

June / July 2008

Award Nominations Special

# ALD # FOCUS

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



Steven Berkoff's "On The Waterfront".  
Lighting by Mike Robertson. Story on page 8.

*In the 5k backlight this issue:*

**Clay Paky "Knight of Illumination" Award nominations • Mike Robertson on the waterfront • Frozen Lights • ALD developments... and much more!**

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# Rick's Remedy

It has been a busy time for the ALD as we prepare for the AGM, accept applications for this year's Michael Northen bursaries, and get ready for the ABTT show which includes the new Clay Paky awards. And meetings: there is a chance to see *Lord of the Rings* and meet with Paul Pyant and David Howe before this epic adventure leaves Theatre Royal Drury Lane (page 22). All this along with the production of *Focus* and the everyday enquiries and running the office involves lots of hours from the Exec committee as well as many members and I want to thank them for their commitment to the ALD in their already busy schedules.

Collectively we have been wondering why we bother, and to this end we have tried to spend some time imagining what the ALD could and should be in the future. There will be a good discussion at the AGM about this and I am sure *Focus* will provide a

forum for your views. Please read the reports about this in the next issue, we are anxious for your input.

One of the main goals of the ALD is to raise awareness of lighting design in the UK, but as ever we need the help of you and the companies for whom we work to give us proper recognition and billing. It still really irks me when I see some members of the design team mentioned without proper credit for lighting. The ALD and Equity both have a very clear view on this. If there is to be a mention of any designer on publicity materials then the entire team should be equally credited. The normal way is set, costume, lighting, and sound in equal format and in that order. If there is need for a credit for choreography or projection or some other special input let that be before or after the designers, but the goal is not to split up the designer team.

Recently one of our major

national companies failed to do this properly for a major new production. They tried to wheedle out of it with phrases like 'customary practice' or 'house style'. Often this company does not mention any of the design team, and while this is regrettable, it is acceptable if all designers are treated equally. I felt it was essential to write to the artistic director making the ALD's position known. While I am hopeful the letter will have some effect even leading designers need to be vigilant.

The ALD rider is very clear on this subject and this is one of the many reasons for using it every time you work in the UK. Managements can strike out inappropriate clauses and then at least you know the terms are clear. I try to get my agent to send out the rider as soon as a job is accepted so that it can form part of the contract that is offered. I believe that failure to live up to the proper billing should



be a breach of contract and I have received damages (or at least fulsome apologies). If you feel you are not properly billed, please let the office know and we can support you to get your work and the role of lighting designer properly recognised.

The Clay Paky awards are another new way of celebrating the excellent work across the world of lighting for concerts, TV and live performance are further detailed in this issue. They will be awarded at the 30th annual ABTT dinner on June 11th. In addition to thanking Clay Paky, a corporate member of the ALD, for their generous sponsorship I relate the most pleasurable experience it gave me in our special feature on the awards starting on page 15.#

Regards, Rick

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# Professional's (photo) Colour Supplement

**For once I'm writing to you from home having been in endless model and production meetings around the world... Mark Jonathan**

## Frying High

Last month included intense meetings at the New Japanese National Theatre which looks like it has an impressive lighting rig. I realise I'd better try and learn some Japanese as 'the man in the street' doesn't speak English.

I did get as far as 'Arigato', although I generally found I could get by on smiling cheerily and saying, "Merry Christmas" quickly. I must say I was very impressed with the Air Japan air hostess who shimmied backwards up the gangway of the plane with a full teapot topping up our cups as she went.

Japan is 8 hours ahead of the UK and I hadn't been back for more than a few days when I had to go for meetings in Las Vegas and Los Angeles. Of course, that's

8 hours the other way. I tried to warn my body that there would be some 'disruption to normal service'. I could tell it wasn't happy.

## Viva Las Vegas

Las Vegas was crazy but the Cirque de Soleil's *Love* and *KA* were wonderful while I found *Zumanity* completely awful. I was surprised as I've such high regard for Cirque du Soleil's integrity. Of course, I think that I was in the minority along with my travelling companion in our negative views.

It always amuses me to see tourists admiring the faux frescos at the Venetian in Vegas. Even though I work in the theatre this pretence at reality seems strange to me. Model meetings followed in LA for operas that I'll be lighting later in the year.

## Back off the Piste

The only thing was to slip back to ethereal reality in the Alps for a last ski in the Alps; we had fresh powder on the 1st of May, fantastic.

That was followed all too quickly by a ballet in London and more meetings in the newly refurbished opera house in Helsinki. It's got a massive moving light rig which we pre-focused for the *Der Freischutz* which I'm lighting there in September. I was warned that I couldn't use all of the rig though as it would make too much noise. *Manufacturers please take note: fan noise doesn't go down well with conductors and sound designers.*

## Photogenics

I try to remember to carry my camera so that months later when I'm working on

the plan for a show I can refer to the pictures I've taken of cranky FOH lighting positions or the set model from strange angles as I try to work out where to put the lights on the plan. What I can't do is take a good production photograph.

I'm not a photographer and usually I'm still lighting the show. Last week, I smiled at Bill Cooper, who must be one of the world's greatest dance photographers. He knows how much I admire his photographs and he knows I know how hard it is to take a photograph of a dancer on the move in my 'dark and moody' lighting...

Of course, the most amusing thing (not) was that the photographer was here to take pictures but I hadn't got a cue in the desk for act 2! I could hear the

camera shutters clicking as I chattered out the channel numbers and Barry Hope (God bless the programmer) tapped away at the lighting desk.

So, as we haven't got time, or in my case the capability to take a good picture we are reliant on others particularly the production photographer. So, as time goes on I make a point of getting to know the photographers and finding out how their pictures turn out.

## Ex(dis)tortion?

I was interested to get an email recently from LD Andrew Ellis. He asked: "I was wondering what the ALD's position is regarding providing the LD with production photos?" Good question, Andrew.

He goes on to explain: "The



"The only thing was to slip back to ethereal reality..."

I've certainly been caught in this issue and paid for pictures in the past but clearly we don't get paid adequate fees to do this. We have put a clause in the ALD's Rider asking for access to photographs. I do feel the position has changed. Many photographers do allow us to use their pictures in exhibitions, catalogues and on our websites.

Certainly, you need to make friends with the 'press department'. Find out whether the press office can give you a disc of the production photographs. Make friends with the photographer.

If I'm discussing access to photographs I sometimes mention to photographers that I'm giving them billing and publicity on my website, and that on a number of occasions a photographer has earned additional income when a magazine or book publisher has asked to publish a photo.

So, while some of this can

be agreed at the contractual stage the personal contact will come later. My advice is develop a good relationship with both the press office and the photographers.

Incidentally, I think that you should make sure that your agent checks at the contractual stage that you do expect to be billed in the press pack and with any photographs that are provided to the press along with other merchandising.

I have caught companies providing photographs and billing the set and costume designer and not the lighting designer. The Royal Ballet does now credit the LD in its yearbooks and calendars, which are on sale in the ROH bookshop, where before it only credited the other designers.

Having succeeded there I notice that LDs aren't billed on the ROH fridge magnet wrappers while the other designers are! So, we all need to be attentive. We have

made sure the Royal Opera is aware of our outrage that they chose to be selective in

billing the designer but not the LD on their recent *Minotaur* poster.#



Leticia Muller in Birmingham Royal Ballet's 'Far from a Madding Crowd', lighting by Mark Jonathan, photo by Bill Cooper.

*production company hasn't offered to provide any photos themselves, instead putting me in touch directly with the photographer, who wants to charge £10 per digital image, or £8 per print.*

*As I want 10 images this is going to be quite expensive. I plan to work for the company again and want to make sure I'm in a strong position to negotiate regarding photos. The images this photographer took are of very good quality and would be perfect for my portfolio, but I feel it's unreasonable to expect me to fork out hundreds of pounds for images of my work..."*



# “Sixty seconds with ...” Paul Pyant



## Sum up your career to date in a short sentence.

Incredibly fortunate happenstance.

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

*Xerxes* for English National Opera. New in 1985...my debut at the English National Opera. A fantastic production (which is still live in the rep at ENO) revivals of which have taken me all over the world. It was the first “grown up” production or at least the first production which received a “grown up” response.

*Wind in the Willows* 1990 Olivier Theatre. One of my all time favourites, brilliant design from Mark Thompson, and made full use of the facilities of the Olivier.

*Carousel* 1992 Lyttleton Theatre. Another Brilliant design, this time Bob Crowley.

## What were the worst and best moments of your career?

Both too numerous to recount!

## Where are you now?

In my office in Lewes... have snuck an afternoon off from Chichester where I am lighting a production in the Minerva Theatre.

## What is your favourite theatre/space?

I have several but if pushed it would have to be Glyndebourne, which I consider to be my spiritual home after so many extraordinary seasons there.

## Where/what would you most like to light?

I am fairly unambitious and have no real “wants” on my list – would just like to continue to do productions that interest me... hopefully for some time to come yet at a pace I can cope with.

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

Young and wealthy.

## Where would you rather be right now?

With someone young and wealthy!

## What is your favourite colour?

Lee 120 Deep Blue.

## If you were a colour what would it be?

Lee 120 of course!

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

Endless previews.

## Which part of the job do you like most?

The anticipation.

## Which part of the job do you enjoy least?

The focus.

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

- 1: A good team (stage management, electrician/programmer, assistant)
- 2: A few crates of champagne
- 3: Insect repellent

## What keeps you awake at night?

At my great age, not a lot.

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

A little unfair to air my personal prejudices - but never a one to include too many moving lights (including *Lord of the Rings!*)

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

It would be a very long list indeed - I would prefer to think that life is a process

which you keep learning on a daily basis, gathering bits and pieces from every experience which influence you on every level.

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

You cannot come out of a production humming the lighting.

## How would you like to be remembered?

Young and wealthy! #

# Mike Robertson on the waterfront

**After reading Clare Brennan’s review of Steven Berkoff’s recent Nottingham production of “On The Waterfront” in which she commented, “Throughout the play the stage is bare. Lights cut geometrically through blackness to sculpt the scene-shifts: two white lines are roads running between city blocks; a cone is a table in a bar room; an oblong the nave of a church,” your editor decided to kidnap lighting designer Mike Robertson between production meetings and demand an explanation....**

## Homework

Probably best known as the 1954 black and white movie starring Marlon Brando, *On The Waterfront* is based on a series of newspaper articles exposing events in 1950s New York harbour by describing the bullying and corruption tactics adopted by unions at the time. In this story, the union boss, Johnny Friendly, and his gang of henchmen keep their positions and wealth using intimidation, violence and even murder to prevent their ‘methods’ being discovered by the newly formed Waterfront Crime Commission. One senior member of Johnny Friendly’s clan (Charley Malloy), has a young brother Terry who is initially ignorant of their tactics

and enjoys his relatively privileged position as errand boy until he is involved in the murder of a dock worker who was threatening to ‘squeal’ to the authorities. Everyone in the firm’s employ must remain ‘D & D’ at all times – Deaf and Dumb. Terry meets the distraught sister of the murdered man and this develops into a Romeo and Juliet relationship which plays in counterpoint to the testosterone-fuelled union, dock workers and management’s labour war. Terry eventually is pushed to the edge and goes to the authorities.

## The director and designers

Mike Robertson has worked with Steven Berkoff several times before, and

consequently they have a good “shorthand” when collaborating. Mike explained, “I am very respectful of Steven’s work even if sometimes the working conditions require an extra injection of diplomacy,” he said. “Steven has a unique skill of combining the art forms of the cinema and stage into a balletic free-flowing creation. Having come across the stage script by original screenwriter Budd Shulberg when in Richard Eyre’s office, he asked the then National Theatre boss if he was staging it? Told that it was ‘not for us’ the seed was planted to mount it himself, as he views it as a “Greek tragedy for the post war era”.

In terms of the set design, Mike explained, “Steven had met the modern artist Patrick Hughes a while back and had approached him to create a concept using his inimitable perspective style. So we went about seeing how we could conjure the atmospheres and locations required by the text on what would be a largely standing set”.

The shorthand in this case was to talk about each lighting moment in terms of three chief ingredients; Face, Form, Both. As a director, Berkoff does not dictate lighting styles and needs, but he knows what he wants and what works. It is Mike’s aim to create an atmosphere, an environment, into which actors can develop the characters – shafts of light,



**Mike Robertson**

*Carried round gallery openings by a succession of extended ‘aunts’ and ‘uncles’, hopefully something permeated his flannel sling aside from soggy rusks; childhood years were more underscored with oil paint than baby oil. Conveniently arriving at school in Edinburgh at a time when they had just built a new theatre, he carved the bold position of the first boy in the school’s 150 year history to NOT play rugby or indeed sport of any kind. Possibly these factors have led in part to his fractionally below racing-snake figure. Games periods were divided being electrocuted in the theatre, learning how to cook for 400 in the school kitchens and the development of plumbing skills in the boilerhouse. Light, food and pipework remain steady passions, although sadly sport has yet to feature.*

*On the rooftop: "The 709 on the pigeons' faces (the birds were acted by members of the cast) is quite true to the birds' real colouring and the Liberty Green on the skyscape represented the all-embracing presence of the US dollar, AND it looks like pigeon shit."*





*Far left: The church scene, defining the space and adding faces.*



*Left: Colour creates atmosphere in Johnny Friendly's office.*



*Far left: "Lights cut geometrically through blackness to sculpt the scene-shifts: two white lines are roads running between city blocks"*



*Left: The courtroom scene: "I wanted to delineate the space, so the first step was to separate those in the dock from the witnesses".*

# Mike Robertson on the waterfront

patches of illumination which can be toyed with by blocking moves or actor's spontaneous feelings. Lighting forms give atmosphere and location; lighting faces gives emphasis and focus pulling. The skill is knowing when to use either or both. "There are times when the lighting dominated to define an environment and other points in the piece where it virtually receded to allow the action to speak its truth more quietly", he said.

## The seeds of a design

When the project was first mentioned, Mike said he had a mental picture of film noir. Not in the way of replicating the movie, but emulating the iconic nature of certain filmic devices; the subtle mix of lighting statements combined with Foley effects to realise this emphasis or subjugation; the constant visual underscoring, very high contrast ratios used in key dramatic scenes and a indubitable bravery by the

film's creatives to underlight certain moments to heighten the dramatic effects. These were the initial images of Mike's 'film noir' thoughts.

The play is powerful yet emotional and cries out for dramatic lighting contrasts, but what contrasting elements of the design did Mike focus on initially? "I often begin the mental image in terms of backlight and delineation with the facelight used as the 'relief,'" he said, "When thinking of the facelight the angle and quality of light shifts in sympathy or contrast to the initial 'structure'". We all know the benefits of using the 45/45 degree angles used to light an actor's face naturally, but as this geometry changes, so does the emotional impact. "This play is full of testosterone; it is brutal in places. That standard cover angle is too soft, too camp for 'brutal', but fine for 'romantic'. And the heart of this story is an impossible love story. So

I double rigged - standard angles and skin tone colour for the romantic, with 60 degrees up and straight onto stage with cooler colours for the dramatic scenes."

## Adding depth

This was sounding a little tame. A double-rigged general cover? So why had the critics licked their pencils in delight and opened their eyes to the lighting? The set was minimal. The concept by Patrick Hughes was translated into a cohesive stage set by Helen Fownes with a two-dimensional skyline surrounding the acting area, dominated by a black grid skyscape. The stage floor was plain apart from two sets of diagonal tramlines which were picked out at times with shutter cuts. There was no scenery and few props, so in addition to atmosphere and emotion, location was added to the list of lighting design requirements.

Mike explained a typical

dramatic scene – the courtroom. "I wanted to delineate the space, so the first step was to separate those in the dock from the witnesses and audience. A stark three quarter backlight was shuttered to light an oblong of the stage floor very brightly in which the accused sat. This emphasised that the whole group was culpable together." Mike explained that additionally, individuals were picked out with front pinspots, very accurately focused. To heighten the tension, and maintain the separation, the protagonist in the dock downstage was lit at head height from the opposite wing, and haze was introduced which emphasised the shafts of light and separation.

## What did colour have to do with it?

Mike's choice for the confrontational style of the play was 708, a cool blue, "It doesn't go green and ruin facial tones when you

check down". But he relented in the romantic scenes by using a slightly warmer 702. Depending on the time of day, the two blues on the skyscape were augmented by a little orange and cool lavender. "But I had to have some fun," he admitted. "In the scene set on the rooftop, where pigeons were kept, I played a subliminal game with colour. The 709 on the pigeons' faces (the birds were acted by members of the cast) is quite true to the birds' real colouring and the Liberty Green on the skyscape represented the all-embracing presence of the US dollar, AND it looks like pigeon shit!"

## Lighting in performance

An important characteristic of Steven Berkoff's style is 'flowing'. Filmic and continuous, there are no pauses for scene changes and no blackouts. Each scene segues into the next. From the pigeons on the roof scene

# Mike Robertson on the waterfront

described previously, the scene transforms straight into a bar room (see front cover), just with a lighting change. “I visualised a morphing of one scene to the next,” Mike explained, “and so we used VL3500s overhead to provide powerful beams and shapes needed for these transformations.” Movements of automated lights were also choreographed to the constantly changing musical canvas comprised of fifties’ pop songs.

We do ‘art not tools’ in *Focus*, but what is Mike’s attitude to moving lights, on which he relied for this play? “I think of a mover as a capricious child who comes home and screams about everything single thing they did at school that day. It’s power is diminished by playing with all the options at once. But that said, they can be amazing and I have found if moved considerably and infrequently the power of them is progress itself”.

“The Nottingham Playhouse LX department has an unwritten rule that for every lamp rigged that isn’t used during the show, the lighting designer forfeits a bottle of wine [*posh crew? - Ed*]. “Well, I needed some conventionals as backup in case the VL’s didn’t do the morphing as I imagined it,” admitted Mike, “so I guess I owe them five and a half cases.” [*I can hear Mark Jonathan’s words ringing in my ear, ‘Well, that’s his fee gone then’*].

The final rig was quite streamlined for Nottingham’s size of stage. Just thirty profiles, thirty PARs, a dozen pinspots, the VLs and a couple of 5k backlights.

## Tricks of the trade

So, spilling the beans to lesser mortals, how does Robertson create? “There are the real-time flashes of inspiration but essentially it is simply down to a lot of preparation. The way I

work is to take copious notes at rehearsal. Every scene, every moment is noted and visualised as a mini-rig. These mini-scenes are then compared and similarities appear and that’s when the rig planning starts. I need to know how it will look at any point of the play. I will note the time of day and any other natural factor, but most importantly I note how I feel at that moment, when I watch it in the rehearsal room and read it in repose.” So it’s lists of moments, lists of emotions.

Mike explained that for this play he started any composition with backlight to shape the space, then adding face light on demand. Face, form or both. “I also used colour temperature and texture contrasts between tungsten and discharge, with tungsten only from the front and discharge onstage”. Stark backlight contrasted with the warmth of face light to enhance the film noir feel.

“Don’t adhere too closely to the story,” Mike advises. “Lighting doesn’t need to be too literal; sometimes just a suggestion can be most powerful.” For *On the Waterfront*, he was faced with a real story, real history. “Lighting design used to be reactive – a red gel here, a profile there. Now designs are far more stylised and provide a healthy dialogue with the action.”

For Mike, each play is different. “I don’t believe in developing my ‘house style’, ever. Not possible.” His love of art, literature and architecture provides him with a rich tapestry of inspiration. “Arrive at the truth by considering all factors in front of you. If I were asked to light the same play twice but with different dramatic styles they wouldn’t look the same”.

If it wasn’t a Berkoff production, Mike confided, the lighting wouldn’t have been so bold. “Steven is

a strong personality with strong views.” His work with Berkoff is fluid and open, “He doesn’t dictate lighting preferences, he just says, ‘try it and show me’”. Things change with time, techniques and equipment. Steven is a man of the theatre and understands this. I believe even Brecht would have been ready to embrace new ideas were he still alive today and, like Steven, embraced the development of the equipment that now allows our maverick images to be manifest.” But what touched Mike deeply was that after completing his design, Berkoff confided, ‘the genius of your lighting was that for me it became my 14th character in this play.’ My guess is that it doesn’t get any better than that.#

*All photos by Mike Robertson. See more at: [www.lightingplan.co.uk](http://www.lightingplan.co.uk)*

# Equity News from Johanna Town



## **Andrew Young takes over from Ian Bayes**

Members may like to know that Equity's London Area & Commercial Tours organiser and our committee representative for Equity's "Theatre Designers Committee", Ian Bayes, has recently moved to a new job at the BBC.

I am sure many of our members who have used his services would like to wish him all the best in his future career and I personally would like to thank him for all his hard work over the years, battling it out in negotiations. Ian has been a strong supporter of the recent working party committee in trying to change what Equity can do for us as designers and how the contracts should

look. Let's hope this work is able to continue over the coming year.

I also thought this would be a great opportunity to introduce you to Andrew Young, his replacement, welcome! If you need to discuss a design contract or you our having problems with a producer or employer Andrew is the man to contact. I asked Andrew to say a few words about himself and what he feels Equity stands for, as a hello to you the members, and this is what he said:

"I am the new London Area & Commercial Tours Organiser, replacing Ian Bayes – a hard act to follow I'm sure members will agree. I started my career at the TUC and moved onto a number of years in the NHS, working in Health Promotion – with a

particular focus on workplace health.

"During my time in the NHS I was also Secretary of a UNISON Branch of around 2,000 members. Over the years my trade union role grew ever larger and two years ago I decided that this is where my heart lay. Consequently I took a Regional Organiser job at the Transport and Salaried Staffs Association, from which after an eventful year covering London Underground/ Metronet, Network Rail and numerous bus companies I moved onto Equity.

"Equity exists to support members with issues in the workplace and beyond. In particular we negotiate basic rates of pay and the terms and conditions that apply in

vast swathes of the theatre industry and monitor and seek to improve the health and safety of our members' workplaces.

"In addition we offer public liability insurance (up to £10 million), backstage cover and accident insurance and offer legal advice and welfare support to our members. Crucially, Equity also runs an excellent pension scheme – specifically designed to suit the needs of actors, designers and stage managers."

Well, good luck Ian, and a warm welcome to Andrew. #

# ALD Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2013

## AGM 31st May 2008. Members' Briefing Summary

### Background

Over the years, the ALD has evolved from an 'elite lunch club' to being a professional organisation campaigning for the interests of members. The Executive committee has been examining how the ALD can improve its services to meet current and future expectations of its theatre and events lighting practitioner membership.

### Some Recent Achievements

Contract rider • Letter to managements • Fees surveys & database • Professional meetings • Agents' meetings • Increased Equity presence • New bursaries & awards • New web site • Re-launch of *Focus* • Advice and support for members in negotiations and disputes.

### Options for future development

**1) Keep the status quo** and maintain just the service and

structure we have today. Social and networking continues with further political and representation activity on an ad hoc, optional basis. This is the comfortable option, but does not move the cause of LDs onward significantly

### **2) Become a full professional association.**

This is a massive leap which includes professional accreditation with licensing of UK practice and provision of professional development. This is currently beyond the level of requirement of the industry members.

**3) Expand and grow**, and significantly extend ALD capability. Help members recognise and improve standards of professional practice, support members as sole traders, and increase networking opportunities. Work with Equity to improve

collective representation to managements. Expand further the appreciation of lighting design.

### **Option 3 is the Executive Committee's recommendation.**

### Strategic Goals

**1) Extend the relationship with Equity.** Every professionally-practicing ALD member will be encouraged to be a member of Equity, thereby giving Equity incentive to work on our behalf.

**2) Embark on a campaign of PR**, both within the industry and to the public that will promote awareness of our role and its importance as a part of the 'performance experience'.

**3) Provide useful, professional support for all members**, including

associates and students, in developing their careers, keeping up with trends, negotiation issues, business skills, fees development and member benefits.

### Action Plan

1. To extend the resource of employed staff
2. To investigate establishing a permanent office
3. To continue to work with Equity and extend ALD presence within it
4. To launch a PR initiative to increase visibility of the ALD and LDs to the industry and the public
5. To specify more clearly the entry requirements for all levels of membership so that these are standard and transparent
6. To open up new sources of funding to implement the strategy and further investigate if achieving charitable status would

enable the ALD to exploit sources of new funding.

7. To enable the action plan to commence, raise membership subscriptions:

Professional Members £75, Associates £40, Students £25 (except for sponsored students), Not for Profit organisations £20 (covers the cost of *Focus* magazine).

8. To develop voluntary help from members

**At the 2008 AGM we are asking you to ratify the new subscription rates and so enable the above expansion plan rather than a decline in services caused by inflationary pressures.**

To respond and comment on this strategy e-mail your views to: [strategy2008@ald.org.uk](mailto:strategy2008@ald.org.uk)

# Clay Paky 'Knight of Illumination' Nominations



The ALD is delighted to have been associated with the Clay Paky lighting design awards, and in addition to sharing photographs of some of the nominated designs with our readers here, we have included comments from our team of theatre, ballet and opera reviewers who contributed to previous issues of *Focus*.

Clay Paky is pleased to announce the nominations for the 'Knight of Illumination'



Lucy Carter: 'Chroma' at the Royal Opera House. Photo ©Johan Persson

June / July 2008

Lighting Design awards that are to be presented in association with the ALD and the STLD at the annual ABTT dinner on June 11th 2008.

These awards are being sponsored by Clay Paky in recognition of the outstanding contribution to live performance and television by lighting designers in the UK. The awards are unique in honouring work across a wide range of rock, theatre, opera and dance plus four

categories of televised work, with each category being judged in a way deemed appropriate by practitioners in their fields.

For the theatre categories, (dance, opera, drama and musicals) the ALD felt that neither photos nor video could not adequately document opera, dance, musical, or drama lighting design. Any design must be seen in the performance context for which it was created. There is also no way that a group of lighting designers could find time to see enough of the excellent work being produced to be able to judge fairly so we decided to contract a group of professional critics who were reviewing performances on a regular basis.

The work they saw determined what was eligible, and as they are attending at least three or more performances a

week, we knew that there would be a wide range of possible nominations. The one stipulation made was that the lighting designers had to be UK based, so those LDs considered for an award who are not based in the UK joined the others who were credited as being 'favourably mentioned'.

## Dance nominations in alphabetical order:

**Lucy Carter** for *Chroma* at the ROH and her work with Random Dance. Her work was remarkable for the quality of light that added so much to the staging.

**Tim Mitchell** for *Hamlet* for the Northern Ballet Theatre whose work was cited for its taste and restraint when so much was going on in the piece (see photo page 17).

**Katharine Williams** for *I am Falling* at the Gate theatre for creating many dramatic spaces in a tiny theatre (also see page 19).



Katharine Williams:  
"I am Falling" at the Gate.  
Photo ©Hugo Glendinning

Favourable mention for **Jean Kalman** for the new Kim Brandstrup piece at the ROH and **Jim Ingalls** for *Mozart Dances* for Mark Morris Dance Co. (both not eligible as they are not UK based).

# 'Knights of Illumination' Nominations



Paule Constable: 'Satyagraha' by English National Opera. Photo ©Catherine Ashmore/ENO 2007

## Opera nominations in alphabetical order:

**Paule Constable** for *Satyagraha* where the lighting gave a dynamic flow that took you from one scene to the other and the light seemed to be emanating from the performers.

Ash Khandekar, editor of Opera Now, wrote in *Focus* Dec/Jan 2008, "Paule Constable calls lighting 'a secret language' which at its best works on a subconscious level. Constable is one of the UK's finest and most versatile

lighting designers with a long list of credits in opera. Her masterful contribution to English National Opera's production of 'Satyagraha' last season added subtlety and radiance to Philip Glass's gently shifting, minimalist score, responding to what Constable calls the 'emotional temperature' of the music."

**Matthew Haskins** for his work on ETO's *House on the Moon*, which was a community work where the lighting helped bridge the audience and the stage

performers and *The Sofa/The Departure* where the lighting created many different worlds.

**Paul Pyant** for *Minotaur* at the ROH (also just as easily nominated for his plays *Speed the Plow* and *Major Barbara*).

Favourable mention for **Wayne Dowdeswell** for Scottish Opera *Go Round* and **Jean Kalman** for *Death in Venice* at the ENO.



Paul Pyant: 'Minotaur' at the ROH Photo ©Bill Cooper



Favourable mention. Jean Kalman: 'Death in Venice', ENO. Photo ©Neil Libbert



*Tim Mitchell: Northern Ballet Theatre, 'Hamlet'. Photo © Dee Conway*

**Drama nominations in alphabetical order:**

**Paule Constable** for *Saint Joan* at the NT where her work was painterly and apropos, and helped to liberate the play with its design [see front cover of *Focus* Oct/Nov 2007 for a photo]. The lighting re-imagined to startling effect how the Olivier could be used. There were also very favourable mentions of her work on *War Horse* at the NT and *Othello* at the Donmar. David Benedict wrote in *Focus* Oct/Nov 2007, “Although they have only worked together four times in ten years, indivisibility of input is the hallmark of another duo: Paule Constable and director Marianne Elliott. Their *Saint Joan* was one of the year’s highlights. Were the scaldingly side-lit tableaux of peasants the work of choreographer Hofesh Schechter, Elliott or an inspiration by Constable? Who was responsible for placing Joan upstage in a tight special so that she could be picked out of the enveloping

darkness offsetting the scene downstage? Who cares. Their vivid visual presences charged up foreground action, bringing dramatic life and emotional perspective to scenes which in lesser productions have been bogged down in theoretical debate.”

**Hartley TA Kemp** for *Artifacts* at the Bush where a simple set of just a Persian carpet was beautifully lit and scenes that were exterior or interior were created with no sense of awkwardness.

**Peter Mumford** for *The Hothouse* where he created a strange creepy mood with a tonal palette of sickly green. David Benedict wrote in *Focus* Oct/Nov 2007, “Pinter’s *Hothouse* lies somewhere between those polarities. A piece by a master rather than a masterpiece, what looks initially like a farcical comedy turns expressionist and very nasty. Ian Rickson’s direction never managed to unify the varied acting styles on display but the

play was given coherence by the designers. Mumford and Bechtler plus Stephen Warbeck (music) and Ian Dickinson (sound) created a forbidding, impersonal institution with dingy, bleak, white-tiled corridors and shabby rooms in a manner creepily anodyne yet eerily beautiful.”

Favourable mentions to **Neil Austin** for his *Emperor Jones* and *Phillistines* NT and **Howard Harrison** for *Macbeth* Chichester and Gielgud and **Jean Kalman** for *Happy Days* and *The Year of Magical Thinking* at the NT.



Hartley TA Kemp: ‘Artifacts’ at the Bush. Photo ©Simon Annard



Favourable mention. Howard Harrison: ‘Macbeth’ at Chichester. Photo ©Manuel Harlan



Peter Mumford: *The Hothouse*, National Theatre. Photo ©Catherine Ashmore





Neil Austin: 'Parade' at the Donmar Photo ©Johan Persson

### **Musicals nominations in alphabetical order:**

**Neil Austin** for *Parade* at the Donmar. Where he delineated space on a unit set creating different tone and atmosphere for each setting. (also just as easily awarded for Emperor Jones and Philistines, plays)

David Benedict wrote in Focus Oct/Nov 2007, "There's a satisfying irony to Austin's illustration of an apocalyptic journey into one man's heart of darkness via magisterial use of bright light. *Parade*, however, is its obverse: the downward spiral of an innocent man lynched metaphorically by a corrupt legal system and literally by bigots.

"The multiple locations of Alfred Uhry and Jason Robert Brown's musical would make demands of the largest stage. On the Donmar's tiny thrust, it's a serious challenge but Austin and designer Christopher Oram's answers to the problems it poses are exhilarating.

"Using Oram's double-

height unit set as a suggestive backdrop, Austin's lighting constantly reimagines the space. On what looks like a less-than-gigantic rig, and without ever resorting to the dully literal business of showing the hard edge of a lit area, he creates an eye-widening variety of spaces. His sculptural way with haze conjures everything from a bald prison cell to the formal brightness of a governor's mansion, from the prickly heat of dusty sunny days to the sudden lacerating chill of a night-time hanging."

**James Farncombe** for *The Dysfunctionalz* at the Bush, which moved from story-based scenes to concert format in an amazing way for that pub theatre.

**Paul Pyant** for *Lord of the Rings*, where he created spectacularly good punctuation that made a complex show look seamless.

Favourable mentions to **Howell Binkley** for *Jersey*

*Boys* and **Ken Posner** for *Hairspray* (both US based).

### **Theatre lighting judges**

The panel of judges comprised **Louise Levene**, dance critic for the *Sunday Telegraph*; **Ash Khandekar**, editor of *Opera Now*; **Michael Coveney**, writing for *Whatsonstage.com*; and convened by **David Benedict**, UK correspondent for *Variety*.

**Rick Fisher** observed and advised on behalf of the ALD and added, "The ALD was involved in setting up the way that the theatre, dance and opera awards were to be judged. We brought together four critics all of whom have contributed to *Focus* over the last year. The work that they had seen previously was eligible for consideration as there is no way to cover such a large number of live performances and the ALD was certain that this type of design award could only be judged by seeing it in the context for which it

# 'Knights of Illumination' Nominations

was created, not in video or photo documentation. Also all work had to be created by U.K-based designers. This sadly disqualified many highly regarded designs. I was pleased to help facilitate the judging process.

For me it was great to hear how much the critics had come to appreciate the role of lighting in the shows they commented on, and they all said that the commission for *Focus* and the judging of these new awards made them look more carefully. They asked many intelligent questions and were really fulsome in their praise of what lighting had achieved in a wide variety of spaces at all levels of the performing arts. This is a great benefit for the future appreciation and recognition of the work of Lighting Designers and the ALD wants to warmly thank Clay Paky for their sponsorship of the 'Knight

of Illumination'. By raising the critics' perception and understanding of what lighting designers are achieving, this sponsorship will continue to help achieve what the ALD is all about well beyond the awards ceremony."

Clay Paky would also like to recognise the assistance of **Durham and Jennie Marengi** on behalf of ALL lighting designers recognised by the Awards and we hope that the success of this first year's event will inspire all lighting designers to put forward their work for next year's awards.#

James Farncombe:  
*The Dysfunctionalz*' at the Bush.  
Photo ©Simon Annard

## Other nominations

**Rock and Roll: Stage Category**  
**Chris Bushell** for Amy Winehouse, **Jonny Gaskell** for Groove Armada, **Rob Sinclair** for The Human League.

**Rock and Roll: Arena Category**  
**Dan Hardiman** for Mc Fly, **Baz Halpin** for Joe Cocker, **Richard Larkum** for Kaiser Chiefs.

**Television: Drama**  
**Adam Suschitzky**, *The Shadow in the North*. **Philip Burne**, *Heartbeat*. **Ben Smithard**, *Cranford*.

**Television: Light Entertainment**  
**Mark Kenyon**, *Strictly Come Dancing*. **Dave Davey**, *Dancing on Ice*. **Martin Kempton**, *Al Murray's Happy Hour*

**Television: Music Programmes**  
**Nigel Catmur**, *Mercury Music Prize*. **Al Gurdon**, *The Brits*. **Chris Rigby**, *Jools's Annual Hootenanny*

**Television: Events**  
**Al Gurdon**, *Royal Variety Performance*. **Mike Le Fevre**, *Newsnight Review Special*. **Steve Nolan**, *Orange Film BAFTAs*.



## 'Knights of Illumination' Nominations



Paul Pyant: 'Lord of the Rings' © The Saul Zaentz Company d/b/a Tolkien Enterprises, under license to Kevin Wallace Ltd. Photo: Manuel Harlan

## Meeting: The ALD in Middle Earth

We are pleased to announce that the ALD will be holding a members' meeting at the West End musical *Lord of the Rings* which after 492 performances and entertaining over 700,000 people at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, bids farewell to London on 19 July 2008.

The meeting will take place on **Saturday 28th June 2008** and we have a limited number of half price tickets for the matinee performance in the Grand Circle, the best seats in the house.

This will be followed by a talk about the show hosted by the show's lighting designer Paul Pyant and associate LD David Howe, while the reset happens for the evening show. Lighting desk programmer Jonathan Rouse and assistant LD Dan

Large will also be present. Following this, ALD corporate member White Light will then host a drinks reception in the Grand Salon.

Tickets will cost £30 (normal price £60), and we ask that those interested contact [meetings@ald.org.uk](mailto:meetings@ald.org.uk) or phone the office as soon as possible to register your interest. Final ticketing details will be released to those people as soon as we have them.

This meeting should prove to be very popular and we urge all members wishing to attend to contact us as soon as possible.#

# Office Oracle

## Latest news from Ian's production desk

### 2008 Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Association of Lighting Designers took place at 11.30am on Saturday 31st May 2008 at the Young Vic Theatre in London. The last nine months has seen the executive working on a new strategy to take the Association forward over the next five years, and those present were invited to add their input and reactions to the proposals.

These can be read on page 14, but due to our print deadlines for *Focus*, a full report and feedback from the AGM will appear in the August/September edition. If you have any thoughts on the strategy please feel free to email them to [strategy2008@ald.org.uk](mailto:strategy2008@ald.org.uk) or come and talk to the various members of the Executive who will be present at the ABTT show.

### 2008 Tony Awards

The ALD is pleased to congratulate two of our members for their nominations for the 2008 Tony Awards, they are Ken Billington for his work on *Sunday in the Park with George* and this year's Olivier award winner, Howard Harrison for *Macbeth*. Many UK shows and their performers, directors and designers were also nominated. The awards take place on 15th June 2008.

### Best Lighting Design of a Play

Kevin Adams for *The 39 Steps*, Howard Harrison for *Macbeth*, Donald Holder for *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Ann G. Wrightson for *August: Osage County*

### Best Lighting Design of a Musical

Ken Billington for *Sunday*

*in the Park with George*, Howell Binkley for *In The Heights*, Donald Holder for *Rodgers & Hammerstein's South Pacific*, Natasha Katz for *The Little Mermaid*

For a complete listing of all categories and nominations go to [www.tonyawards.com](http://www.tonyawards.com)

### 2008/09 Subscriptions

Please note that the deadline date for payment of your subscription fees for 2008/09 is 1st July 2008. Therefore if you do not pay by standing order and have yet to send us a payment, please do so as soon as possible. If you do not pay the amount owing, then this is the last issue of *Focus* you will receive.

Payment can be by cheque, sent to the office, by credit card via the website (please note that we charge an administration fee to

cover any charges we incur from Pay Pal), or you can download a standing order form from the website and send it either to your bank or the office.

Those members who pay by standing order should have received their new membership card sticker and the 'Details Held' form. If you have not, please contact the office.

### Michael Northen Bursary

July 1st 2008 is also the deadline date for those student members who wish to enter the 2008 Michael Northen Bursary. The submission must highlight the creativity of the project and imagination in the use of light, what inspired you, the processes used to create the final design, and how you would approach the project the second time around.



Supporting information in the form of photographs, plans and research material can also be submitted. Full details can be found on the students' page of the website or you can contact Mary Pope, the student representative, at [mary.pope@ald.org.uk](mailto:mary.pope@ald.org.uk)

### New Corporate Rep

We are pleased to announce that Iain Quinn of ETC has joined to Executive as the new corporate representative taking over from Andy Collier. Any corporate members who have queries about their membership or benefits, ideas for members' meetings or just get more involved in ALD business can contact him at [iain.quinn@ald.org.uk](mailto:iain.quinn@ald.org.uk)

# Office Oracle

## Showlight 2008

BBC Scotland's new state of the art headquarters in Glasgow, which boasts the latest broadcast technology is the biggest TV recording space to be built in Scotland and the second largest TV studio in Britain, is to host the 2009 Showlight event.

Set on the banks of the River Clyde, the BBC's new high definition television studio complex was opened by the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, on September 20 and is a bold departure from traditional TV studio premises.

Showlight 2009 will take place from May 16 to 19 and will be of interest not only to TV lighting directors, but anyone involved with entertainment and architectural lighting design. The BBC's high definition equipment will be utilised to illustrate papers from all genres of lighting, including theatre, film, event, education, architecture and, of course, television.

Established in 1981, when the first event took place at London's Barbican, Showlight exists specifically to give people time to talk, to discuss ideas and to mix with some of the best known names in the lighting industry. Organised by lighting professionals for lighting professionals, Showlight takes place every four years, always at a different venue and the 2009 venue is appropriate, as it will be 20 years since Showlight was last based in the world of television.

To register your interest in Showlight 2009 e-mail [register@showlight.org](mailto:register@showlight.org) or visit [www.showlight.org](http://www.showlight.org) where you can also keep up-to-date with the speaker programme and all other Showlight events.

## SBTD Collaborators at the V&A to close early

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

Originally planned to close at the end of the year, the closing date has now been brought forward by the V&A to 31st August due to the need for building works in the Theatre Collections galleries. So if you were intending to visit the exhibition in the autumn, please note that it will not now need to make the trip during the summer. Peter Ruthven Hall commented, "This unexpected early closure is deeply unfortunate especially as the exhibition has been extremely popular." Son don't miss your chance!

## ALD at AC Lighting North

The AC Lighting North show in Leeds (29-30 April) lived up to its good reputation. The ALD stand, situated conveniently next to the bar and the food, provided a focal meeting point for a number of existing members and there was a good number of enquiries from potential new members – all of them based fairly well away from London.

As usual AC Lighting North proved to be excellent hosts with the arrangements running smoothly, a good layout and the added incentive for visitors of a free lunch – how often do you get one of those? Our thanks go to them for their organisation and hospitality over the last few years.

Next year the show is being taken over by PLASA – PlasaFocus is the new brand name. They plan to maintain the same informal and friendly ambience that AC Lighting have built up over

the years – but doubtless will aim to introduce some of their own ideas. But rest assured, the ALD will be there!

## Focus sackcloth and ashes

The editor would like to offer his humble apologies for two cockups with the last issue. The first was the late delivery (delayed in order to accommodate an insert from the ABTT), and secondly a printing error which resulted in the randomness of some colour pages. This rendered Howard Harrison's award winning lighting for *Macbeth* on page 5 in monochrome, and also, in some copies (notably Jo Town's personal copy), the photograph of *The Steward of Christendom* which illustrated '60 seconds with Johanna Town' (yes it was she) which was also printed in black and white. Apologies. Hair shirt costumes all round.#

## Contact us

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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

**David J. Muir**, Coventry.

**Declan Randall**, Johannesburg

#### Associate

**Tom McLean**, Bath

**Cameron Smith**, Minehead

**Iain Walters**, Maidenhead

**Kevin Ward**, Surrey

#### Corporate (rejoining)

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**Production Services Ltd**

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Commerce Road, Brentford

TW8 8LG

Tel: (+44) 0845 094 3049

www.london-light.com

## Dates for your diaries

#### 15th July:

Deadline for *Focus* Copy

#### 11th & 12th June:

ABTT Show 2008 \*

#### 1st July:

Deadline for Subscription Payment

#### 7th-10th September:

PLASA 08 \*

#### May 2009:

Showlight 09 Glasgow

\*the ALD will have a presence at these events

# “Sixty seconds\* with....” Mark Jonathan

**Sum up your career to date in a short sentence.**

Started in 1973 and now design lighting for drama, opera, musicals and ballet everywhere.

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

*Far from the Madding Crowd* – BRB, the piece is an emotional epic with tremendous opportunities for lighting and it was central to me being taken seriously as an LD. *Die Entführung Aus dem Serail* – Strasbourg - beautiful but the mealbreaks were such fun too.... *Nicholas Nickleby* - Chichester – some of my best work to date

**What were the worst and best moments of your career?**

When I was reviving John Bury’s lighting for Peter Hall’s production of *Cosi Fan Tutte* and I changed a few colours... Or maybe when I went early on a cue....

**Where are you now?** At the production desk of the Chichester Festival Theatre.

**What is your favourite theatre/space?**

The Birmingham Rep – It’s a big stage that can work as a regular proscenium stage or it can thrust out allowing some flexibility for the stage design. There’s a good stock of equipment which was developed by Tim Mitchell and it’s now managed by Andy Fidgeon, chief LX

Working anywhere for Birmingham Royal Ballet, There’s a real friendly spirit there. The dance companies are the last vestige of the theatrical tradition of having a company of players. The lighting and technical standards are high and have improved over the last few years and there is a great will to support the work and look after it on tour.

**Where/what would you most like to light?**

*West Side Story* in a theatre with a wonderful crew and plenty of time.

**If you weren’t a lighting designer what would you be?** A ski teacher or maybe a doctor.

**Where would you rather be right now?** On top of a mountain looking into a couloir of deep powder snow.

**What is your favourite colour?**

Lee 201.

**If you were a colour what would it be?** Open white.

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

Production managers who don’t know that we need a groundplan and section and don’t understand how to mask a show and have

schedules that they don’t keep to. IATSE

**Which part of the job do you enjoy most?** The Tech.

**Which part of the job do you enjoy least?** Arguing with producers or my agent about how much we should be paid. Looking at a blank piece of paper and a complicated set design.

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

A wonderful production electrician/programmer; an Adjustable spanner; a pencil.

**What keeps you awake at night?**

Excitement about a show that’s going well and anger.

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



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

Mick Hughes, Robert Bryan, David Hersey and working in rep at Glyndebourne.

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

Be truthful to the work you are involved in and have fun even when everything around you is falling apart.

**How would you like to be remembered?**

He did what he could in the time without making too much fuss and it looked wonderful. Oh, and he was fit, handsome, charming, and a brilliant, extreme skier who was great in bed!#

\* Mark would like it be known that these comments were made in November 2007 and some of his responses may have aged with time [especially the last one? - Ed.].



The lighting effect from the lighting pod taken from one of the followspot positions (photo Chris Childs)



# Brass monkeys

**“I understand you do some lights... we’re doing a panto in December and wonder if you could come and talk to us”. Steve Tyrrell offers some unseasonal advice for those invited to light a pantomime on skates.**

## How it started

It all started in 1999 with a simple request from the ice rink at the Spectrum Leisure Centre in Guildford. Then the fun started. We couldn't work during the day because the ice rink was open to the public. So the team turned up at 10pm one Wednesday night for an over-nighter - we were scheduled on the ice at 11pm and had until 5am because that was when the morning skaters started. The ice rink manager told us there was a delay getting onto the ice as the ice rink staff had to regularly flood the 'pad' with water to keep the thickness up, and that night was the night they do it. We waited. A couple of hours passed and the crew was getting a bit restless, not to say cold. "Can we start off ice?" I asked.

"Bit of a problem there," the Manager replies. "We've got regular staff training on the burglar alarm tonight, so can you all stay within the ice rink please?"

It was cold, it was late, we'd been on site for three hours, achieved nothing, and there was only four hours left! We finally rigged two 18m lengths of truss on chain blocks, some Par 64s for key lighting, some Molefays with colour changers (to colour the ice), all the dimmers and control. At 5am we struggled with the multis from the rig to the dimmers as the early morning skaters arrived. Five performances later and we were ready for the Out. The show came down at 6pm, and the manager informed us that was a home ice hockey match due to start at 8pm.

The public were taking their seats for the hockey match as we struck the last of the chain blocks.

This was the start of the excellent working relationship with the venue, and its unusual requirement of working on ice (no regulations to cover that one, yet!), which has grown and lasted nearly ten years now.

## Tight schedule

It's now December 2007 and the ninth ice show we've lit at the Complex. This time the panto was *Dick Whittington*. So far we've presented *Aladdin*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Robin Hood*, *Peter Pan*, *Cinderella* (twice), *Jack and the Beanstalk* and an 'all stars' gala (featuring the girl from the TV whose name I forget).

The formula is now pretty settled, but some experimentation on each show provides a little variation. I'll summarise the best bits that have been carried forward from show to show as our experience has grown over the years.

The schedule starts in August with the announcement of the show and auditions with rehearsals proceeding 'off ice'. Rehearsals 'on ice' start around October. The cast is a mixture of amateur and professional skaters who rehearse for a few hours a week. Production meetings during September decide the staging, specials and effects. The final version of script usually arrives around November. I see the first full run on the Saturday of show week, followed by second



*With a crew of regular skilled freelancers, freelance LD Steve Tyrrell runs QL to light and provide sound for dance and musical theatre in a variety of small scale and regional theatres. A fan of technology in the theatre he enjoys experimenting with stretching what can be achieved in the smaller theatre, with the smaller budget to achieve a West End feel; and then there's the panto on ice...*

run on Monday. The fitup takes place the following Thursday with a 'dress' that night followed by two shows on Friday, Saturday and Sunday with the Out on Sunday night.

## Creating theatre

The space is essentially a traverse 'theatre' with 1300 seats, the ice rink of 30m x 60m with a 50m star cloth with blacks to mask the

ends, flown approximately 10m downstage to create a backstage area plus entrances. That leaves 30m x 50m of ice to light. Unfortunately, the ideal location for the additional LX truss to compliment the house rig (down the middle of the ice rink), is occupied by the house PA and disco lighting, so a position over either side of the ice, running upstage and downstage, is used to give additional cover to the house rig and to focus down the centre of the stage.

It's not a flashy show. Washes are created by the house rig and areas are lit from the temporary rig. Texture effects are produced on the ice using breakup gobos together with the 'movers' which are a mixture of MAC500s and MAC600. The movers also provide specials and illumination to highlight acting areas around the ice. The white ice (give or take the various adverts and hockey lines) takes colour very well. Unfortunately, it also acts like a mirror very

well to, so care has to be taken with the focus not to reflect lights straight into the audience's faces.

The height of the rig does give problems with lighting faces and this is a constant battle. The rig can't be lowered due to sight lines from the balconies. After the first couple of shows, I came up with a scheme of lighting pods around the handrail of the ice rink. These have taken various guises including using Par64s, LED Pars, with and without movers, with and without scrollers. The disadvantage is that anything placed on the handrail or around the ice rink (including cabling) has to be removed at the end of the show as the ice rink is re-opened for public skating sessions.

Because of the tight timescales I use Capture 2005 visualisation software to pre-programme as much as possible, especially effects from the movers. I have found this to be extremely accurate if the site survey has been accurate.

### The light of experience

I have I learnt a lot about light and ice in the last nine years. Ice is really slippery especially after it's been flooded with water; it's just like ice! The best time to work on ice is after it's been heavily skated on. The ice is then just like gravel to walk on or to drive the cherry picker on. The environment is cold and wet (the crew don't like it cold and electricity doesn't like it wet). Any cable used at ground level on or around the ice has to be fitted with connectors rated for at least IP44. Obviously everything is RCD protected with different supplies feeding LX, sound and backstage. If you leave anything metal on the ice it quickly embeds itself into the surface so you can't pick it up (Socapex connectors and truss especially). Cable refuses to coil after it's been sitting on the ice for a while and LX tape stops sticking. I now use wood blocks for supporting the truss during assembly and rigging. Cable is left in its flight case until it is needed.

Oil from chain block chains destroys the surface of ice for the skaters. Plastic buckets are used to keep the chain in when using chain blocks over the ice. Fans blowing smoke and haze across the ice 'burn' a hole in it. Fans are 'focused' to ensure they don't blow into the ice but up and away from it while still moving the smoke in the right direction.

Using Wireless Cans (DX200) in a big venue are a lifesaver. The move from wired to wireless cans saved around 300m of mic cable being installed to backstage and the followspot positions for the run of the show. The

SM, who's running round the ice backstage, doesn't have a cable to trip over any more. The downside is that wireless DMX using 2.4GHz spread spectrum uses the same band as the DX200 so every now and then there is a loud click in the headset of the wireless cans.

Driving a cherry picker on ice is something that's not covered in the IPAF course. When lighting shows for ice, the skaters seem to like skating in the dark, yet video always wants it as bright as possible... but when it all comes together it's totally magical.#



Show Crew  
L to R, back row Anthony, Steve P, Chris, Jeanette, Steve Tyrrell, Keith.  
Front row Dan, Dave.



*Lit by house and temporary rig, taken from followspot position (photo Chris Childs)*



# Winning skills for a Finnish theatre student

Once a year, students from across Finland gather in Espoo for the Finnish National Skills Competition. The event is all about demonstrating the professional competence of young people, not only in the competition itself, but also in the organisation of the event. Tapio Järvinen, a theatre technology student at North Karelia College kept a diary of his lighting design and programming experiences for ETC.

“In January 2008, I was asked to help with the lighting design and operation for two of the dance competitions – Taitaja and SAKUstars – as well as several other events. My previous experience was mainly from lighting bands and small company parties, but by the end of February, when I knew more about the event and the first Capture drawings arrived, it had become clear that this event would be the largest I’d ever worked on.

**19 March:** First meetings to go through what would be happening in my area – the Länsväylä Hall. Started on the design for the light design for the act by Circus Salpaus, the event concert and the SAKUstars dance competition; we also created the lighting design for a fashion show by Omnia.

**5 April:** Got some experience with the Robe moving heads and ETC Congo desk we would be using for the shows and went through the schedule for the following week – it was just a week away. I was mainly programming the lights for the concert using CDs of the bands and a pre-release version of Capture. I had made notes of the bands’ song structures, which helped me build a frame for the performance. The week was filled with different experiences: frustration, excitement; the pain of creation but also feelings of joy from success. Stress also

became a factor at this point. At the end of the preparation week, we transferred our equipment to the hall. My student group helped with rigging.

**12 April:** On Saturday we rigged the lighting and sound system, and programmed desk to update the focus and colour palettes. It was only the following day that I had time to program the lighting. We had been given a Hippotizer media server to display visuals and graphics and even though I had no experience, it didn’t take long before I had grasped a basic knowledge of using it

**14 April:** Monday and Tuesday were spent practicing the opening ceremony; dress rehearsals with a live audience took place on Tuesday evening. Wednesday was the next time I was able to continue programming while SAKUstar dancers were rehearsing, and by now all the preparation was complete. That evening

I was getting extremely nervous about the concert the following day. I’d experienced nervousness before a week earlier but now it felt as if it all had focused on this one evening.

**17 April:** The SAKUstars dance competition was run through by a couple of my student friends. I took care of the Omnia fashion show later that day. The first real test was yet to come – the concert in the evening. As soon as the band got their instruments on the stage and begun the sound check, I concentrated fully on updating the lighting. I had programmed each song as a separate sequence, so when the band gave me the list of songs they were going to play I was able to put a playlist together, so all I had to do during the show was to push the GO button. Blinders were driven from their own submasters. I also programmed some moving light intensities for a couple of the submasters and a front light (Martin MAC250 Wash) intensity. I had very high expectations, and although

we didn’t make any serious mistakes, I wanted to do better. Still, I was relieved when the show finished.

**19 April:** Saturday morning began with a rapid update of palette and intensity of the lights for Circus Salpaus, and then straight into the performance. We dealt with competitions in between but then we had to prepare for the closing ceremony.

The event was an interesting experience in every respect. My biggest challenges were mastering Congo and lighting design, but the support I received was fantastic. We had a lot of light coming from the sides, which created a whole new dimension for me especially in band illumination.

I had also never lit a circus performance before, but the lighting looked great and supported the acts without disturbing the performers, for whom the placement of the lights and beam angle is of great significance, especially while juggling.” #

# Letters

**In reply to our last 'Pro's Platform' item in which Guy Kornezki aired his views of an article in Mondo\*Arc 'Light Art for Light Art's Sake?', we received a response from its author, Sharon Stammers.**

**Dear Editor,**

I would be grateful if you would print my response to Guy Kornetski's soapbox article in the recent *Focus*. My article was intended to ruffle feathers so it is good to know that it worked. Having said that I feel I should respond as my views and the article were misrepresented and misunderstood.

Misrepresented - as instead of feeling threatened or fearing the theatre lighting design community, I have spent my working lifetime embracing the crossover of disciplines. For 12 years, I worked for a lighting practice whose whole ethos was founded on the majority of staff having a theatrical background. I regularly lecture about my background and the

advantages a theatrical start can give an architectural designer. I have also been instrumental in fostering links between theatre lighting design education and the architectural lighting profession. I spoke at Rose Bruford College a few weeks back and with LIPA only this week. My big mistake appears to have been to use the word 'theatricality' in a negative way, the article was actually about the proliferation of lighting festivals and the lack of quality control on the projects that make them up.

The article was a summation of research on the many lighting festivals taking place globally for a paper given at Messe Frankfurt at the start of April. The paper concentrated on looking at the costs of lighting festivals as opposed to investment

in long term urban lighting. The conclusions given were based on visitor figures and responses, health and safety problems, examples of building owners trying to replicate designs, secret deals with manufacturers etc. The literally hundreds of pictures of badly lit buildings led me to believe it was time to open a critical dialogue on the topic of festivals and their impact on our profession. I am not anti-festival and worked extremely hard as part of the team that set up Switched On London last year. However, I think it obvious that whilst encouraging creativity, community spirit and awareness of the visual envelope, not all lighting festival projects are of a quality that enables us to continue our uphill struggle to convince clients and the

wider public as to what good lighting can achieve.

On a wider professional level, I have no wish to alienate the whole of the ALD. In my work for PLDA, we actively seek out partnership and co-operation with other associations and are supporting Lighting Magazine's current campaign 'Unite for Light'

So Mr Kornetski, if you still feel that my article was secretly aimed at undermining the excellent work that the fertilisation of our two disciplines creates, I invite you to an open debate on Lighting Festivals in a future Joined Up Lighting event which will include the IALD, the SLL, PLDA and the ILE.

We would more than welcome the contribution of the ALD.#

**From Dan Short (ALD #49)**

**Dear Sirs,**

I was tempted by the offer on Nick Moran's book *Performance Lighting Design* and found it (the book, not the offer!) superbly well-written.
































However, my enjoyment of the book was marred - and the book took me longer to read than it should have done - because my eyes kept crashing into 'typos'. There were so many, and because I'm a nerdy pedant I noted them all down; all that I spotted, that is, there may have been some I missed! I counted 526 in the 240 pages - even some in the index. However, I did resist the temptation to confirm every page reference; the few I did check were OK except one.

Typos seem to be an all-too-frequent problem in theatre books for some reason. In the *ABC of Theatre Jargon* by Francis Read (sic), for example, I counted 64. Mental note: I must get out more!

Best wishes (I really enjoy reading *Focus*). #

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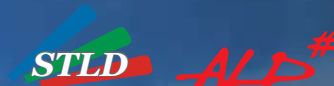
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