



February / March 2011

In the limelight this issue:

David Taylor • Panto in Jo'burg • Computers - who's in control? • Johanna Town takes *Charged* • *Lighting up the dark* from guest critic Michael Coveney ... and much more...

Price to non-members £5.00

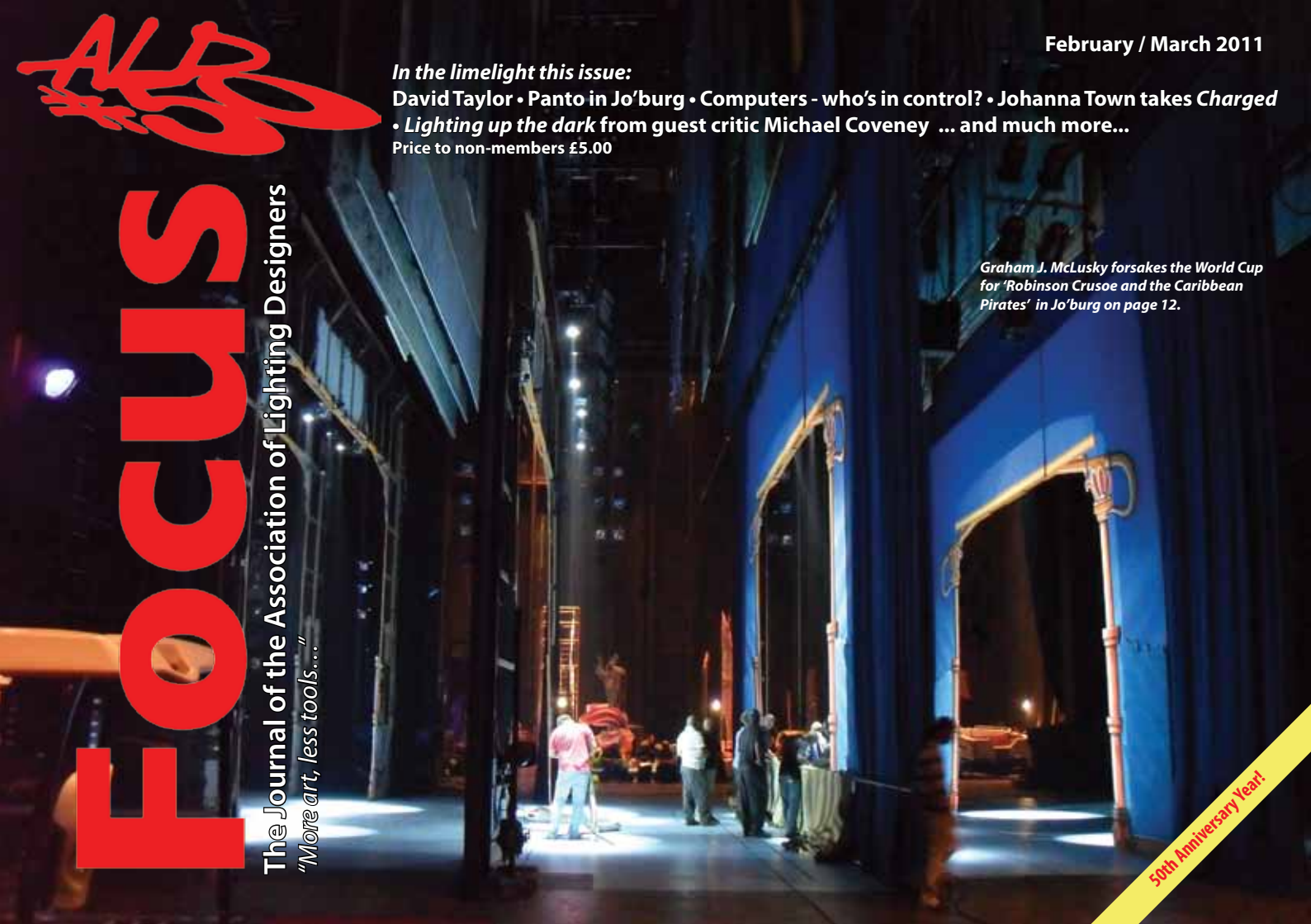
FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers




















"More art, less tools..."

Graham J. McLusky forsakes the World Cup for 'Robinson Crusoe and the Caribbean Pirates' in Jo'burg on page 12.

50th Anniversary Year!



Corporate Members Thanks for supporting the ALD.

<p>AC Entertainment Technologies Ltd 01494 446000 www.ac-et.com</p> 	<p>ETC Electronic Theatre Controls Ltd 020 8896 1000 www.etcconnect.com</p> 	<p>your company could be here!</p>	<p>Roscolab Ltd 020 8659 2300 www.rosco.com</p> 
<p>ADB Lighting Technologies +32 2 709 3211 www.adblighting.com</p> 	<p>Goboland UK 020 7060 4626 www.goboland.co.uk</p> 	<p>Northern Light Stage & Technical Services Ltd. 0131 622 9100 www.northernlight.co.uk</p> 	<p>Schnick-Schnack-Systems GmbH 0844 800 4395 www.schnickschnacksystems.com</p> 
<p>Artistic Licence (UK) Ltd 020 8863 4515 www.artisticlicence.com</p> 	<p>Hawthorn Theatrical Ltd. 01664 821111 www.hawthorns.co.uk</p> 	<p>Philips Entertainment 07974 752646 www.seleconlight.com</p> 	<p>Stage Electrics 0117 938 4000 www.stage-electrics.co.uk</p> 
<p>Barco High End Systems Europe Ltd. 07919 007960 www.highend.com</p> 	<p>Lee Filters 01264 366245 www.leefilters.com</p> 	<p>Production Resource Group UK 0845 470 6400 www.prglighting.co.uk</p> 	<p>Storm Lighting Ltd 01483 757211 www.stormlighting.co.uk</p> 
<p>CCT Lighting (UK) Ltd 0115 985 8919 www.cctlighting.com</p> 	<p>your company could be here!</p>	<p>Projected Image UK Ltd 0191 265 9832 www.projectedimage.uk.com</p> 	<p>White Light 020 8254 4800 www.whitelight.ltd.uk</p> 
<p>Clay Paky S.p.A. +39 335 72 333 72 www.claypaky.it</p> 	<p>MA Lighting UK Ltd 020 7625 4371 www.malighting.com</p> 	<p>Pulsar Light of Cambridge Ltd 01223 403500 www.pulsarlight.com</p> 	<p>Wybron Inc. +1 719 548 9774 www.wybron.com</p> 
<p>Computers Unlimited 3-D Design 020 8358 9476 www.vectorworks.uk.com</p> 	<p>Martin Professional UK 01622 755442 www.martinpro.co.uk</p> 	<p>Robert Juliat +33 (0)3 44 26 51 89 www.robertjuliat.com</p> 	<p>Zero 88 01633 838088 www.zero88.com</p> 

Rick's Reminders

Happy New Year! This year is going to be an eventful one for the ALD. As you know we are celebrating our 50th anniversary. It was in 1961 that a number of distinguished lighting designers got together to share stories and good food and wine in the West End. In the early years the field of lighting design was not fully recognised as an integral creative part of theatre production and I sure that the original members of what was then the Society of British Lighting Designers started meeting as they enjoyed each others company. It was a new field and everyone seemed to know each other. We're planning a special 50th anniversary *Focus* later in the year.

50 years later much has changed, but the strength and support that we can give each other is still at the core of what the ALD is about. Our

founders' camaraderie lives on and it is one of the truly remarkable things about the lighting world is that we are all so passionate about what we do and the people who do it. The growth of the ALD, which will welcome its 2000th member this year, and has a current membership of about 700, is I believe down to that passion and friendship.

As you know I announced that I was standing down from the role of Chair of the ALD. It is over 15 years since I was invited on to the Executive committee and I am proud of how the ALD has developed from the warm friendly society of colleagues which I hope is still at its heart, into an organisation that strives to support all its members, be they Professional Designers, Professional Members, Associate, Student or Corporate. This growth is

absolutely not solely down to me but to the strength and commitment of the entire Executive Committee past and present and many of you who have encouraged and imagined an ALD that was vibrant and of value to you.

I believe that the ALD now has a larger percentage of the actively working lighting designers and those working in the field of lighting than at any time in its history since perhaps those rather select meals at Rules' Restaurant in London's Covent Garden, which required 5 West End seats under the designer's belt to be able to sip the Nuit St. George. But we cannot be complacent and there are still many working lighting professionals who should be part of the ALD.

I am truly delighted that after advertising the position of Chair in *Focus*, Peter Mumford has offered

to take on this role subject to confirmation of the next AGM, which will be held at PLASA in September 2011. Peter is one of the leading lighting designers and he will bring new prestige and energy to the Executive and the entire organisation. His experience, not only in lighting at all levels in the UK and abroad but also as designer and director, will bring added value in the challenging world where our working lives are as likely to embrace digital and architectural lighting as live performance, which has been my area of practice.

Peter has already joined the Executive which will enable him to participate in all discussions and planning. The Executive and I welcome Peter's greater involvement with the ALD and I believe it will be the start of a renewed development of the ALD.

Regards, Rick 🍷



Highlights

- 4 **David I. Taylor**
Richard Pilbrow, Rick Fisher and James Laws
- 6 **Marko's Miscellany**
Mark Jonathan let loose
- 9 **Office Oracle**
News via lan's desk.
- 12 **.. It's panto time in Jo'burg**
'Graham J. McLusky's behind you!'
- 18 **"Taking the Chair..."**
Peter Mumford in the wings.
- 20 **Railway Children**
Will Evans and friends.
- 23 **Ms. Town takes Charged**
Celebrity interview with Johanna Town
- 28 **Lighting up the Dark Side**
with guest critic Michael Coveney.
- 34 **Does your computer work for you?**
Tom White in rhetorical mood..
- 37 **Handbook review**
James Laws
- 38 **New Technology Showcase**

“Farewell, old chum...”

David I. Taylor 1963 - 2011

It's particularly hard to write a farewell to David, tragically snatched away from us at such an early age.

David was a passionate man. He adored lighting design, theatre and life. We worked together at Theatre Projects for over twenty years. In 1993 he came, with his wonderful wife Sara, to join me at Theatre Projects in America. They had two wonderful sons, the apples of David's eye. Together we worked on over seventy projects, many landmarks of American theatre.

Being a theatre consultant is absorbing. The quiet glow that comes after a successful opening of a new project makes one forget the long journey, sometimes for many years, which led to that moment. Getting up before dawn to catch another flight, long days meeting theatre people seeking to learn and understand their dreams, endless negotiations with, sometime recalcitrant, architects to defend those aspirations, patiently trying to teach an unaware contractor

of the need for precision, long nights of sleeplessness regurgitating those struggles, confidence, self-doubt, the panic before a major presentation, the thrill of victory... This was the life that David excelled in.

I remember on January 17, 1994, in a Santa Monica hotel. I was woken by an express train in my bedroom that threw me on the floor; plaster was collapsing from the ceiling. The 6.6 Northridge Earthquake. Well-trained from living through the Blitz, I put on shoes and trousers, grabbed my briefcase with computer, and with only flickering emergency lighting, groped my way to the stair escape through screaming, panicking fellow guests. It was 4.31 AM.

Fighting through the crowds in the lobby, I found David, looking distinctly shaken.

“Come on Dave, we should get out of here, I know the safest place.” In the courtyard of the hotel stood a vast, 500-year old banyan tree. We two lost Brits took shelter beneath it

as helicopters rattled in the skies above us, and after-shocks continued to surprise. It was very frightening indeed.

But, dawn broke, and we had a meeting to attend. No taxis, so we set off, walking several miles through rubble-strewn streets to the architects' high-rise offices. We arrived to find a tall building without windows and with water gushing from every floor. We guessed the meeting was cancelled.

David looked at me. “Richard, I guess we have the day off.”

David and I had many memories together. Disasters, many happy times, with many triumphs. Throughout this roller-coaster, consulting life, his was the cheerful, affirmative, determinedly optimistic spirit.

He will be long missed.

Our hearts bleed for dear Sara, and the two boys, of whom he was so proud, Sebastian and Oliver.

Farewell, old chum.

Richard Pilbrow, President, ALD



From Rick Fisher , Chairman, ALD

It was with shock that has quickly turned to immeasurable sadness that I have learned of David Taylor's sudden death while he was on a business trip to Taipei, Taiwan.

David was a lighting designer, Theatre Consultant and an extremely active member of the lighting community both in the UK where he was born and more recently in the USA where he worked for Arup as their global leader of Theatre Consulting.

David was active on the Showlight Committee and was always keen to participate in all aspects of planning for that unique symposium even if via Skype link. He was responsible for making sure that some of the most interesting people working in lighting in the US were invited to Showlight. He had also just been offered and voted into the post of the first Vice Chair of PLASA in North America.

David was also passionately interested in the training of young lighting designers and consultants, as he had benefited from initial training at Central School of Speech and Drama and Masters Degree training at the University of Connecticut, at a time when that sort of targeted, professionally-oriented education opportunity did not exist in the UK.

In addition David was a past Secretary of the Association of Lighting Designers at the same time as working with Theatre Projects in London on developing performing arts spaces all over

the world. It is absolutely no understatement that he kept the ALD going in a period when many lighting designers were too busy trying to build careers to consider being involved in an organisation like the ALD. Through his passion and enthusiasm for talking about lighting and the people who worked in lighting, he brought many people in the ALD, myself included. You could not easily say "No" to David as he rarely turned down a chance to be involved in any opportunity that brought lighting and theatre people together to share in a love of the process of putting on performances.

His work with Theatre Projects and Richard Pilbrow took him and his beloved wife Sara and their two sons Sebastian and Oliver to live in the US many years ago but he was still active in the UK lighting community.

Our thoughts go to his family and all his colleagues past and present. Our industry is considerably less bright without David, and he will be greatly missed.

From James Laws, Fellow, ALD

The ALD owed its early character and bearing to the support and initiative of Theatre Projects Consultants, headed by Richard Pilbrow. Our first Secretaries were also TP people; Jerry Godden and, from February 1988 to April 1993, David Taylor.

In those days the Secretary was the de facto

unpaid Administrator of the Association. David took us from being a lighting club of about 200 scattered unknowns to a fighting unit that managements began to recognise and whose 450 members they respected.

David's other ALD hat was Events Organiser. He realised that the key to a coherent ALD was meetings that people wanted to go to. So he hired coaches to take Londoners to Nottingham and Bristol. In that way we realised that, whilst we were scattered in our ones and twos, there were so many of us. We all shared the same ambition and concerns. We could all understand lighting and, in those pre-web days, seeing the different methods we used was a revelation.

David's energy and will to jump-start the ALD was infectious. We in the Executive found ourselves at TP HQ on several Sundays, planning the next move, the next initiative. He left us in tremendous shape, when he started his hugely successful career in the States. From there he sent regular contributions to *Focus* and we enjoyed his wry reports, such as the one on Jewish Musicals or (*Jewscals* to David), written with such good humour and acute observation that no right minded person could take offence.

We shall all miss David in our different ways and we are all acutely aware that lighting has lost a champion, who knew how and why we ticked. He gave unsparingly to help us to find our voice.

Thank you David. 🍀

Marko's Miscellany

A professional's view of the coalface from Mark Jonathan

Cold Christmas Lunch?

Well done to those of you who managed to get to the *17th Annual Lighting Lunch* despite the chaos caused by the bad weather. It was sad that for the 2nd year running the weather interfered and stopped so many people from coming on the day. I was especially impressed

that a number of Fellows of the ALD weren't going to be put off: top marks to Francis Reid, who despite the lack of trains from Norwich, came via Cambridge.

Meanwhile, Robert Bryan, Mick Hughes, Brian Croft, John Simpson and Jim Laws battled through the snow to help us knock back more than a few bottles of wine; sadly, David Hersey was stuck at Nice Airport, while Enrico Caironi from Clay Paky flew in the night before and made it to London. Enrico had to leave early because of his concern about getting back to Stansted Airport, where his colleague Pio Nahum arrived in the morning in time to attend the lunch but couldn't get any transport from Stansted to London. So he spent the day waiting at the airport for his flight home again. What bad luck Pio. I'm really not impressed with the

UK's failure to manage some bad weather.

Moving the event back to lunchtime seemed to be a popular choice but I do wonder if we should move the event to a less risky month weather-wise? At the lunch Rick Fisher presented Andy Bridge with his ALD Fellowship. Rick also announced that Peter Mumford will stand as Chair which is great news for the association.

Cold Christmas in Luton Airport?

Two days later on the 22nd December I was at the airport in good time. The EasyJet flight showed a one hour delay. At the gate we were kept waiting a long time – one of the flight crew had gone sick.

Eventually, that crew member was replaced, but Luton failed to give us a

take-off slot before Geneva shut for the night. We were offloaded and given our baggage back. Then a man (without a loudhailer) and whose command of English was limited, arrived to say we could go home and we'd get a refund. It's 11pm in Luton! While some people left, others formed a group declaring they would hire cars and drive to Geneva; given the weather in France that was an extremely risky decision. The rest of us groaned audibly and urged the man in the fluorescent jacket to do something in terms of getting us out before Christmas. Many of my fellow passengers were Swiss, so his assumption that we all lived near Luton and could simply 'go home' wasn't really an option. I mention this because many of you travel and it's when things go wrong that you get the real



Theater an der Wien



measure of how hard your airline will try to get you to your destination.

Ironically, a year earlier, when the Swiss Airplane I was booked on went 'tech' at London City, I was limo-ed to Heathrow and booked on BA. But meanwhile, back in Luton, we were on the verge of being abandoned. It was now midnight. Our man returned (he really did need a loudhailer) to say the only flights out of the UK before Christmas were via Liverpool on Christmas Eve. We waited until 3am when a coach turned up. Our man in the jacket had disappeared,

so we asked the driver if he was going to Liverpool. He thought he was, so we got on the bus. Of course, the heating wasn't working so we froze, but finally arrived in Liverpool at 8am.

Now, I do need to give a house point to EasyJet who put us up in a good hotel, but at this stage I thought we would probably spend Christmas in Liverpool. EasyJet then lost marks because they offered no further information, so we booked taxis for 5am the next morning to get us to the airport.

Well, in the end we got to our destination and I was just in time to buy all the groceries for Christmas and the last, short, slightly tubby Christmas tree. I offer this story merely to remind you to think about what happens when things go wrong. On this occasion I wasn't rushing

to get to a lighting session but quite often I am.

Ghosts in Wein

While I was in Switzerland for the skiing, I took the opportunity to go on to Vienna for a recce. I thought I would have a lonely visit. As I walked across the deserted stage of the beautiful Theater an der Wien, imagining the spirits of the theatre's founder, Emanuel Schikaneder and its first musical director, Ludwig van Beethoven, a voice came from behind me: "Excuse me," said the voice, "I have to ask you to leave the stage!"

I wheeled round and there was my old friend Niv Hoffman. I first worked with Niv in Israel where he's a staff director, and now here he was working on *Castor & Pollux* the opera that would precede the opera I was going to light. Suddenly, I wasn't all alone in Vienna. Niv told

me he had been sitting at the production desk and had seen me walk across the stage. He'd said to the Austrian lighting designer and ALD member, Bernd Purkrabek:

"Who's that? I know him..."

"That," announced Bernd, *"is Mark Jonathan".*

Well, it turns out I had met Bernd in Munich when he was working at the Bayerische Staatsoper. What a small world it is. Needless to say, I had a little hangover the next day!



"That," announced Bernd, *"is Mark Jonathan".*



Less Art, more Tax

While I was briefly back in Blighty I was interested to read about the lighting and sound *Water-Tower* installation by Bruce Munroe in the medieval cloisters of Salisbury Cathedral. Visitors can experience sound magically translated into light and colour as sixty-nine glowing towers, made from 15,000 stacked recyclable water bottles, illuminated with fibre optics and LED projectors change colour to selected music through which visitors walk while listening to the music. It

sounds like it's worth a visit.

Meanwhile, I spotted the headline in *The Times*:

"That's not art, that's a lamp, says EU".

The story is about an video-art installation at St Paul's Cathedral by the San Francisco-based video artist Bill Viola which uses a number of plasma screens. Now, art works usually have a nominal 5% VAT applied to their value. But the European Union has deemed that *electrical goods that are used in modern art installations should be taxed as consumer goods at 20%*. However, when

valuing the goods in this case they are not applying the high street value of the screens but the full artistic value of Viola's video altar pieces – £2 million. That's a lot of VAT at 20%. The new European regulation passed last year says that lighting and electrical equipment cannot be considered as a work of art even if an artist has worked on them. Watch out, I'm sure the HMRC will try and tax us out of existence too.

Screen saver mode

Fast forward a few weeks, one hour before my departure to go back to Vienna and the screen on my MacBook Pro went blank.

Thanks to the lighting colleagues who advised me, I gather it's a known Apple fault but that was no great comfort as I started to think of all the paperwork and plots

that I generate... I arrived in the evening in Vienna, this time without incident. The next morning, I found an Apple franchise, handed the Mac in for 'express service', caught the U-bahn and tram and found the rehearsal studios by 11am. Not bad for an English boy. First the flight, and now the Mac crashing made me think should I have a spare? Or maybe it's just best not to worry; lest we forget it was only a few years ago that I laundered and destroyed two passports a few hours before my scheduled departure to Munich.

Getting the operatic spirit

On Sunday, I went to the last performance of *Castor & Pollux* and Bernd had done a beautiful job. You'll be able to catch Bernd's work at Geneva and Glyndebourne soon. On the subject of the small

world, in the interval met a conductor, two directors and a designer who I'd worked with before. Oops, another slight hangover prevailed the next day.

Well, I'd better get back to work. I hope that the ghost of Emanuel Schikaneder who built the Theater an der Wien (as well as being an impresario, dramatist, actor, singer, composer and Mozart's friend and librettist of the *Magic Flute*) and the ghost of Beethoven, who actually lived in the theatre while he worked there, will smile upon me.

I'm sad to report that Schikanader lost all his money when the currency was devalued and he then went insane. Like Mozart, he died a pauper, as we shall too... courtesy of the taxman and the cutbacks in the arts, unless we are very lucky.





Office Oracle

News from Ian's production desk

New Chair for the ALD

Further to the 2010 Annual General Meeting and the decision of Rick Fisher to inform the meeting of his intention to stand down as Chair in 2011, we printed an article in the October/November 2010 edition of *Focus* outlining what the role entails, and asked for members to come forward and stand for the position vacated by Rick. A timetable was produced detailing the process that an election would happen, culminating in the new Chair taking up the position at the 2011 AGM.

As the deadline passed we received one expression of interest from outside the current Exec, from Peter Mumford. The Executive wanted to discuss the situation at its December

meeting before proceeding with the process. It was therefore not possible to follow the timetable as laid out due to print deadlines and the meeting date. The situation was discussed fully and all present were very happy to invite Peter on to the Exec from now and then ask for confirmation of his position of Chair at the AGM. This is similar to how Rick was appointed 15 years ago, although in this case we are fortunate to have a period of handover.

Peter is most complimentary about the growth of the ALD into a respected force to be taken seriously and he wants to add his efforts to this. He will bring not only his huge experience across all forms of lighting design, stage design and TV design and director but also a welcome injection of new energy and ideas into the

ALD. He also asked Rick if he would be willing to continue as a member of the Executive beyond his term and Rick has agreed to do so.

The current Executive team believes that this is the best route forward, and can only benefit from not being distracted by an election process and work instead on supporting lighting design and designers as the ALD marks our 50th anniversary in 2011. We asked Peter to introduce himself to those of you who haven't met him yet, and you can read his piece on page 18.

2011 AGM

It has been decided to hold the 2011 Annual General Meeting of the ALD on **Sunday 11th September** during the first day of the PLASA 2011 Show at Earl's Court. The main business of the Meeting is to vote



Andy Bridge (right) being presented with his ALD Fellowship from Rick Fisher.

on the confirmation of the new Chair, Peter Mumford. Further details will follow in due course...

New ALD Fellow

At the Christmas Lighting Lunch in London, Rick Fisher (above) presented a plaque to our newest Fellow, Andrew Bridge on behalf of the ALD.

Listed as ALD member number 11, and responsible for the ALD's logo, Andy

has a long and varied list of credits that include three Tony Awards for his lighting designs and most famously *Phantom of the Opera* which is still running in London and has also been seen in USA, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Japan, China, Korea, Australia, South Africa, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Singapore and as *Phantom – The Las Vegas*

Office Oracle

News from Ian's production desk

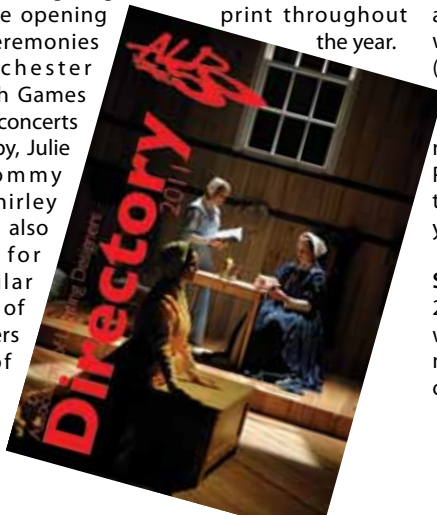
Spectacular. Other West End shows include *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Sunset Boulevard* *Saturday Night Fever* and *Aspects of Love*.

Other work includes the Albert Hall productions of *Madam Butterfly*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Show Boat*, *Siegfried and Roy* spectacular at the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show* at Disneyland Paris, lighting director for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Manchester Commonwealth Games 2002 as well as concerts from Bing Crosby, Julie Andrews, Tommy Steele and Shirley Bassey. He was also responsible for the spectacular floodlighting of the headquarters for Lloyd's of London.

2011 Members' Directory

The new edition of the members' listing directory should be included with this copy of *Focus*. If you have not received this, please contact the Office and we will organise a replacement.

You will see that we have re-designed (and re-branded) the yearbook this year, and it now fits in more neatly with *Focus* and other leaflets and information we print throughout the year.



After canvassing the opinions of members, it was decided that we would no longer include the diary in the publication as the majority of people now use electronic methods for a calendar, and we could also reduce the paper use and cost of the directory.

As it is no longer linked to a particular year, we are also considering NOT printing a copy every year. We would also like to know if members would like an electronic copy (probably in PDF format) as a replacement or to fill in for the years that we do not produce a printed copy. Please contact the Office or the website forum to add your voice to the discussion.

Subscription Fees

2011 / 12 subscription fees will be set according to the member category you are in on the 14th March 2011.

Current subscription rates are as follows:

- Professional Designer £75
- Professional Member £75
- Associate Member £40
- Student Member £25
- Corporate Member £400
- Non-profit Organisation £25

We are still owed approximately £1200 pounds of the current subscription year money by members who have not changed their standing order to reflect the rise in 2009.

If you are in any doubt as to whether you owe any monies to the Association, please contact the Office with immediate effect. Your membership is at risk if you do not.

And Finally...

Apologies for the unorthodox packaging of the last edition of *Focus* (above). We included with the magazine an 'insert' from Corporate Member MA Lighting, which due to its size and thickness somewhat dwarfed our little publication that was stuffed inside it. With no identification on the address sheet that it was an ALD posting, some members apparently cast aside or even discarded the mailing as direct mail without opening it.

If you find that you have also done this, or even that it has not arrived due to the Christmas post and the delays caused by the December snow storms in the UK, please contact the Office and we will send you another copy. #



Diary Dates

2011

18 March - 16 April

UK Design for Performance 2011, RWCMD, Cardiff. [Details page 23.](#)

1 April

Subscription Payments due

19/20 April

PLASA Focus 2011, Leeds*

15/16 June

ABTT Theatre Show*

1 July

Deadline for subscription payments

11 September

ALD AGM

4th Knight of Illumination Awards*

11-14 September

PLASA 2011, Earl's Court*

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

Contact us

The Association of Lighting Designers

PO Box 680, Oxford, OX1 9DG, UK Tel: 07817 060189

office@ald.org.uk www.ald.org.uk

The Executive

President: **Richard Pilbrow**

Chairman: **Rick Fisher** rick.fisher@ald.org.uk

Deputy Chair: **Jason Larcombe** jason.larcombe@ald.org.uk

Administrator and Treasurer:

Ian Saunders ian.saunders@ald.org.uk

Professionals: **Mark Jonathan** mark.jonathan@ald.org.uk

Equity Rep: **Johanna Town** jo.town@ald.org.uk

Corporates: **Iain Quinn** iain.quinn@ald.org.uk

Student issues: **Jack Knowles** jack.knowles@ald.org.uk

Meetings: **Will Evans** and **Mary Pope** meetings@ald.org.uk

Education: **Nick Moran** and **Scott Palmer**

education@ald.org.uk

Committee members

Andy Collier andrew.collier@ald.org.uk

Paule Constable paule.constable@ald.org.uk

John Leventhall john.leventhall@ald.org.uk

Declan Randall declan.randall@ald.org.uk

Tom Dexter Scott dexter.scott@ald.org.uk

Kevin Sleep kevin.sleep@ald.org.uk

Focus Magazine

 ISSN: 1364-9299

Editor: **Andy Collier** editor@ald.org.uk

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

Matt Daw*, London

Charlie Lucas*, London

Professional Member

Chris James, Dudley

Associate Member

Adam King, Eastleigh

Gavin Maze, Middlesex

Simeon Miller, London

Sponsored Student Scheme

Central School of Speech & Drama:

Theodore Athanopoulos

Kieran O'Brien

Thomas Robson

Maximilien Spielbichler

Guildhall School of Music & Drama:

James Adkins

Alex Durrell

Karin Singh

Charlie Smith

RADA:

Ben Donoghue

Sarah McColgan

Rose Bruford:

Matt Heays

** from Associate member*



Forget the world cup... it's Panto time in Johannesburg!

Oh yes it is! says Graham J. McLusky

this entire panto thing so worthwhile? It's that huge gang of screaming children out front, enjoying themselves so much that some are sick with over-excitement!

Whilst the unsuspecting citizens of the UK think that panto is safely a uniquely British bastion, you are wrong! "Oh yes you are!" The South Africans, especially the ones in Johannesburg, are enjoying panto and have been doing so for years!

Pantomime in Johannesburg?

... is dit moontlik? O ja dit is! (Work that one out. I am not sure I really did either).

Johannesburg. The aftermath of a World Cup; a sea of colourful Jacaranda trees. It has changed a bit

since last year; things have improved. Even the muggers ask politely now! The roads are a bit better, fewer potholes, a new bus system (with big bendy buses), taxis are still mobile gas chambers with bad brakes. Vuvuzela sounds are a distant echo.

So there I was, out in Johannesburg last October and November for my eighth year running, working on a huge panto at the Joberg Theatre Complex. At the first performance, I leaned over the balcony to see a sea of kids and parents having fabulous fun in the stalls. This is what it's all about. It's magic and may it always continue that way.

It took nearly two weeks to put that show together. Lighting panto in South Africa is a bit different to

what we are used to in the UK but they do it their way, and brilliantly, with scenes full of African song and dance, scripts loaded with Afrikaans language, other local languages and English; local jokes, music, pop music, colour and plenty of fun. I haven't a clue what some of it's all about, as the local languages baffle me, but the rest is very recognisable. They always follow traditional panto stories, the sort where Cinderella goes to the ball and meets the very "lekker boykie princie" who is "cutie cute" and after a very "girlie girlfriend". "Hallo hallo haai daar dumweni molewang," says the dame to the audience!

This show was *Robinson Crusoe and the Caribbean Pirates*. Written by the very

It's that time of year when theatres and theatre producers provide children and families with that greatest of all British traditions... *Pantomime*. It's an amazing product. Full of fantasy, colour, jokes, fun, music, action, costumes, tradition, flashing plastic wands and tiaras, sweets, effects, lighting, sound, explosions, confetti, mirror balls, favourite songs, good and bad acting, swashing and

buckling, coaches, pumpkins, fairies, demons, dames & ugly sisters.

Pantomimes in all shapes and forms – from low budget to massive budget; from no scenery to more scenery the proverbial stage brace at! Hardly any lighting to a grid so packed with every toy you can imagine. From no sound to full blown, ear boggling systems.

What actually makes





... it's Panto time in Johannesburg!

lovely Janice Honeyman, who is a busy, well known, highly respected writer director, she formulated the incredible mix of black, white, coloured (yes you *can* say that apparently!) Afrikaans, African, English and a lot more besides.

There was to be plenty of swashing and some buckling, lots of love songs and popular tunes and a huge Afrikaans hit in SA called *Kaptein Span De Seile*, which was so catchy, one was singing it in one's head all the time! Aaaaagggghhh!

There are many well known people in the show – TV stars and presenters, comics and models. It's all very glamorous and gorgeous with plenty of dancers and singers. One of the leads in this cast was a lingerie and swimwear model! The sets and costumes are provided by UK panto giants, Qdos.

Production Manager Chris Wood and I travel out there in October each year to help

them stage the massive sets and assist in the visuals. So it was that on a Monday last October we found ourselves in Johannesburg and headed up to the theatre. I took a look at the rig (which was already in place) made a few changes and answered a lot of questions. I am ably assisted by a fabulous local crew. It's a good thing that they speak English as the many different languages spoken (11 officially recognised ones, mainly a mix of Sutu and Zulu) can be a bit baffling to say the least!

The afternoon was taken up by a full run through of the show in the 'Rear Stage' area. Let me explain: the main stage is big and crammed with fully automated lifts, trucks, sledges and traps. The rear stage area, separated by a moveable sound proof wall, is about the same size as the main stage. There are two side stages, the same size, which become docks

and storage for the duration. *And each side and rear area has counterweight flying and lighting!* You could do one main house show and three large studio shows simultaneously! Yes, it's a big theatre. The run through was shaky to say the least and our writer/director Janice was rather miffed... more than miffed in fact, she roasted the cast for being sloppy. I didn't want to upset her!

The first appearance of the ship and pirates was after the houselights and preset faded away and we bled through the front gauze to see the ship at night, in the distance, surrounded by low smoke. This was at the back of the rear stage and it seemed a mile away! The ship 'floated' downstage to reveal the pirates. Spooky. It worked fine, and set up the show well.

My rig consisted of mostly house gear, mainly 2kW Fresnels and profiles (as they were available), lots of Source



... it's Panto time in Johannesburg! So says Graham J. McLusky

4s and tons of Par Cans. Mixed up in all this were MAC700s and Robe Washlights, so I had about 30 units in all. They have so many instruments at the theatre that you never seem to be able to exhaust the supply! Boy, does it get bright at times! The inevitable mirror balls were employed. *[Tip for panto newbies: It ain't Panto without at least two mirror balls!]* Strobes, LED toys, blinders, FOUR hazers, two low foggers, six smoke machines (cough, cough) and a VL3000 to project a flipping great big gobo of the show title on the front cloth! To top that we had pyros all over the place, rockets shooting across the auditorium and more!

Another tip: It's not how big it is – it's what you do with it that counts! But if it is big, it can be more fun!

Chris and I were invited to the Tech Manager's home for a braai (barbecue) in the

evening. Simon and his lovely wife were very generous and provided food and booze, outside in their garden, next to the pool. Remember, that in October / November it's springtime there, and warm.

The next day we got stuck into focussing. The rig was big and therefore took quite a while to work through. We were focussing into Wednesday and by evening we were setting up groups, rough blocking in and trouble shooting. Regular breaks are taken every day, just like at home. Working time directives are adhered to and plenty of tea is drunk. Food was available in the theatre café at mealtimes but for me, a vegetarian, the menu was rather boring. There is a limit to how many avocados and halloumi slices one can stomach!

We started lighting on Thursday, but the director

wanted to get the cast working onstage as fast as she could, so I had to light around and over them. That was not exactly my style but that is the way they do it. We managed a late quiet session that night. We were escorted back to the hotel each night by burly security blokes. We were told that, "This is for your own personal protection" and informed that about nine years ago a cast member was shot dead for his laptop as he walked home alone to the hotel. We accepted the escort option.

More plotting followed on Friday, and then a sort of tech bash-through wearing protective headgear and padding in case of collisions. I jest, but the methods employed here leave no room for major error! We only managed a pizza from a local takeaway that evening. *Memo to self: don't get extra*

chilli – it blew my brains out!

On Saturday we worked some scenes and lit more missing bits until all the ends joined up and went for a tech dress rehearsal that evening. The UV scene was cut as even under about 3000 excruciating watts of black light, the locally-made UV props didn't show up at all! So it was replaced by a flown giant snake which dropped in and out to frighten the kids. (Only in Panto could this ever happen!)

We had a day off on Sunday and went round to Bernard Jay's (the CEO's) apartment for a Sunday lunch and plenty of liquid refreshment. It was a nice afternoon, generous food and drink and nice company. We sat out on the balcony with the sun shining.

The first preview was Wednesday, and I stayed on to the following Monday to settle the show in and

make changes as necessary. The actual first night was late Sunday afternoon with an enormous number of sponsors and groups taking up most of the house. Sponsorship is something the Joberg Theatre Complex is good at getting. Radio and TV stations, motorbike dealers, jet ski dealers, boat suppliers, cars, helicopters – they are good at this and good at everything they do. It is a shining example of how a theatre should operate. Smart, efficient staff, polite and helpful. Well run FOH and stage, and hospitality!

There was a huge wine and fruit party afterwards with press invited; snapping away like mad. I went for a quiet meal and was invited to join some cast and friends from a previous panto at their table and stayed drinking for hours! 🍷



The Society of British Theatre Designers presents

Transformation and Revelation

The UK Design for Performance Exhibition 2011

From March 18th the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff will host the 2011 exhibition *Transformation and Revelation* presented by The Society of British Theatre Designers. This is a unique opportunity for people in Wales and the rest of the UK to preview this extraordinary collection of work before it travels in part to represent the UK at the 2011 Prague Quadrennial International Exhibition this summer. In 2012 the Victoria & Albert museum will house the exhibition for six months followed by a National tour to English venues.

The exhibition also offers an exclusive sneak preview of the new Royal Welsh College landmark £22.5m development currently under construction which is due to open in the summer. The exhibition will take place in a

number of spaces including the newly built Richard Burton Theatre, and will mark the first public event to be housed in this exciting venue.

The exhibition will include drawings, paintings and photographs, 3D artefacts, scale models, specialist props, costumes and puppets, and there will be extraordinary interactive exhibits from Lighting, Video and Sound designers, Theatre Consultants and Theatre Architects.

The total number of exhibitors anticipated is over 200. It will include notable designers such as Richard Hudson, Marie-Jeanne Lecca, Paul Brown, Bob Crowley, and Yolanda Sonnabend to name but a few. Designs on display will range from Antony Gormley's *Sutra* with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and the Shaolin Warrior Monks for

Sadlers Wells to Es Devlin's designs and projections for the *Lady Gaga Monsterball Tour*. Ian MacNeil's new designs for the New York version of *Billy Elliott* will be shown alongside *Lion King* designer Richard Hudson's latest works for dance.

The exhibition also includes work from emerging talents such as the very latest winners from the prestigious Linbury Biennial Competition. In addition the ACTD (Association of Courses in Theatre Design) schools exhibit will show work from UK design schools and colleges.

A full programme of Workshops with exhibiting designers will be taking place with local schools, colleges and community groups throughout March and April 2011.

Design concepts for

well known classics will be displayed alongside new works, stimulating engagement and imagination of both Industry professionals and public visitors.

The theme of *Transformation & Revelation* specifically aims to explore the ideas and processes behind the final designs. The exhibition will provide an insight into how an idea becomes a design, and how it then reaches the stage in a realistic form. Exhibitors will explore the process that takes them from an initial idea to research; from 2 dimensional sketches and computer generated imagery to a 3 dimensional model, and finally to full size build and performance.

A full colour catalogue with editorial text and contributions from over 200 designers will also be

available to purchase during (and after) the exhibition.

As recent cuts in arts funding threaten the future existence of our regional theatres and theatre companies, an exhibition promoting recognition of the UK's diverse and rich pool of theatre design talent is crucial to help inspire the support necessary for the survival and development of British theatre, encouraging a new audience for theatre and inspiring a new generation of designers.

The exhibition is open weekdays from 9.30am to 8pm and weekends between 10am and 5pm between March 18th and April 16th 2011. Entrance to this exhibition is free to the general public.

www.theatredesign.org.uk/exhibitions/

“Taking the Chair, and introducing myself ”

Peter Mumford

When I was approached by Rick and the Executive to consider taking over the chairmanship of the ALD, I must confess to more than a little apprehension. It is a decision not taken lightly, as I can see that the responsibility for continuing and progressing the work and status of the organisation is a considerable one.

Rick Fisher has done a fantastic job in his role as Chairman and it is, as they say, going to be a hard act to follow. I'm very pleased that he will be staying on as part of the Executive because his experience will be invaluable.

I have now been to my first Exec meeting and the support, enthusiasm and experience of the committee gives me great confidence and encouragement. I will not be actually taking over the chair formally until later in the year, so I have a bit of time to learn the ropes!

I hope that as a designer of some years of experience that cover the most of the various applications of lighting design, I may have something useful to offer to both the post of chair and the ALD and very much look forward to the challenges ahead.

There are obvious current issues that the ALD is addressing in an increasingly influential way, not least the contractual fee and copyright structures currently in place (or not!). Although the ALD is not a union as such, I would certainly want to exert as much pressure as possible

along with the Exec to continue to improve both fees and working conditions and I applaud the current liaisons that have already been established with both the UK and US unions.

One of my main concerns relates to both the education of young lighting designers and their emergence into the 'business'. I'm aware that we now have a great number and variety of courses around the country in 'lighting design' and are producing a large number of graduates for a relatively small profession. As a more established designer I am in constant receipt of emails either submitting questions for theses or asking for work experience opportunities or simply asking 'how do I start?'. I always try to help with these requests but it is a rather a random process.

In America, it seems that students are much more prepared for working as assistants and also there is a professional structure within the theatre there that encourages, even sometimes insists on the use of assistant designers. I would therefore be keen to explore the possibility of creating a more formal apprenticeship scheme

in this country, which I think that the ALD could be very central to. Encouraging producing houses, both commercial and subsidised to budget in the inclusion of a lighting design assistant, not just when it's a large scale musical or spectacular, would open the door for many a talented young beginner. Stage designers have model assistants built into their budgets and costume designers have a costume supervisor more often than not.

This would, of course, need to be a subject for discussion with the educational courses too, and I believe that the expertise within the ALD could be most useful in guiding courses towards training their students to be ready for the role of assistant as well as equipping them as fully fledged designers.

I also think that an ALD annual forum where college leavers could meet and question a number of working designers would be a useful addition to the calendar, perhaps a day's seminar along the lines of Improbable's 'devoted and disgruntled' sessions would work.

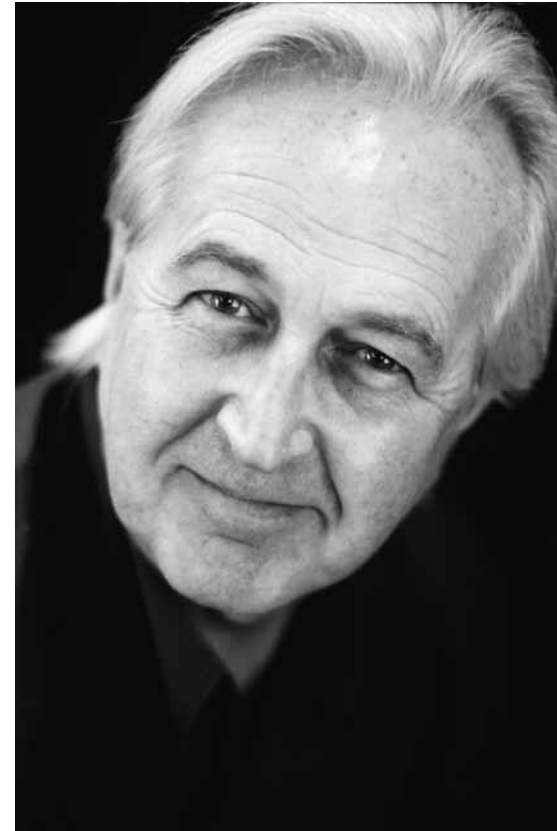
I am not a technocrat although I happily embrace all the new technologies (where appropriate). My background is Art School (stage design) and ten years of experimental theatre in the 70s, and though the 'experiment' still goes on, I now work broadly across all areas of performance, and include a decade of work in TV/film.

Like many of my colleagues I'm interested primarily in the 'art of lighting' as opposed to the mechanics, although I fully recognise the need for both.

Lighting designers work as 'lone fish' and the organisation of the ALD is so important to bring together us individuals to share, discuss, innovate and improve the state and status of the art of lighting design.

If you wish to know more bits and pieces about me do have a look on the website:

www.petermumford.info 🍷



Meetings....

The Railway Children

by Will Evans - the ALD's own Railway Child.

Sometimes we lighting people get labelled as 'anoraks' or a bit 'geeky'; totally not true of course but were we tempting fate by organising a meeting involving steam trains and lights?!

Members of the ALD went to London's Waterloo station in November to find out!

The Railway Children' has just finished its very successful stint at the old Waterloo International terminal, certainly one of the most interesting and successful site-specific performances the capital has seen for some years. This is site-specific theatre on a grand scale.

The stage is the tracks and the audience sits on the platforms – either side creating a traverse performance space. The situation of the performance space within the terminal is odd. For starters the building itself is huge and cavernous, much bigger on the inside than it looks from the train coming into Waterloo, and it seemed odd that the performance space is sited at the 'country' end of the platforms, only really just inside the canopy. The



Stirling Single No 1

reason for this (and thus the 10 minute walk from 'Front of House' to 'auditorium') was explained: the old Euro Star Terminal is on a curve and for the space to work it had to be sited on a straight section of track, and yes, the only straight section of track is at the far end of the station!

The Production was originally staged at the National Railway museum in York and one of the first questions asked of lighting designer Richard G Jones was 'What's different?' The simple answer was 'not a lot really'. The seating banks are deeper to accommodate

more people and so there is an extra section of trussing either side, and the playing space is slightly longer. But other than that, the rig and the design is basically the same. Richard added a few more Source Four Revolutions and extended his washes and general cover but there was

no huge re-design. Weight limits on the truss seemed to provide the biggest challenge with weight – not budget or power – restricting the numbers of lanterns. Richard had used a lot of Minuet Fresnels simply because they're light. The loading on the terminal's roof structure was very specific, even to the extent that should it snow, teams were on standby to clear it from the roof in case it tipped the balance!

Many of us wondered why the numerous escalators and travelators within the building were not working (it certainly would have made the long walk easier!), Richard told us that power had to be taken from the escalators to power the site and also it would have cost the production company £65K per escalator to get them back into working order!

What struck me most as a

whole about the production was the stage craft and ingenuity involved. Many simple tricks were employed to great effect such as the hidden smoke machine that tracks along under the false 'platform' on one side of the tracks, no automation here, just a well-oiled track and a live body pulling who has perfect timing!

The scene in the tunnel is also magnificently simple with a black gauze being pulled down either side of the tracks so the audience can see through the 'walls' of the tunnel. The action takes place on several moving trucks which run on the old railway tracks, pushed and pulled by a well-rehearsed team of crew dressed in period navvies' costume. This could, I'm sure, all have been done with motors and complex automation systems but somehow it wouldn't have

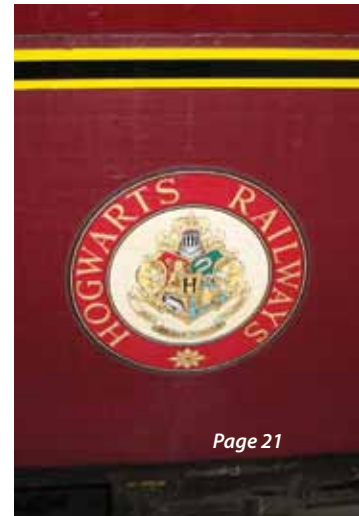
been right. Seeing how it all happened fitted the piece and the period, with the crew often becoming part of the action, including when the candle is blown out in the tunnel scene by the wind, no wireless DMX here just a birthday cake puff!

After a very good look around the theatre side of things we all got to meet the star of the show. Stirling Single was built in 1870 and weighs in at 66 tons. She has one massive 8ft 1inch diameter driving wheel each side (hence the name). Directly behind the loco is the Old Gentleman's Saloon, built in 1871, and it was this carriage that appeared in the original film version of the Railway Children in 1970, so is a true veteran of stage and screen! Behind these two vintage examples of British Railway and film history were two more modern examples



of railway/film history.

Somehow part of the 'Hogwarts Express' had made it to Waterloo! Two carriages used in the Harry Potter films were used as buffers between the vintage stock and the diesel locos pushing the whole train from the rear. Ah... yes, sorry to spoil the illusion. Stirling Single No1 does not steam into the performance space under her own steam. I think we were





all a little saddened, but not surprised, already a Health and Safety nightmare, having hot steam, fire and exhaust ploughing into a theatre space including 1000 people plus actors only feet from the front of the train is a bit much for even the most relaxed HSE safety inspector! However the illusion is impressive with wireless DMX and wireless dimming supplying a tiny smoke machine in the funnel and birdies flickering away on the foot plate, you could easily be fooled into believing she was in full steam. Even with modern Diesel locos at the rear, safety is still paramount and with the train moving at no more than 5mph, emergency brakes kick in if the train goes more than a millimetre over a certain point and CCTV is linked back to the DSM and other crew. There is no room for error and the systems are tested every day, as we were lucky enough to witness. Even at 5mph, a train and carriages weighing over 100 tons doing an emergency stop is still scary!!!

Inside the Gentlemen's saloon



We all ended the tour by having a little 'foot plate' tour and being shown round the engine and the Gentlemen's Saloon which included a few photos! All in all, a fantastic

trip and a big thank you has to go to Richard and his team, John, Dave, Adrian and all the others who helped bring this show to life. 🍀



Ms. Town takes Charged

One theatre, three spaces, six plays, three directors, four weeks, one LD. Your editor interviews an exhausted **Johanna Town**.

Clean Break is a theatre and education company that for 30 years has been working with women who have been affected by the judicial system. *Charged* – which ran at the Soho Theatre in November – was seen as their most ambitious project to date and what appeared a fairly straightforward, if challenging, project for lighting designer Jo Town, soon turned into a marathon.

Six plays by different authors, and with three directors, were to be presented in two cycles of three plays, and Jo suggested that I see them.

The original concept of the two play cycles involved condensing a string of current issues into 30-minute performances in found spaces, such as a real house; the audience would promenade from one space and issue to the next. Simple,

Jo thought. If a suitable house was found, the lighting demands would be restricted to 'minimal naturalistic' by the format of each room. A few table lamps here and there? A fluorescent switched on and off on cue by a dexterous SM with long arms in the kitchen? Sorted.

As no suitable house was to be found, and with the start of rehearsals looming, a decision was made – relocate to the Soho Theatre. This intimate theatre has two established spaces; the main house seats 140 and a studio space above that can easily accommodate half that number. Audience circulate in the ground floor bar and the basement restaurant. It was the restaurant that provided the third space. So we audience members were offered three plays per cycle, two cycles and three spaces. The clever part was

to arrange things so that the audience of max. 140 on any night was split in two on arrival starting with half in the studio for play 1, while the remainder were in the restaurant for play 2. We all came together in the main house for play 3 then went in opposite directions to see the plays we'd missed. Brilliant. Except for the effect on the lighting design, which had transformed from 'use what was bolted into the house', plus a clutch of practicals, into a full theatrical stage lighting rig x 3.

Now, the plays had already been structured for promenading audience and found spaces in a house – so shows had to be re-worked to suit a seated audiences in proscenium format (main house), in the round (studio) and cabaret-style (restaurant). Author Rebecca Prichard so loved the restaurant space





Dream Pill by Rebecca Prichard
performed in the restaurant.
Photo: Sheila Burnett

whole rehearsal process, to which everyone must adhere without fail. Scary. Director Tessa Walker joined the team by the middle of week two and at last designs for the restaurant where able to take shape, and in true theatrical tradition that was the one likely to cost most and squeeze the pips from the already tight budget.

Jo had her economy plan prepared. Unused lighting equipment in the (relatively) well-stocked main house could be used in the studio at no extra cost to the production, so the entire budget was at her disposal for the restaurant. Simple.

The day was Monday of week 3 and the first real visit at Soho. With the mainhouse and studio rigs combined Jo was confident that she could order the rental stock needed for the restaurant,. "Where there's a will there's a

she asked if she could have time to re-write her play, and conjured up *Dream Pill* from scratch (this was in the cycle I saw, and is pictured above). On the first day of

rehearsal one of the three directors collapsed with glandular fever and had to be replaced. The fun had started. Jo realised, "Four weeks to go, only five of the six plays were

ready, there was no director for two plays for the next week and a half, and to top it off no confirmed set designs". The situation was beginning to look like a slow motion car

crash so Jo took off her LD's collaboration hat and put on her Chief LX steel-capped boots to dictate terms – *there was to be a schedule not only for the tech weeks but the*

Johanna Town discusses lighting *Charged* at the Soho Theatre.

Doris Day by EV Crowe

Photo: Sheila Burnett

way”, she thought. Sadly the ‘will’ was the ALD Exec’s very own Will Evans, lighting not one but two shows in the main house during *Charged* studio tech period. And to make matters worse, he was going with his plays on tour; yes, and *taking Jo’s earmarked kit with him*. Deep breath.

Down to the restaurant for a recce. “No power”, Jo was told. “But what about the kitchen?” she replied. Well spotted; the chip fryer was electric and yes, they could spur off the main to provide a 32A feed. Low energy sprang to mind. Jo’s only prior experience with low energy lighting was at the Arcola Theatre (cf. *Focus* Feb/March 2009 “*Whatever The Producers Want!*”). She didn’t much like the restrictions or the light then, but was interested in trying out the new Selador LED.

As a theatrical venue, the subterranean restaurant posed only four problems for Jo: the audience was using it before the show; exposed cables and lighting positions didn’t mix well with diners, waiters and chip fryer; Jo hadn’t

seen the two plays at that stage and there was no confirmed set design. “What have I let myself in for?” This was going to be a “less is more” gig – less art, more restrictions. So the begging started. Hire companies, ex-employers, friends... anyone got a light? Friends at The Royal Court, producers at Clean Break, and Stage Electrics all stepped up to help. But there was still her dream of Seladors.

With the restaurant gyroscope spinning, Jo dashed to the main house as soon as Will had done his locust impression disappearing on tour with most of the kit devoured. She sorted out what was left and started planning her studio and mainhouse rigs. The design for the studio comprised mainly 500W Fresnels, or as the low-energy lobby call them ‘half kilowatt room heaters’. But where was the time left this week to see six rehearsals, attend set design meetings, block cue sheets, enjoy director discussions? Whew.

But wait, things couldn’t get any worse. Yes, they could; the leading actress from two of the plays had to





Doris Day by EV Crowe

Photo: Sheila Burnett

withdraw for family reasons. By the time her roles were re-cast Jo was in tech for the other plays and didn't ever get to see a full run.

With a schedule providing no more than four hours to set change and focus and then four hours to tech and dress each play, things were getting tight. And in addition to being the sole lighting designer, Jo also played the parts of chief LX and lighting

technicians. With three spaces being rigged and then rehearsed in all spaces at the same time and only one production electrician, Jo had no choice but to roll up those sleeves, again. The restaurant eventually boasted 12 ways of dimming for the birdies, three different manufacturers of LED moving heads and another 12 LED sources including six Seladors (thanks Mark

White at ETC). The problem with borrowing equipment from all sorts of sources and using architectural as well as theatrical luminaires is they all seem to come with different forms of power cable. There were 13A, 15A, 16A, and Powercon cables as well as IEC. There wasn't a single cable in any rig without its share of adaptors, extensions and sex-changers. Fault finding was a terrifying

experience for the stage management who were left to run the shows.

But enough tools, I hear you ask. What about the art? The restaurant is little more than an enlarged bar area with fixed bench seating at one end, the staircase from the lobby/bar coming down the middle, a bar at the far end and chairs and tables liberally spread around.

Headroom in the restaurant was about, errr, my headroom, or so it seemed when I stood up to offer a lady (my seat). Jo had positioned short towers strategically near entrances to the kitchen and fire exits to manage cables as much as providing lighting positions. Towers of beer crates provided set dressing and their internal illumination gave a dull naturalistic feel to the sordid space where two ten-year-old girls reflected on their lives

as child prostitutes. I can't say I was looking forward to *The Dream Pill*, but I shall remember the quality of the writing, the brilliant acting and direction for a very long time. The pill in question was the drug given to the girls. As they drifted in and out of their fantasies the Seladors provided the colour contrast to the naturalistic birdies. All LEDs certainly did the trick, except when the girls waved frenetically at the end of the play, their arms juddered. This is common to all LED sources, I later discovered.

Jo had ordered some LDDE fluorescents for general wash in the restaurant but there was no space to put them out of range of diners, waiters and chip fryers, so they were boxed up ready to head home, and that was the end of day two until...

..."Have you been upstairs?" Soutra the set designer asked.



That Almost Unnameable Lust by Rebecca Lenkiewicz

Photo: Sheila Burnett

Johanna Town discusses lighting *Charged* at the Soho Theatre.

paint the ceiling white while you're at it, and then reinstall the left-over fluorescents and a couple of LEDs, please!" Or words to that effect.

The problems stacked up. We won't even go into describing the implications of mixing tracking memory desks with architectural moving lights and fast changeovers between venues on three very different lighting desks [expletives deleted]. Ahhhhh!

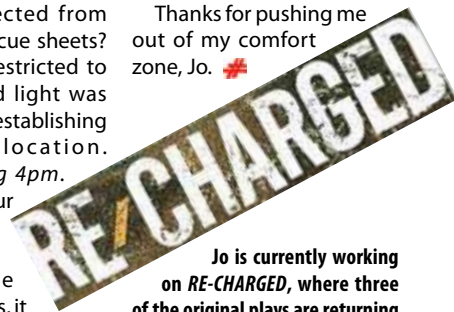
Four hours to tech and dress, take breath and repeat for the next play/space. The main house was less of an ordeal but the stress was affecting Jo. She eventually admitted to one of the directors that she was very sorry but she had completely forgotten, "where do the actors move to next?". She was annoyed with herself. This has never happened before. It was then gently

pointed out to her that she hadn't actually seen the plays in question – they had been discussed, but that was all. Just a few days left.

I asked Jo about the design process and she laughed. Her initial feelings proved right. Read the script and write a cue sheet, one that everybody involved could follow – directors, actors, SMS. Is this the first time a set of plays were directed from day 1 by the LX cue sheets? Each play was restricted to 30 minutes, and light was the key factor in establishing space, time, location. *Winter's evening 4pm.* With all the colour opportunities offered by LED sources and the LLDE fluorescents, it was the subtle colour temperature shifting that sent shivers down the backs of the audience.

Charged had been a huge journey of discovery, but Jo was proud of how she had behaved and had communicated with the three very different directors. She paced herself, but even so it had been a huge emotional drain. As for me, the three shows I saw, along with this interview, proved to be an enjoyable, if emotional experience as well.

Thanks for pushing me out of my comfort zone, Jo. 🍌



Jo is currently working on *RE-CHARGED*, where three of the original plays are returning to Soho's main stage from March 23 – April 9.

For more information please go to www.charged.org.uk

The studio had been rigged to Jo's specification. "You can't sit on the benches without hitting your head on the lights." Jo knew the studio's height restrictions but the rig had always comprised 500W Fresnels so that's what was used. But in the mean time this space had been completely reconfigured. Once a general office space, the studio had been given a makeover as a box within a box. A miniature pit theatre had been created with the help of temporary walls and three-step bench seating on all four sides. And yes, I can confirm that there wasn't

much headroom if you sat at the back at the top trying to be an inconspicuous middle-aged, balding, overweight, 6'2" male like me...

Jo went home that night in total agreement with the set designer that the rig wouldn't work, but there was no budget left for the studio. A sleepless night. Now where were those fluorescents? Jo redesigned the lighting on the way into the theatre the next morning, and then had the daunting task of informing the crew that their previous two days of work was all coming down "*Derig all the 500W room heaters,*

Lighting up the dark side

Focus is delighted to welcome back **Michael Coveney**, Chief Critic of the leading theatre website **Whatsonstage.com** and a contributor to its sister publication **Whatsonstage magazine**.

When Glenda Jackson embarked on her well-documented six-year affair with lighting designer Andy Phillips in the mid-1970s, she used to refer to him, with barbed affection, as “The Prince of Darkness.” They met on an RSC production of *Hedda Gabler*, directed by Trevor Nunn, which went on a world tour, although the younger, newly married Jackson had noted the coarsely attractive individuality of the hard-drinking Phillips when he was an electrician on the *Marat/Sade* at the Aldwych way back in 1964.

At one performance of *Hedda*, Jackson came off the stage and asked Andy why there had not been any light on her in that particular scene. “Because,” replied the feisty focuser, “you’re doing such an awful job and there’s no point in lighting it.” To

which Glenda replied, “You wouldn’t even know how to light a cigarette.”

Well, I dare say there’s often tension between actors and technicians, but this particular friendship was unusually passionate and combative. But the anecdote does illustrate the power exerted by designers over actors. They can make actors look good, bad, or invisible, sometimes unwittingly so.

“I have no way, and therefore want no eyes; I stumbled when I saw.” So says poor blind Gloucester in *King Lear*, but everyone onstage and off at the Donmar Warehouse was reduced to the same condition (without any extra gouging) when the lights went out early in the New Year.

Derek Jacobi’s acclaimed performance in the leading role was plunged into darkness by a power cut in

the middle of the second act, just as Kent was put in the stocks. For a few minutes, apparently, the cast struggled on as best they could. But after fifteen minutes, the audience was asked to leave.

That was that. No light, no show. The theatre was in darkness for over an hour as energy supplier UK Power Networks carried out cable repairs. Most proper theatres, I daresay, have working lights they could throw on, or a back-up system of some sort.

But the Donmar, for all its awards and glamour, is not, in that sense at least, a proper theatre. Nor does it operate a “proper” understudy system, so that when an actor in the previous production, Stephen Sondheim’s *Passion*, sustained a serious eye injury from a gun firing blanks, the performance schedule was thrown into temporary disarray.

We won’t even begin to go into the delays, injuries and uproar surrounding the Broadway opening of *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* (and how ambiguously challenging a title is *that* to the lighting design profession?) but none of the technical hitches involves the lighting, as far as I can see. One thing for sure: the lighting of a big Broadway show sets the mood and somehow the tempo of the performance, whatever the actors do.

The same is true at the Donmar. As usual at this address, Neil Austin’s lighting is germane to how Michael Grandage wants *Lear* played: fast, no fuss, clear as a bell, in full light, even on the blasted heath. The entire action is contained in a white boarded stockade (designed by Christopher Oram) on which Austin’s penetrating

light picks out the blotches and imperfections in the wood as though they were boils and veins on a human face.

This took me right back to William Gaskill’s all-lit-up, white light *Macbeth* in 1967, with Alec Guinness and Simone Signoret, which I’m sure Andy Phillips must have designed. It was unheard of to play a tragedy in full light, and certainly not *Macbeth*, where “nights black agents to their preys do rouse” with almost alarming frequency, one way or another.

Musicals are more commonly played in bright light, none more so than the recent delightful *Salad Days* at the Riverside Studios. As we shivered through the coldest December on record, and into the New Year, here was sheer unadulterated escapism into sunshine, laughter and falling in love,

Salad Days at the Riverside Studios. "... sheer unadulterated escapism into sunshine, laughter and falling in love" Lighting: Mark Doubleday. Photo: Roy Tan



Aboard a flying saucer: **Salad Days** at the Riverside Studios. Lighting: Mark Doubleday. Photo: Roy Tan



and it started at the entrance to the vast second studio, where the cast handed out graduation scrolls as we progressed to a green college lawn, doubling later as Hyde Park, surrounded by huge yellow drapes that seemed deliberately designed to exclude the real world outside.

The lighting of Mark Doubleday therefore had to "set the mood" before the show even started, then illuminate a vast cubic area without shadow or dead patches – easier said than done, I imagine, and on limited resources; the show was brilliantly presented by the little opera company *Tête à Tête* – and then had to absorb "inserted" needle-sharp revue sketches in a beauty parlour, a West End nightclub, and aboard a flying saucer.

While in seasonal mood, I recall with similar affection, too, the lighting of Chris Davey for *Beasts and Beauties* at Hampstead Theatre, a brilliantly simple and

vigorous re-telling of fairytale and folklore by poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy, which was sparing in effects but perfect in tone and density. And I felt the same about a very different children's show, the thirteenth successive annual presentation of *The Snowman* at the Peacock, originally directed at the Birmingham Rep by Bill Alexander, in which Tim Mitchell's lighting mixed warmth and wintriness with often dazzling results.

While pondering this article, I re-visited two of the best shows of last year, the RSC's *The Winter's Tale* and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Love Never Dies*, in new circumstances. Each contains not only excellent lighting plots by, respectively, Jon Clark and Paule Constable; each also contains one of those great dramatic moments enhanced by lighting that shakes an audience by its collective throat.

The great switch in *A Winter's Tale* became literally that, as the whole stage at







the excellently reconfigured Roundhouse was transformed at the flick of one. Greg Hicks as Leontes suddenly conceives he's a cuckold: "I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances but not for

joy, not joy." Social merriment expires in a moment. And the phantasmagoria of *Love Never Dies* (critics were invited back to consider the changes that have gone on since the show opened) climaxes in the title

song, delivered by Sierra Boggess as Christine in a cathedral of light sculpted in beams as the stage revolves and a tug of love is enacted in the onstage "wings."

Constable herself recently defined lighting for me as "telling a story in a beautiful way." Both these instances of interventionist lighting make a crucial contribution to the main story, one of both narrative propulsion and poetic enhancement. With a show like *Cirque du Soleil's Totem* at the Albert Hall earlier this year, the whole eyeball feast is a non-stop light show, designed by Étienne Boucher, with lasers, banks of spots ranged around

the venerable interior and some amazing water ripples on a flat surface, a raised disc in front of a bullrush forest (where lurk the musicians) which is now a lily pond, now a swamp, now an ocean, all across about five square metres.

There's still nothing more stirring in the theatre than a good old-fashioned follow-spot. The BBC TV documentary about the London Palladium over the Christmas holidays (produced and directed by Lucy Kenwright, Bill's daughter) featured Linford Hudson, the cheerful chappie who has been "spotting" the stars from his Argyll Street eyrie for

no less than 47 consecutive years. He positively glowed with happiness.

If the Italian clown in the *Cirque* show had been any better, he'd have been the beneficiary of some great "spotting" in the Albert Hall; there has to be something extraordinary at the end of that beam, after all. I remember seeing Frank Sinatra in the same venue, making the same vast arena seem like a late-night cosy bar: he merely sat on a stool, hunched his shoulders, and sang his heart out, pinpointed in the darkness by a single spot, born along by the Buddy Rich band. Real theatre. And so simple. 🍷

Lighting up the dark side

Michael Coveney



Tom White asks: Does your computer work for you? Or do you work for your computer?

As a London-based freelancer I appear to spend most of my time trekking up and down the country for work. I travel fairly lightly with the exception of my not so light personal computer. Be it a PC or a Mac we take them everywhere and usually in a fairly non-sensible shoulder or briefcase-style bag. I dread to think of the damage that we are doing to our backs over the course of our working lives.

I recently realized that I had taken my Mac to work with me every single day since its purchase in 2006 and the number of those days where I actually hadn't used it were too many to ignore. The traveling to and from the production site is normally a good time to get a lot of work done. But if you have been in technical rehearsals for 10 or 11 hours, is it really a good idea for you to then sit hunched over your laptop? Also I find that I make work for myself if my computer is in front of me; endless to do lists and lists of pre-programming information and synopsis information for the piece I am working on. More importantly I was beginning to become concerned that I was spending too much time looking at my computer while in production, and not at the stage picture in front of me. I was also desperately seeking a way to make the most of the technical rehearsal period and try to use that time just for lighting and not tidying up show files and cue lists etc.

I decided that enough was enough and my next production would rely as little as possible on my laptop. I immediately went to 'The Graphic Centre' and got fully kitted out. I arrived



at the first production meeting relaxed and well prepared having reread the script on the train (with no laptop for distractions). After speaking with the director and set designer I was oddly reassured that a mere pen and paper could enable me to quickly (albeit crudely) sketch out some ideas for certain moments of the show. Those ideas would then remain in my sketchbook throughout the entire process to go back on, no trawling endlessly through folder directory after folder directory or trying to find an earlier unsaved draft.

The only exception in this process however was the plan. Drafting will always be a process that is far quicker and clearer by the use of technology. However I did manage to completely maximize my time by having prepared a written list of exactly what I would have to draw.... (It used to be a spread sheet, mad I know).

Here is an example of the Vectorworks draft list:

1. Profile shot for (M) at desk (P22), Steep Front Angle, Cold, L711/L200?
2. Acting Area Wash x 9 area's (Gam872)
3. Wide Unit from the circle rail for front fill (Scene 9)
4. Act 2 Xlite from midstage L204 PAR 64?
5. Groundrow Cyc L204

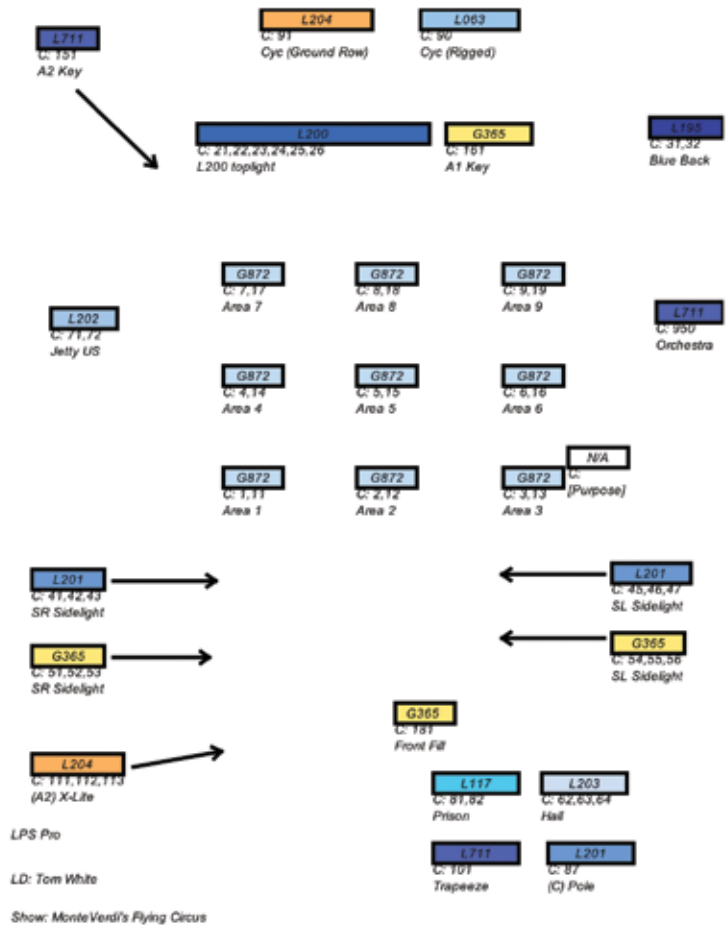
Using this information along with the tech spec of the venue I could rattle out my rig plan in one morning and there would be no lugging around my laptop upon which to view it. I love a large plan printout it's the contents of your imagination on paper. It reminds you that it's real and it's going to happen. There's nothing like bit of pressure to sharpen the mind.

Once this was accomplished I would normally type out a cue list comprising of cue number, cue point, lighting and time information. Now I do still believe this to be a useful exercise, but it was time to reserve it for the preview period when there is a little more room for tidying up and logging what you've done. On this production I kept my cues firmly written in the script (for now at least).

One of the last pre-production things to undertake was a magic sheet/cheat sheet. Just the act of drawing the sheet out means that your channel numbers will be permanently etched in your mind for quick recollection when under pressure. There is no peering at cramped LX pipes searching for the one instrument that will complete the look. Whilst feeling the burning eye's of your colleagues waiting on you to hurry up.

An example of the show's magic sheet is shown right. I use LPS pro a lot in preparing production paperwork (Rosco's answer to lightwright). Its magic sheet tool is very useful and you can create a clear and easy to read layout of your rig very quickly. The final sheet to accompany this is a list of groups and palettes for quick access. I typed and printed this for clarity but there is nothing wrong with a hand written one. With all of this paperwork printed I was ready to go.

In production I had no distractions but the stage itself. Granted I was sat near the desk so I could easily read channel information. I also feel that colleagues can be put off by the



Tom White asks: Does your computer work for you? Or do you work for your computer?

sheer amount of technology on your desk. Some people don't discuss an issue with you because you appear to be hard at work on your computer (granted this sometimes has its advantages). But otherwise It's easy to isolate yourself from the rest of your team when you are surrounded by technology. We should all remember that a great production comes from good teamwork.

Work notes are almost always better handwritten, then you have a permanent record of the notes you have done and those lingering notes that were you to ever haven enough time you would accomplish. It's also much easier to tear out a page of Hang/Rig notes and distribute to the appropriate production electrician etc. I fear that some of us (particularly we younger LDs) have forgotten that it's OK to work on paper.

This article was not intended to insist to you all that we stop using our own personal computers. I just feel that sometimes it's a good exercise for us to review our own process and how we use technology to its advantage. The iPhone is a fabulous invention – I can already use it to check which cue we are in onstage and bring up channels (desk compatibility permitting). I haven't used an iPad but I have seen it with EOS/ION designers' remote software; it looks like a fantastic invention and it will revolutionize how we work as will tablet PCs in general. However, it is important to remember that no matter how great all of these innovations are we should not become too obsessed with their capabilities and remember that the technology is there to assist us and not the other way around.

So why not save your money and treat yourself to a SketchPAD this Easter? 🍷



*I would like to thank Graham Barwell at Thames Digital Reprographics for the plan printing; they have a very fast turnaround time and can bike drawings to you (even if your working in the Midlands!). Photos were taken by the set designer Helen Stewart. The production was **Monteverdi's Flying Circus** by Armonico Consort directed by Anna Tolputt.*



Tom White is a UK based lighting designer specialising in Theatre (particularly new writing), Opera, Dance and Music Concerts (Classical and Rock). He is represented by Karen Baker at Associated Arts and lives with his partner and daughter in Fulham West London.

The Handbook of Techniques for Theatre Designers

Colin Winslow. Reviewed by **James Laws**

*The Handbook of Techniques for
Theatre Designers*
Colin Winslow
ISBN 978 1 84797 200 2
The Crowood Press Ltd 2010
£16.99

Why are we reviewing a book about scenic and costume design?

When reading this book, I was struck more by the revelations of common ground between the design specialists than by the lack of details about lighting. This is a book on communication between departments and between designers of all sorts and the audience.

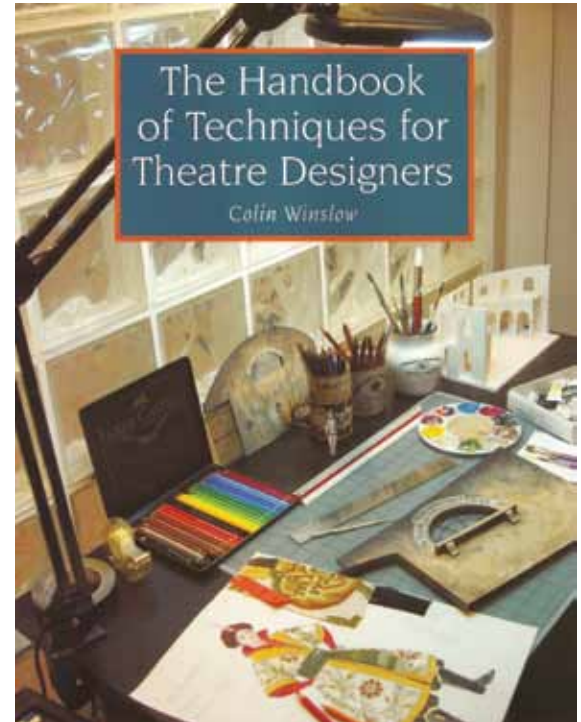
This is the third Handbook of which Colin Winslow has published, the others being on *Set Design* and *Model Making for Set Designers*. To each he brings his many years of experience at all levels of professional theatre. Items that will help us in *Techniques for Theatre Designers* include perspective and the vanishing point, model making and the materials and tools to use.

There is a very good chapter on Using Colour, which discusses the differences between the scenic and lighting colour wheels. Colour psychology from the scenic point of view reveals why red may not be the logical colour for STOP at traffic lights. The author advocates the use of light and shade on the edges and corners of some painted sets and cloths, in anticipation of the same techniques being used by the lighting designer.

It is with the chapter on Digital Techniques that the worlds of lighting and scenery are seen to converge. Photoshop, AutoCAD, TurboCAD & Vectorworks are all compared and illustrated, together with the more esoteric Autodesk 3ds Max and Poser, which offers a range of stock figures

and clothing. The amazing Spectrum Z510 Colour 3D Printing System is explained (see a video on www.ualberta.ca/CNS/3DPRINTER).

This copiously illustrated book is a well laid out and comprehensive help to anyone who is concerned with how their work is seen and presented. It will introduce students to good habits that should last a lifetime. These include a strategy that we should all apply with our lighting, to the probable benefit of our careers: It is always a good idea to discuss the progress of the costumes with the director during the rehearsal period and make him or her feel part of the team. 🌸



Lighting designers do it in the dark

Nick Moran reports from The White Light / ALD / Central School
New Technology Showcase at the Embassy Theatre at Central
on 28th January



Above: Guests and students mingled in the theatre between demos, catching up and making new contacts. Second and Third year lighting students from Central's BA Theatre Practice course ran demos of the lighting products to order on the ETC Eos and Grand MA consoles.

White Light were the major sponsors of the whole day, providing technical staff and equipment, and the refreshments at the quiz (but not the winning team alas). The students worked with Dom Yates and Nate Seekins of White Light to plan and prepare the rig in Wimbledon. Once on site, student Chief Lx Dom Houlison lead his team from load in on Monday through to the load out on Saturday.

Right, top: Paul Young of Pixel Range brought their newest Pixel Par – that actually does pale colours, and that “interesting LED brown”.

Right: “Old School” cloud projection from a moving light? This innovation – a copy of the art work from an old Patt 252 / VS Effects disc made to replace the animation wheel in a Mac 700 – aroused much interest

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



Top: Bruno Poet talks to Central student Ziggy Jacobs at the console. Martin Professional's Matt Pitman looks on.

Mid: Does the presence of live concert LDs Andi Watson and Chris "Squib" Swain indicate an increasing convergence of techniques and interests between theatre lighting and lighting for live music?

Bottom: Nick Richins in search of... Nick was part of the winning team in the 2nd annual ALD quiz that followed the showcase.


February / March 2011

4TH KNIGHT OF ILLUMINATION AWARDS

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

LONDON, 11TH SEPTEMBER 2011

Organized by:   

official sponsor: 

Proudly supported by:     

Sponsors:      

