view the whole structure in plan form, and the first fixture was a small dot in the middle of it. It was clear that to achieve the results I wanted; this was going to require a lot of equipment.

August / September 2010

My intent at this stage was to ensure that all of the tables were pin-spotted as per the client's request, and to be able to create an intimate or expansive environment as required, whether through some texturing of the walls of the venue with gobos and washes, or bringing the whole room down to the pin-spots and the stage only, and so on. I wanted a clearly definable 'look' for each act or segment of the show and it was going to be a full silver service dinner and so that needed to be bright enough for the waiting staff to see their way around the room (without emptying a very expensive meal over the laps of the guests), and yet remain

intimate and atmospheric enough that the guests didn't feel that they were dining in a large air conditioned warehouse.

Having worked in the Middle East for long enough, I knew that the 34 tables of 10 were going to be changing in both size and location right up to the last minute. It was also obvious that once the frighteningly expensive carpet was down, and the tables in position, there was going to be no rig access whatsoever – once the carpet was in, the cherry pickers were out! It was clear at this stage that everything was going to have to be automated, and pretty damn reliable.





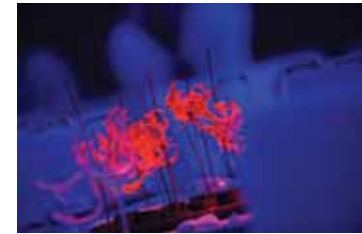
# Pinspots for Dessert

Paul Smith

Now that I had decided that we were to use automated fixtures throughout, I started to refine the design down and so with the circular trussing that was hanging from the roof, I decided with Nick to make it a focal point of the room. This served a couple of useful purposes. Firstly, it greatly assisted with the appalling acoustics that the venue offered and so worked in tandem with the 15 tonnes and \$1m of acoustic panelling that was going around the room. Secondly, the trusses became a light source in their own right. We draped each of the trusses to create what became known as 'The Chandelier', which was internally lit with LEDs and became the defining core of each of the 'looks' of the various show segments, and allowed very bold statements of colour, from Mubadala's blue to the Ferrari

red and on to varying other combinations in between.

From there, and with the possibility of an ever changing seating plan in the back of my mind, each of the pin spots became a moving head spot. Aside from gaining a great deal of intensity (the lowest fixture was at a 10m trim height and so tungsten pin spots would have been struggling to compete with the rest of the intelligent rig anyway), I also gained an ability to wash the tables with colour and gobos, as well as an ability to reposition them to the walls for texturing and incorporate



some live moves as the acts might require.

The original plan as pitched to the client was that video was to be projected onto the entire visible surface area of the interior walls, however as both the financial and seating/sightline cost became apparent, the video idea was dropped. This left us with the problem of making the walls look a bit more interesting, and so I was asked to provide some additional texturing. With the aid of my trusty WYSIWYG system for the checking out of beam angles and coverage (and some pretty well drawn 3D layouts of the venue if I do say so myself), I opted for a mixture of intelligent spots and washes and in particular the Mac 2000 as they are both plentiful in the region, and most importantly, the animation disk is not bad. To my mind they have never

replaced a DHA Animation wheel, but for the purposes of this project I wanted only a suggestion of fire and water, and so they would be more than adequate for the task. Initially I had located a quantity of Studio Due City Colours around the internal perimeter, but by the time they were in, the seat kills were significant, and so again, everything needed to be located in the roof. More weight!

At around this time, I was beginning to get a little concerned about the location of the venue. Power requirements were large, and a floating barge in the middle of a bay was going to be doing some pretty odd things to the structure as a result of wave action. Fortunately fate stepped in, and in the next round of budget reviews it was decided that the elaborate and impressive





pontoon based structure that Nick had put together was a bit too costly. A location on land was found, although still in the grounds of the hotel, and it suited our purposes to a tee.

Having taken care of the stage lighting early on in the project, the time came to redesign the set to fit in some more tables, and so with a growing orchestra and a shrinking stage, Nick and I sat down to thrash the set out. Despite the ever shrinking depth of the stage itself, we still wanted to maintain the illusion of depth, and we also needed to maintain the LED screens. Two large IMAG devices to flank the stage, with six narrow upright screens further upstage to provide video wallpaper.

By this stage I had become quite taken by the table mats; the event organiser

was using their shape quite extensively throughout the invitations and other areas of the event, and they looked a lot like a linear breakup gobo, and so to continue the theme through the lighting I had all of the stock gobos in the moving lights replaced with an assortment of linear breakups, as well as some Arabic patterned gobos to provide some more interesting textures.

In order to assist with the illusion of depth behind the on-stage LED screens, we had agreed to place a star cloth slightly further upstage, to maintain the breakup theme, I wanted to use some interestingly arrayed Versa Tube strips arranged in a similar manner to the mats and between the screens and the cloth. Again, it proved a bit too costly, but we liked the look,

and so we opted to arrange white plastic water piping on a framework and up-light this with a much smaller quantity of LEDs. Also at this stage, my carefully sized 15m Diameter upper circle truss that was cunningly positioned to provide all of the stages backlight became a poorly positioned down-light truss as the stage had had to move back by about four metres to accommodate the extra row of tables. While not an ideal solution in this case, I had ensured that tables on the outer reaches of the venue were reasonably well top-lit by their pin spots by out-rigging a set of 1.5m scaffarms at various positions up the legs. While the set was going to be getting in the way in some areas, it did allow for a reasonably even backlight and so the scaff arms were continued to the

# Pinspots for Dessert

Paul Smith

upstage legs too.

One of the last areas to deal with was the pre-function reception which was to be held out at the front of the dome, and with a long pathway to walk along before the guests made it to the venue, the client wanted my exterior treatment of the dome to have some impact, and, "Possibly with some of those big search-lighty thingies?". Never one to shy away from any opportunity to use a sledgehammer to crack a nut, I figured that 'when in Rome' and as they do like to have the most, biggest, more of, and so on in the UAE, I went ahead and specified 20 Alpha One 7kW searchlights to ring the venue ensuring its visibility for miles around, with another 24 2.5kW City Colours to light the dome itself. None of the pictures I received after the event do

any justice whatsoever to the Alpha Ones, so you'll just have to take my word for it that they did indeed look very, very good.

At this point, the venue's grounds staff assisted greatly by spending some time ensuring that all of the architectural lighting in the grounds that was in view during the guests' walk from the valet parking to the venue was all in good working order and pointing roughly where it should be, which left me to deal with the lighting of the Ferrari F1 car model out the front, and making the landscaping that we had had to do look pretty.

In order to keep the Mubadala corporate blue theme fairly constant, I had the crew gel up the streetlamps encircling the dome with a nice deep blue, and then we constructed

some upright truss towers for getting the ambient lighting into place, and provide some useful hanging positions for the only nod to 'old fashioned' lighting that the show got with some Source Fours and fresnels to hit the car and the guests, with the aid of large quantities of diffusion to reduce the glare, given the shallow angles.

And so show day came and went, and from all accounts the event was a roaring success. The hotel even enquired about the possibility of buying the venue and its contents and keeping it permanently, which unfortunately for the crew who had to load it all out, didn't happen in the end. For our part, the show won In House Productions an award for the lighting design at this year's Middle East Event Awards, and so

I should very much like to thank MA2 Programmer Richard Lambert, and crew chief Matt Jefferson, without whom it would of course have been very difficult to pull off indeed.

And if you are wondering about the tables, five more were added on show day, and the CEO of the company's table doubled in size and ended up with three centrepieces.

In hindsight, I'm very, very glad that we opted for all of those movers. 🍷



## Paul Smith

*Paul is a freelance lighting designer and programmer.*

*Based in the Middle East for the last eight years, Paul recently returned to the UK to continue his lighting career after lighting one too many 'soulless corporates' and coming to the conclusion that living in a desert, the grass must almost certainly be greener at home.*

*Paul started lighting at the age of 11 at high school in the UK and has worked in genres as diverse as theatre, concerts, television, corporate, and themed environment.*  
[www.paulsmithld.com](http://www.paulsmithld.com)

# Not to be missed... PLASA 2010

## September 12-15



With hundreds of new video and lighting products announced for launch at PLASA 2010 (Earl's Court, September 12-15) you'll not only meet up with your old friends, greet new ones and receive a brilliant gift from the ALD, you will also experience one of the world's greatest showcases for new ideas and the latest lighting techniques and (ssshhhh...) tools.

### Visit the ALD stand!

As usual, our intrepid Nigel Lawson Dick will be managing the ALD stand, and rumour has it that there will be some super new graphics of stunning lighting from ALD members. Come along and tell us what's happening in your lighting world. Talk to members of the Exec and tell us what you really think!

The presentations for the 2010 Michael Northern Bursary will be on display, and the awards will be presented on Monday 13 at 12:30, including the *Francis Reid Award* (formally the ALD runner-up prize).

### So else is there to see?

We are told that there will be a new **Interactive Innovation Gallery** – relocated to the front of Earls Court 2 – with live demonstrations of *Innovation Award* nominated products.

There is a new **Early Opening** time – come to the Innovation Gallery at 9.30am for a sneak preview of all of the products nominated for this year's PLASA Awards for Innovation and bookmark the new products you want to see on the show floor.

For our growing band of Professional Members involved with video and projection, take a look at the **InfoComm International AV Seminar Programme** – a free four-day programme of events for AV professionals, hosted by InfoComm International.

This year, there is an expanded **Technologies for Worship Pavilion** – for LDs doing more work in what is becoming a rapidly expanding market.

The **PLASA Awards for Innovation Ceremony** takes place on Monday 13 September.

And there is a new **Industry Skills & Qualifications Wednesday** when the industry meets the future.

With the industry's biggest hitters among hundreds of companies unveiling new products from an A-Z of the industry, 30 first-time exhibitors, and the PLASA Show's unbeatable networking opportunities, make sure you don't miss the latest news.

The show offers four active days of business, learning and industry connections from Sunday 12 to Wednesday 15 September 2010.

### Free Vectorworks presentation

There is a Vectorworks Lighting Design Presentation by Alex Wardle, exclusively for ALD members, on Wednesday 15 September at 12:00 on the Vectorworks Stand [2-P2].

Alex will be showcasing some of his recent projects with the use of Vectorworks Spotlight. He has spent the last five years working as Kneehigh's Production Manager, with Arup Venue Consulting and at the National Theatre. His lighting design projects include *Rapunzel*, *Tristan & Yseult* and *The Red Shoes*. This is not to be missed!

### So, how much?

We are very grateful to PLASA who not only generously support the ALD through the stand allocation but also have set up a special registration portal for ALD members to obtain a free ticket for the exhibition. Currently, the cost of pre-registration is £10, and £20 on the door.

So visit the FREE registration link shown opposite and support the ALD, our Corporate Members and the industry! 🍀

This year PLASA 2010 is offering **FREE** tickets to all ALD members!

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Re-investing in the industry



# THE POETICS OF LIGHTING

Edited transcript of a presentation given to delegates of Showlight 2009 by Dorian Kelly of Illuminati

“I am here today to talk about my favourite subject. I hope it’s yours too. It probably is, or you wouldn’t be here at Showlight. It’s about light, pure light, and what it does to you. It’s a simple concept. It’s the contribution that light makes to a performance. Light as a performer in its own right. Not just a technical help, a

means of visibility, or as an aid to stop actors bumping into the furniture, but as much an integral part of the art of performance as an actor.

It all started for me at the age of 17 when the electrician at Colchester weekly rep went on a bender and disappeared. I was pitchforked onto the Sunset board there on the grounds

that I was the nearest person to hand, and duly made a pig’s ear of the job until I found my feet. About a week later I looked sideways at the stage as I was doing the final fade down. It was beautiful. It was just right for the music, the words; just right for communicating the emotion of the moment to the audience. Do you know that amazing moment when the light fades away slowly and just closes in before it just disappears leaving behind a memory, a ghost of what was there before? That night the audience just sat there for a few seconds before they started clapping, like a sort of endbeat of communal appreciation, and then applauded like they had never clapped before. All ten of them (well it was weekly rep!). It got me in the pit of the stomach. I was hooked. I wanted to feel that

# The Poetics of Lighting

Dorian Kelly

way, and the audience to feel that way, every time I did a fade up or a fade down and spent the rest of my career trying to communicate that incredible feeling. Sometimes I succeeded. Mostly I failed.

Like all arts – music, books, films, Cathedrals! – the art of lighting design should be regarded as a specific kind of cognitive engineering. As a first principle, art is actively intended to influence the minds of an audience. Its major social functions are cognitive: they influence memory, shape public behaviour, set social norms, and modify the experience of life in their audiences.

It's not too much to say that with the use of controlled light we can cause people to feel however we want them to feel. We can easily cause an emotion to sweep over an audience like a body

blow – or to kill it stone dead. And we can do it fast. Even in a black box theatre, we can cause an audience to know what world we are pitchforking them into. Time of day, place, period. We can speak of horrors or joys to come. We can suggest, mislead, confuse, unbalance, and emotionally engage. And then go on from there to make them see what we wish them to see, think what we want them to think, believe what we wish them to believe.

Consideration of the poetics of light puts the physical tools of our amazing trade – the luminaire, the dimmers, the desk, the digital protocols, all the servant technology – way back on the back burner in the chain of creativity that brings the human psyche to the forefront.

It relies fundamentally on instinct: by being totally receptive to that part of the brain which tells you new things. I'm sure you have all experienced it: you are doing something else altogether and suddenly an idea pops into your head and presents itself fully rounded and ready to go, the sort of, 'where the hell did that idea come from?' idea that seem to have no recent past in which its preparation and appearance could be followed. In fact, the sort of idea so amazingly brilliant that it makes you want to get your brain out and hug it in gratitude.

Those brains of ours are amazing creatures: subtle delicate, clever. But they don't like to be out of balance, they like to fill in missing information, to work out what is required to complete an artistic jigsaw. Given the right conditions your brain

can come up with good answers sometimes quicker than we can think because it knows much more than our conscious self does.

What we 'see' is far more than the upside-down image marked on the retina, but an entire universe of references, memories, emotions, and every experience of our personal world that we have ever undergone. It can bring to bear the several-deep meanings of words and phrases, the colours of emotions, the value of plain areas of colour, how light coming from one direction can seem 'faster and busier' than an otherwise identical beam coming from another direction; the angle and texture of light conveying actual information, time of day, latitude, season and so on. All that information power buried in light, pure light!

How do we unleash all this power of the brain's imagination? Do we say to our brains, "go ahead chum, you're on your own, I'm off to the pub, let me know when you have decided"? Well funnily enough, essentially, that's it. Obviously you have to upload all the information first to give it something to go on. You are all professionals, you know this already; get to know the script, chat to the director and all the other professionals involved, even the actors; get so that you really understand everything. But how do you give your brain space to breathe to come up with the best ideas?

Personally, (we are all different) I start by reading the script, like a novel, just for pleasure. I have some biscuits handy and a nice cup of tea, and just read it. Of course, ideas will form and pictures emerge, but

# The Poetics of Lighting

Dorian Kelly

you know what? Take no notice. Ignore them. Discard them without examination. Be ruthless. Don't give them any room in the house. That means that if you suddenly think "Oh I see that scene in steel blue". Just ignore it. Even if it's a good idea. Certainly if it's a hardware-based idea like 'this is a job for my Mac 2000s' or even 'oh, I see a digital light curtainsweeping majestically across the plain like a herd of wildebeests' (oh! the wonders of a classical education!)

But eventually after a few reads, a few rehearsals, some of these these ideas – the good ones – well, they are sneaky little things and they do creep in. They refuse to go away. They appear like little flashes of lightning throughout the script, as important keyframes: then that's when the magic happens. The brain has found

the balance. It's found the missing parts and filled in all the bits of the theatrical Sudoku. The poetic emerges!

Suddenly these ideas and concepts present themselves with great force, sometimes complete in every detail, born fully-formed and rounded with no loose ends and then it's time to come back from the metaphorical pub.

But even then it's just a sketch, an idea, a concept. The really hard work begins. For it is at this stage that you turn your keyframes into reality: use your hardware, (which you must remember is merely a tool) to create that elusive backlight beam that comes from the top right corner of your visual picture, producing a halo-like corona around the character, sharply defining a shadow which reaches almost to the floats and creates a crucifix-like

impression – or whatever your vision was.

There is a price to pay if we put too much emphasis on our tools. In a worst case, the technology totally dominates the look and can have the effect of amputating or modifying the true needs of your design. We all know that in extreme cases, it actually becomes the design itself and we hear people using the term 'look' to describe the effect. At present, many excellent productions and concerts look alike; the 'in' look is pixel-mapped and colour changing LEDs; only the quality of the content saves some of them.

Recently I saw a rep show which used a gobo cover at low levels in haze in an attempt to create a mythic Aboriginal feel, but it failed horribly because the kit they used were moving

lights with discharge lamps and the beam quality was all wrong. It wouldn't focus 'brown'; and at low levels the colour temperature was too high. Try as it might, it just looked like a rock show effect. I know for a fact that they had a whole lot of Cantatas, Silhouettes and S4 round the back doing nothing, but they had just bought these heads after a lot of arguments and a long financial struggle and they *had* to use them, come what may.

So my point is: don't be misled by the latest looks, don't use the latest technology just because it exists and is fashionable. Let your imagination create the picture first and then look for the tools to make it real.

## To Sum it all up, lighting is:

A bridge to the interpretation of the indescribable in human experience; a means

of expressing feelings and the intangible. It is a thing of beauty at its most fundamental, inextricably linked with our culture and our early conditioning. It works the most basic level of all – the emotions – without needing to go through any kind of intellectual process on the way. It is sophisticated, subtle, evocative, inspirational, elusive, deeply complex. 🌸

## Illuminati Creative Group

*Illuminati has interesting and original ideas for the arts, their buildings and their technologies - UK and the world. [www.theatrearts.biz](http://www.theatrearts.biz)*

## Diary Dates

### 9 August

Edinburgh social evening (see p.11).

### 10 August **Now 2 September**

Shoot out at the Hall for Cornwall

### 12-15 September

PLASA 2010\*

### 12 September

Knight of Illumination Awards ceremony

### 12 September

2011 Sponsored Student Scheme Opens

### 17 September

Deadline for *Focus* Oct/Nov articles

### 1 November

Deadline for 2011 Yearbook info submissions

### 24 December

Application deadline for Sponsored Student Scheme

## 2011

### 1 April

Subscription Payments due

### 19/20 April

PLASA Focus 2011, Leeds\*

### 15/16 June

ABTT Theatre Show\*

\*the ALD will have a presence at these events.

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To submit ideas for articles, information, correspondence, corrections and any comments about *Focus*, please email **editor@ald.org.uk**. Owing to space restrictions, we regret that we do not accept press releases for publication in *Focus*. However, Corporate members of the ALD may send press releases to the ALD office (office@ald.org.uk) so that they can be posted on the News section of the ALD website for immediate and wider coverage. Corporate members only may advertise in *Focus*, please contact the office for details. Editorial guidelines for authors are available on request from the editor.

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

## New Members

welcome to...

### Professional Designer

**William Reynolds\***, London

**Paul Green\***, London

### Professional Member

**Edmund Sutton\***, London

**Oliver Thomas\***, Blackpool

**Kelli Zezulka\***, Leeds

### Associate

**David Boyd**, Leatherhead

**Richard Dodwell**, Hertfordshire

**Graham House**, Redhill

### Student

**Grant Anderson**, Edinburgh

**Harry Greenfield**, West Wickham, Kent

\* from Associate

# “Key Plight”

## Ziggy Jacobs

Lighting techniques, as guidelines for creating art always do, spark interesting conversation. Recently in Stage Directions online “Theatre Buzz”, audio engineer Jacob Coakley posted one such piece of tinder – an article concerning the McCandless and other basic lighting methods. It discussed the use of these

methods as bases for more complicated designs, and as tools on their own, in relation to his experience in audio. He ended with these questions: “So, all my lighting peeps – what do you think? Are these methods merely jumping off points for you? How far do you adapt them for your gigs? And at what point in your adaptations do

you no longer consider your design as actually using this method?”

This got me thinking about my experience with the techniques, their significance to me as a designer and a student, and the place of instruction and guideline in the world of design as a whole. Most of us who have chosen this bizarre and rewarding profession, I believe, consider ourselves artists, or at least that is our aim. What place do rules and instructions have, then, in the creation of art?

Lighting design is a confluence of technology and vision, of the tangible and intangible. It therefore often seems that the technical specifications of instruments, for example, or these ‘methods’ of textbook lighting may have more of a bearing on the quality of a lighting design than,



say, the manufacturer of a painter’s brush has on his painting. After all, it’s the end result that counts – but our industry’s special circumstances often lead us to a special examination of tools and process that is not so ever-present in other art forms. I would not hesitate to ask for the plans of a design

and asked to see a picture of the brushes with which it was painted?

Like a tool kit, each piece of technique in a lighting designer’s repertoire is only as good as its ability to function; whether this is according to manufacturer’s instructions or not is at the risk of the designer. For some

***“It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it.”***

*Joseph Joubert  
(1754-1824)*

functions, the basic flathead screwdriver is the right tool – opening a housing connected by flathead screws – in the same way that an even, traditional



*Photos: A Remembrance of Things Past, from the novel by Proust, adapted for the stage by Harold Pinter. Directed by Dominic Rouse, set and costume by Ruth Sutcliffe, lighting design by Ziggy Jacobs, sound design by Jamie Flockton and Janeck Pearce.*

wash is often the efficient tool for a show with a quick get-in at the Edinburgh Fringe. However, it turns out that a flathead screwdriver is also a pretty great tool for opening a particularly sticky tin of paint, despite that not being its intended purpose. An even wash, it turns out, can also provide individual area illumination, or opaque a gauze when placed and focused accordingly. No time soon, however, will I attempt to PAT test a practical with a flathead screwdriver. It just isn't the right tool.

In particular relation to one of those questions posed in Coakley's article, *'Are these methods merely jumping off points for you'*, I would say that in order for methods to be effective as jumping off points, simply on their own, or even in their absence, they need to be understood. Rather than feeling obligated

to attach more significance to the unmodified technique, or feeling compelled to ignore such a 'basic' option, perhaps we should feel more responsibility for understanding it.

One of the tools mentioned in Jacob Coakley's article specifically is 'level', an amount of illumination present. There is a sticking point here that I find often in the opinions of fellow practitioners: "Now, I would imagine it's the same with lighting. No matter what effect you want to achieve, you want the entire audience to share in it. Which means there are certain things – like a minimum of illumination – that you need to achieve."

I have had this argument before, and it is my strong opinion that there is no such thing as a 'minimum of illumination.' Whether Paul Anderson is jarring us with a



blinding wall of white light or Dan Large is leaving us in an intense moment of darkness in Hampton Court Palace, a level is neither minimum nor maximum, but appropriate, a perfect example of the right tool for the right job. Perhaps rather than key, fill, and backlight being our rules of thumb, our responsibility is to story, experience, and moment.

A unique advantage of

lighting design education is the opportunity to test and explore these techniques, a lack of them, and their adaptation and modification, in a safe environment. The opportunity to build up our tool kits and enter the professional world prepared to choose the right tool for the right job, as well as armed with the knowledge that the kit will never be complete— that we will always be adding

to our practice.

In the spirit of the original provocation, I am passing on my opinion to other practitioners here only to transfer that spark of conversation – what is your take, fellow ALD members, on levels of illumination? Clarity of actors' faces? An even three-colour wash? The McCandless Method? What place do guidelines have in your art? 🌸

# Focus on Opera Lighting

We are delighted to welcome **Clare Colvin**, Opera Critic for the *Sunday Express*

As someone who has trouble changing a fuse, I have always been inclined to think of lighting design as a job for the boys. How wrong, I realised, was this stereotypical view when

I saw the first five operas for *Focus*, with the brief to concentrate on the lighting. Three productions were lit by Paule Constable, the fourth by Jennifer Schriever and the fifth by Mimi Jordan Sherin.

Paule Constable has said in an interview that the audience should not notice the lighting. In Michael Grandage's new production of Britten's *Billy Budd* at Glyndebourne she used light

as a way of indicating mood, weather and time of day or night. Philip Oram's set was the interior of a warship, a wooden-ribbed frame with layered decks that induced a sense of claustrophobia, integral to the opera. Through the open hatchway a pale light slanted as of a cloudy day at sea. When the men settled down to their below decks sing-song, the lighting was directional, warm and golden with candles and oil lamps, the faces nearest the candles bathing in the glow, with shadows and darkness behind.

As a French warship approached, and the ship's company assembled on all decks, shafts of light through the rafters illuminated the dry ice, suggesting swirling mist from the sea, and subtly highlighting the white and navy uniform of officers on the quarterdeck above the

milling sailors. Billy on his last night before execution was lit as through a prison grid.

In the Glyndebourne revival of Nicholas Hytner's production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* Constable suggested beyond the travertine marble frame of the villa a glorious Mediterranean light reflected from the Bay of Naples. As the crazy day of masquerades continued, the light dimmed atmospherically to l'heure bleu and finally to velvety night, punctuated by paper lanterns.

Cleverly calculated naturalism, too, was used by Constable in David MacVicar's production of *The Marriage of Figaro* for Covent Garden, with lighting that suggested France of the Touraine rather than Spain, thus complementing designer Tanya McCallin's set of Louis XV parquet and panelling.



*Billy Budd*. Glyndebourne Festival Opera 2010: Chorus ensemble. Lighting: Paule Constable. Photo: Alastair Muir.



## Focus on Opera Lighting

### Clare Colvin

Penny Woolcock's production for ENO of Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* began stunningly with an image of aerial dancers behind the oceanic blue scrim transformed by lighting and video into deep sea divers searching for pearls. Lighting designer Jennifer Schriever, together with Fifty-Nine Productions video design, were responsible for the effects. After the watery blue world, Schriever used a flood of warm lighting for the first scene of the village by the sea, so the predominant red, orange and browns of the villagers' clothes were heightened, giving a Caravaggio-like effect with strongly defined folds to the material. Later, the play of light on undulating black silk presented the unnerving impression of a tsunami. The simple effects here were the best and the more elaborate projections of the characters' faces on to the backcloth

were superfluous.

WNO's mighty production of Wagner's *Die Maestersinger* was directed by Richard Jones, with sets by Paul Steinberg and costumes by Buki Shiff. Here, the lighting of Mimi Jordan Sherin complemented the transitions between naturalistic and stylised sets. For the surrealistic brightly coloured and trefoil-decorated roofs around the town square, she employed changing washes of reds and greens. The realistic interior of Hans Sachs's home was lit by a naturalistic suggestion of daylight through the opaque windows.

Naturalism had little to do with Jonathan Kent's production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at Glyndebourne. Think Fellini Film Noir visits the *Night of the Living Dead*. Designer Paul Brown had devised an ingenious revolving cube, and Mark Henderson used cool emphatic lighting that



*Don Giovanni*. Glyndebourne Festival Opera 2010.  
Kate Royal as Donna Elvira. Lighting: Mark Henderson. Photo: Bill Cooper.

highlighted shadows of the diamond-cut stone in a sharp relief of white and black. The coolness contrasted with the stage flames in the final scene of Act I when Don Giovanni's palazzo was torched and set ablaze.

In Act II, as the cube began to disintegrate, its walls leaning outwards, Kent has Giovanni serenading Donna Elvira's maid, gazing towards the window that never opens, while the lighting illuminated the gentle drizzle falling on his shoulders, creating an unusual image of pathos. As the cube disintegrated further, and the disguised Leporello was trapped amid the rubble by his assailants, the spotlight trained on him as if he was in the dock. The last image was a long way from the conventional hellfire finale, as in the shadowed light the corpse of the Commendatore rose from his grave and clasped the Don to his putrefying bosom.



## Focus on Opera Lighting Clare Colvin



*Simon Boccanegra. ©The Royal Opera, June 2010. Lighting: John Harrison. Photo: Catherine Ashmore.*

“Genoa . . . with the sea in the background . . .” was Verdi’s stage instruction for Verdi’s *Simon Boccanegra*. It was an instruction director Elijah Moshinsky followed in his 1991 production, revived recently at the Royal Opera House with Plácido Domingo in the title role, when he said, “I think the opera needs to look luminous. The sea provides the background colour for the whole action.”

Michael Yeargan’s set of a row of columns that frame both the Grimaldi palace and the Council chamber was lit from the back and the side. The original conductor Sir Georg Solti wanted a ceiling, to make the set act like an acoustic box to give him a chance of getting real pianissimos, so this ruled out overhead lighting.

John Harrison achieved a luminous effect of light

coming in from the sea for the opening scene where a billowing sea of silk was shaken slightly to suggest waves, before disappearing mysteriously through a hole in the stage, creating a wonderful harmony of sight and sound. The lighting cues followed the colour of the music and the time of day, so the changing shade of blue coming over the horizon suggested dawn or dusk.

The growing numbers of outdoor or semi-outdoor productions raise new logistic problems. The lighting designer is not in full control of the light or darkness on stage, and therefore the time of day in which the preliminary scenes are set may be at variance with the daylight slanting through the open sides of the theatre, as was the case with Stephen Barlow’s production of *Don Giovanni* at Opera Holland Park, lit by Colin Grenfell. The first scene murder of the Commendatore takes place at night, but Yannis Thavoris’s stylised design of dark panelling and massed portraits of the Don in any case called for an

imaginative response by the audience. Grenfell’s task was theoretically easier with OHP’s *Fidelio*, the action of which starts in open air and daylight before entering the gloom of the dungeon at a time when daylight is fading.

It has been a salutary experience to look at productions chiefly from the lighting angle. Newspaper critics attempting to fit the many aspects of an opera into a 400 word slot often neglect to mention it for reasons of space. But any production that is to make its effect must have a successful lighting design. Lighting provides the magic that transforms the set from plywood and paint into a living, breathing world. 🌟



# James Laws reads **The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography**

Joslin McKinney & Philip Butterworth, Cambridge University Press 2009, ISBN 978-0-521-61232-6

Scenography? What is **that**, you may ask. Although you may not have consciously read the word *Scenography* before, you could well have contributed to it when lighting a production. It is being taught at universities. Seminars are convened in its name, so it must exist. To give this book the review it deserves, I must start with some fairly hefty quotes from its pages. This should give everyone an idea of the complex concepts involved in Scenography and how they relate to our practice of design and artistic dynamics, in the productions that we light.

First a definition:

*In this book, Scenography is defined as the manipulation and orchestration of the performance environment. The means by which this is pursued are typically through architectural structures, light, projected images, sound, costume and performance objects or props. These elements are considered in relation to the performing bodies, the text, the space in which the performance takes place and the placement of the audience. Scenography is not simply concerned with creating and presenting images to an audience; it is concerned with audience reception and engagement. It is a sensory as well as an intellectual experience; emotional as well as rational. Operation of images opens up the range of possible responses from the audience; it extends the means and outcomes of theatrical experience through communication to an audience.*

In the preface we learn that:

*Scenography is located as an emergent academic discipline through provision of a conceptual framework for consideration as performance practice and modes of communication with audiences.*

I don't see that my review should be commenting on the subtler merits of Scenography. However, I should tell you whether you can find a useful amount about the subject in this book and I ought to indicate how the concepts expounded relate to lighting design as we understand it. Where could Scenography take us?

There is lot of scholarship here from McKinney & Butterworth, who teach or taught at the University of Leeds. The quotation notes and bibliography extends to 30 pages, some 15% of

the total. The index is good. Assuming you are not being taught Scenography methodically, you can access the subject from whatever aspect you want. There are 20 entries under *light* but none under *lighting designers*. However, lighting concepts are certainly dealt with, particularly in conjunction with the pioneers of Scenography, of which Edward Gordon Craig, Adolph Appia & Josef Svoboda are probably the most remembered. These visionaries' projects and ideas were always articulated but, in the cases of Craig and Appia, were not always realised.

All three left many sketched elevations and Svoboda's works are documented in production photographs. The common scenic thread of these artists appears to be powerfully stepped stages with monolithic blocks and

dynamic light and shade. Some of their sketches and images are in this book and they form 13 of the 29 monochrome illustrations. There is no colour, except for the front cover, which shows Robert Wilson's setting for Orlando. Robert Wilson is a contemporary Scenographer, born in 1941. His work is discussed extensively.

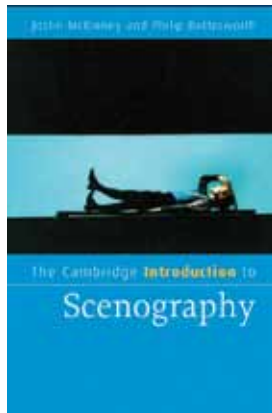
If I'm offered a new viewpoint, my first instinct is to look to link it to anything previously experienced. For my wife this was easy; she helped to make 20ft long leaves out of gauze and eggshells (from the Dorchester Hotel), for Svoboda's setting of Ostrovsky's *The Storm* (1966) at The Old Vic.

However, in *The Cambridge introduction to Scenography* I was looking for people who are (or were recently) well known in the UK for thinking about vibrant spaces and

how audiences could access the script through them, in landmark productions. People such as Sean Kenny and Richard Pilbrow for their ability to show a burning city and not to dwarf the human story in the original 1962 *Blitz!*, or John Bury, who championed holistic Design for so many years and who understood and demonstrated how settings and lighting work together, to make a sum greater than the parts.

What about Max Keller's expansive work for opera, not to mention the whole production team of the extraordinary 1992 *An Inspector Calls*? None if these practitioners is discussed or mentioned, except for Ian McNeil, who designed *An Inspector Calls* and whose work for *Far Away* is included.

For *Scenography* to make itself a mainstream concept, written education

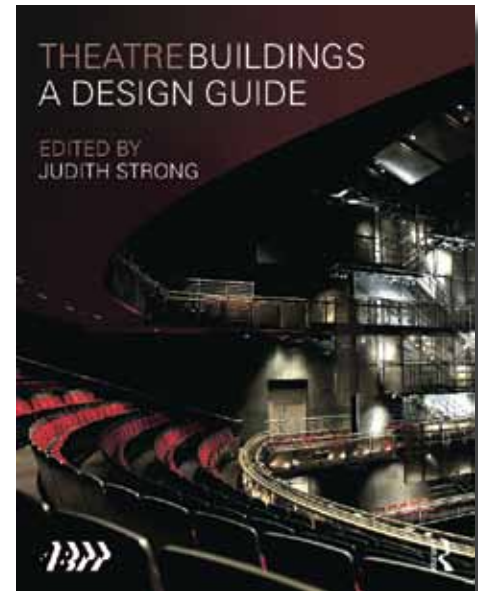


on the subject will have to identify and celebrate key scenographically- driven productions, that have won awards or been widely seen by the readership. Otherwise the championing of the idea of *manipulation and orchestration of the performance environment* will remain the responsibility of OISTAT and of academic courses. That would be a pity. From the coalface of not-for-profit theatre, I have in my archive the following memo:

We have never - and don't intend to - consult with lighting designers prior to the signing-off of sets.

I hope that the progressive aim of Scenography is to bring together directors, scenic, lighting, projection, costume and sound designers, to work together without division and to a common shared objective that serves the script, the actors and the audience, whilst acknowledging that single visionaries who can handle all aspects of a production are so rare that collaboration is the common way forward.

I fear that many current lighting practitioners will struggle at a first reading, (as I have), with the sheer breadth of the philosophical mapping in this book. A skilfully wrapped but simple message of "more art, more collaboration, better shows" would give us all encouragement in these turbulent times. 🌸



Published by the ABTT with Routledge, this new book takes the reader through the whole process of planning and designing a theatre. It looks in detail at each area of the building: front of house, auditorium, backstage and administrative offices.

It gives specific guidance on sightlines, acoustics, stage engineering, lighting, sound and video, auditorium and stage formats, conference and education uses, and even catering. The book contains around 100 full-colour images and over 60 specially drawn charts and diagrams. We hope to publish a review in a future issue of *Focus*.

Details: [www.abtt.org.uk/publications/books](http://www.abtt.org.uk/publications/books) 🌸

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