

ALD #

# FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers

"More art, less tools..."

April/May 2019

*Tosca*  
Opera North  
Director: Edward Dick  
Set designer: Tom Scutt  
Costume designer: Fotini Dimou  
Lighting designer: Lee Curran  
Photographer: Richard Hubert Smith

*In the backlight this issue:*

- Lighting dancing robots
- Early-career advice
- Parcan lamp recall
- *Lighting Flight*

...and much, much more...

Price to non-members £5.00

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# From the chair...

Welcome to our spring issue of *Focus*, which is packed with lots of association news and includes some interesting articles from Durham Marengi, Simon Wilkinson, James Simpson and Prema Mehta on Stage Sight. I am also really pleased we have a guest writer this issue for the Professionals page from the lighting designer Zoe Spurr. This is exactly what *Focus* should be doing – sharing news and stories from our members to our members – so please keep them coming in.

Since January, the Exec has also been busy producing a members' Professional Working Practice paper for your use alongside a contract when being engaged on a production. See Mark Jonathan's article where he talks further about PWP and its place in the ALD's resources. These papers have been drawn up to help underpin our members' professionalism, so it's very important you have your say – after all, it is your association.

As companies continue to feel the pinch it is important that we hold onto the value of our skills. The ALD is prepared to speak out to producers if unfair pay or working conditions come to our attention. We are not a union, but we can add our voice to your concerns; it is important to remember you are not alone. I hope the growth of our resource pages can help members find information that will empower them in their place of work and in negotiations.

The ALD has been lucky enough to have had some great press recently. These articles come about because members ask us to help them discuss the issues that are affecting them. It is very important for us to keep a dialogue going on the issues facing our members and to deal with what you find most important. Recently, on Twitter it was brought to our attention that a young female student had been told at a careers talk that having a career in lighting design is difficult for a woman! It is hard to believe that this is still being said when there are so many good female lighting designers and technicians working across our whole industry. It reminds us why it is so important that we don't fall silent and that all topics from working and pay conditions to equality and diversity are constantly being challenged in the public domain. Regarding the tweet, it was also great to see so much positive response to the remark.

In closing can I remind you all that the ALD AGM is upon us. It will be held on 25 May at White Light's premises in London and the Northern College of Music in Manchester. Thank you to Bryan Raven and Nick Ware for making their spaces available on a Saturday. I am really pleased we have been able to open the AGM to members in two locations.



Johanna Town  
ALD chair

It has been hard to organise, and I would like to thank Nick Moran for running with my mad idea and for getting all the technology in place. (Fingers still a little crossed!)

I hope as many of you as possible will join us in person. We have some technical workshops organised for the morning sessions in each venue, as well as a discussion on making work for camera and live audiences, led by Bernie Davis, a pioneer in this field. There will be a complimentary lunch, the AGM and, of course, a social drink to finish it all off. We will be live broadcasting Bernie up to Manchester along with the AGM.

Please put the date in your diary. I really hope as many members as possible can pop by even if it's just to attend a workshop event in the morning and then go to work in the afternoon. I and other Exec members will be in London and the northern Exec will include Lucy Carter, Katharine Williams and Kelli Zzulka – we look forward to seeing you. 🍀

# Illuminating the darkness

"Darkness designer" [Mark Jonathan](#) on his latest productions



The year seems to have started more slowly than usual. Is this a side effect of Brexit? It did mean that I was able to accept the invitation from choreographer David Bintley to return to look at my lighting of his production of *Beauty and the Beast*, which we first made for Birmingham Royal Ballet in 2003. The production is scheduled to go out on a UK tour playing 50 performances in Southampton, Birmingham, Plymouth, Salford, Sunderland, Edinburgh and Bristol. It would have two formats: the regular "large" size and a slightly reduced version for some stages. I arrive in Southampton at the Mayflower, which is immense in terms of auditorium. Stage-wise it's the cutback

version but I'm full of praise for just how the BRB team has managed to shoehorn Philip Prowse's epic stage design in. It's not my first time in Southampton. I toured there many times with Glyndebourne, doing my first re-light of *Così fan tutte*, lit by Robert Bryan, back in 1979. The theatre has had considerable adaption since then and the get-in dock is way better than it used to be. I hope that this will reduce people with bad backs and get-in injuries.

I'm always happy to come back and re-visit productions that I may have lit for ballet or opera companies. The work we do is so delicate that I worry that some subtleties may be lost over the years as the permanent lighting rigs morph and change or the staging and choreography may be adjusted. In the case of BRB I am most definitely superbly supported by ALD member Peter Teigen, who is the company's lighting consultant and often lights for them, along with head of lighting Johnny Westall-Eyre, who both bring decades of dance lighting experience, alongside the BRB programmer Alastair Phillips and all the BRB team. When I first lit the production, Philip Prowse would urge me to keep a sepulchral darkness in

much of the ballet. I have long recognised that with darkness may come an epic quality and often the more light you add the more "domestic" a stage picture may look. However, the risk is lack of visibility, and this is heightened in large theatres where the audience may be a long way away. Lest I should forget some of the original reviews that were split between praising the visual qualities of the work and immolating me. The ballet critics have always had sharp knives. On one of the revivals in 2014 I received a letter from a disgruntled audience member who said that she couldn't see from her usual seat on the back row of the upper circle in Plymouth. She went on to say that in fact she was a regular attendee at the theatre and that the lighting was never bright enough for her at all the shows she and her friends went to. I found myself being blamed for all the shows she had seen and not just the ones lit by me.

Over the years, I tried to tease more light into the darker states while retaining the mystery and atmosphere. It's also worth noting that too much lighting made the *Beast* rather more cuddly than might have been desirable; as I said earlier, it's a very

*Beauty and the Beast*  
Birmingham Royal Ballet  
Choreographer: David Bintley  
Designer: Philip Prowse  
Lighting designer: Mark Jonathan  
Photographer: Bill Cooper



delicate balance. I arrived in Southampton on the Monday afternoon and the focus was in full swing. It had to stop for the company to do class before the evening session where there was a full run on stage with costume. We decided not to run it with lights as too much of the rig was still to be focused. It gave me time to watch the ballet and refresh my memory and decipher my notes, which probably made sense when I wrote them 16 years ago. It gave Peter time to focus the FOH over the rehearsal and

the working lights. I admire the calm that swathed the rehearsal as everyone made the best of what they could.

Starting the tour away from BRB's base in Birmingham was not ideal in terms of rehearsal space, and the next morning we raced through act one lighting cues, but again we had to stop to accommodate class. In Birmingham, class could take place in a spacious rehearsal room, but this isn't practical in So'ton. So, we get a long brunch break. By the afternoon

dress rehearsal we have checked through the act one lighting and we run the act two cues without having checked them in advance of the rehearsal. Things look pretty good, courtesy of the efficient work by the team and Alastair's programming on the desk, which is fast and accurate. I should mention that BRB tours its own production desks that have adjustable legs and a folding flap that allows portly LDs to get into their theatre seat, and they afford a comfortable view of the stage. As well as a great desk there are lightweight headsets with a single ear for me. Oh joy! Well done, BRB! (See the photo on page 7.) There isn't much time to do notes, have a break and be back in the seat for the evening dress with a different cast. The following day the schedule repeats with the opening night that evening. There is much applause and its time for a few well-deserved beers.

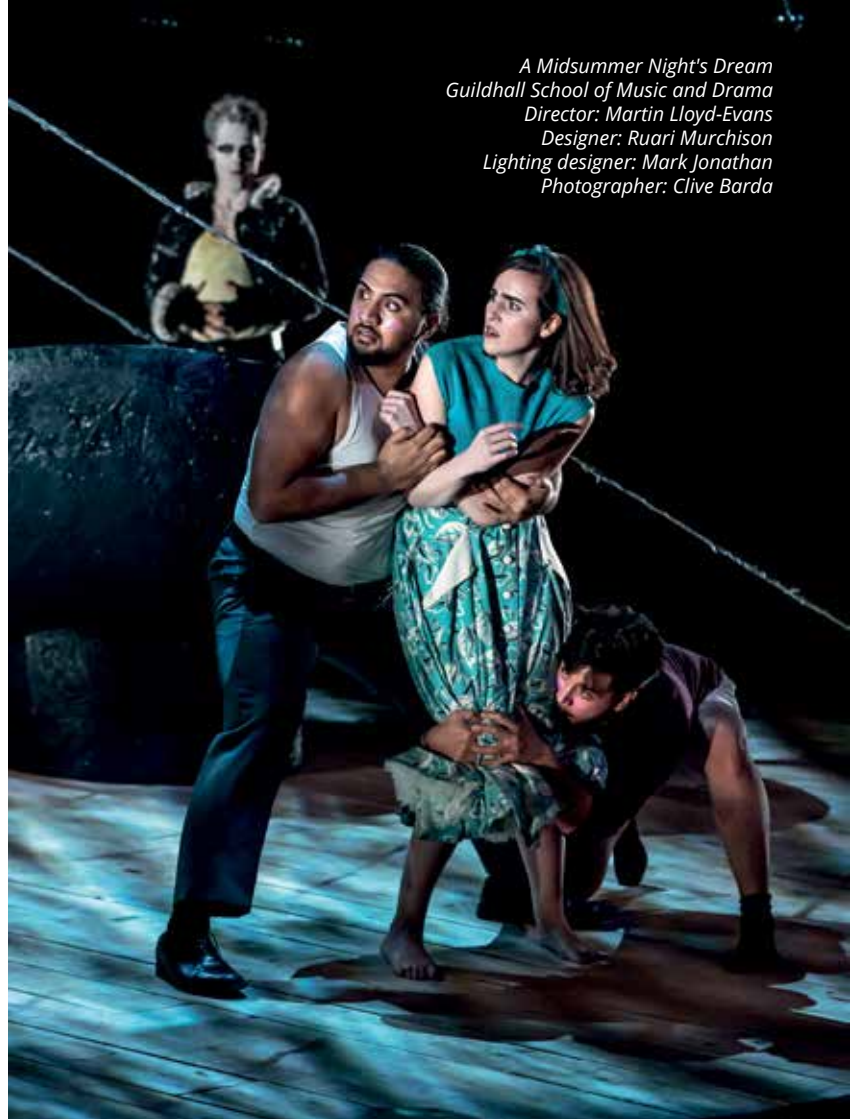
In February I'm delighted to be back at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama to light the opera *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. I'm very happily re-united with the insightful head of opera Dominic Wheeler, the brilliant opera director Martin Lloyd-Evans and the phenomenal stage and costume designer Ruari Murchison.

# Illuminating the darkness

Mark Jonathan

By coincidence Ruari and I have worked together previously for BRB, as well as internationally in opera and ballet, in regional theatre, at the NT and on a West End musical, so we are old buddies. Ruari has a way of distilling what is needed into a concentrate that always serves the production perfectly. For me, of course, the secret is in the title... like the play, most of the opera is set at night and like *Beauty and the Beast* I will be juggling the need for night, atmosphere and yet visibility. In fact, at the meet and greet, Martin introduces me as the "darkness designer". Ruari shrouds his design in crisp black masking and only at the final moment do we reveal a white BP putting everything into silhouette. There is a small overhead oval onto which we will project, and the raked, black timbered floor has a much larger pale ellipse echoing the ceiling piece, which will also be an excellent surface to project on. The overhead oval is joined to the large floor ellipse by a crisscross web that might represent the forest or the web of intrigue sown by Puck's interventions. The costume design will bridge the Shakespeare of 1590 and the 1960s when Britten wrote the opera version. Oh... and there are 100 light bulbs spread across three bars, which we will use to bring magical starlit moments, each bulb requiring its own dimmer. The raked floor has 16 traps that the fairies and Puck pop out of.

Given the rake, I decide that nearly all the overhead rig will be comprised of moving lights from the Guildhall inventory, with one backlight bar that we should just be able to reach from the floor at the back. The overhead oval screen is boxed in with both video and LX above it and LX bars on either side of it will hang on drifts. I am very fond of VFX storm clouds



*A Midsummer Night's Dream*  
Guildhall School of Music and Drama  
Director: Martin Lloyd-Evans  
Designer: Ruari Murchison  
Lighting designer: Mark Jonathan  
Photographer: Clive Barda

The Birmingham Royal Ballet production desks

From left to right: Johnny Westall-Eyre, Peter Teigen, Mark Jonathan, Alastair Phillips



and these feature in the production, drifting both on the overhead screen and on the floor ellipse. Sometimes video joins in too and the combination of the old technology and the new works better than I expected. Most importantly, Ruari understands the critical need for bays in the wings in order to provide discreet crosslit illumination.

There is plenty for the Production Arts students to gain important lessons, from both the prop and scenic construction, costume, video, lighting, production and stage management, with some complex sequences of cues to be given, not to mention some deft flying moments as

pathways to a degree; that's a breathtaking achievement.

In the last issue of *Focus* I reported on the ALD strategy reboot day. So, to update you: the Professional Working Practice group has written a code of practice that we are suggesting our working members would "sign up" to. There is nothing too onerous in this, but it could be one of the levers that we could use to show HMRC that the ALD should be exempt from charging VAT on membership fees. We also hope that producers will see the PWP as an advantage in terms of employing ALD members. Please would you visit the ALD members page and if you have

the moon travels across the stage. I'm always full of awe that when the creative team withdraw the only professional left is the conductor, while everyone else – singers, orchestra and technical staff – are students who are on their various

any comments please send them to [PWP@ald.org.uk](mailto:PWP@ald.org.uk).

In the last issue I also alluded to a producers' code of practice, but as we began to review the draft it sounded a bit too stropo. So, we have decided to soften the producer's part into a producers' guide to working with ALD members. This is currently in draft status and can be viewed on the ALD site. Bear in mind that the guide to producers will sit alongside the ALD rider. We are also commissioning a series of guides to help producers understand what we do as lighting or video designers, programmers, production electricians, associates and assistants, and we recognise that in many cases there is a need to educate producers on how our jobs have changed. We hope these guides will aid producers and production managers to understand some of things that members have been writing about recently to do with what's involved in the various jobs that we do. We have to get the message across that for most lighting people the current situation in the UK is not sustainable. Drafts of these will go online in due course. In the meantime, please do have a look at the

# Illuminating the darkness

Mark Jonathan

PWP and the producers' guide to working with ALD members. We are also trying to be inclusive in the guide, which is not just about designer members but other lighting professionals too. If you would like to be more involved in writing the guides then please let us know. Meanwhile, we are looking towards the new agreements that are being compiled at Equity where I hope some better working policies will be adopted. See Robbie Butler's Equity update on page 42 for more information.

Finally, I was outraged to read something on Twitter that a female stage management student who has a passion for lighting has been told that she shouldn't pursue her lighting dreams as "it's really hard to get into lighting if you're a woman". I would agree that it may be hard to get a job in lighting but gender shouldn't come into it. As a man I have to say that there are plenty of women in lighting who have done and are doing a fantastic job, whether they be a lighting designer, video designer, programmer, head of lighting, production electrician or an associate, and I'm pleased to see plenty of aspiring students who are women. The ALD is not gender biased but it does have a chair and an editor who are

women, to mention just two of our members, last year three out of four Michael Northern bursaries were won by women, and a female ALD member has won a near-record four Olivier awards for best lighting design! 🍷

*Below:*

*A Midsummer Night's Dream  
Guildhall School of Music and Drama*

*Director: Martin Lloyd-Evans*

*Designer: Ruari Murchison*

*Lighting designer: Mark Jonathan*

*Photographer: Clive Barda*

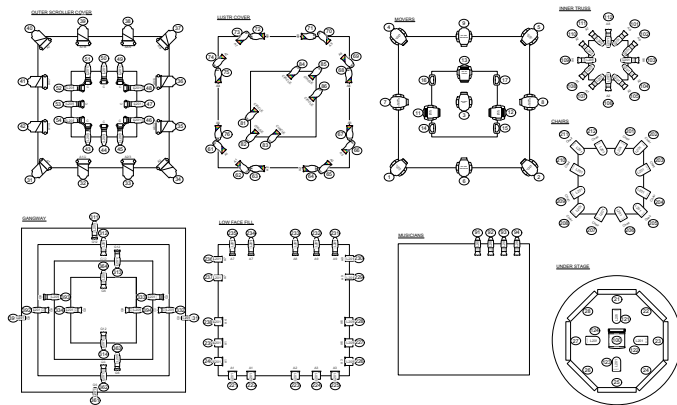


# Marko's tips 'n' tricks

It may be stating the obvious with this tip, in which case, forgive me.

As my mind toils over my latest plan, which is for an in-the-round production at the Liverpool Everyman, I found myself thinking about the systems I might use. This thought is combined with me using the substantial inventory of lights that the Everyman has, including movers, LED profiles and groundrows and a mass of tungsten generics. Using the theatre's inventory is a bit of mind game as I try to divide the number of lights available into systems.

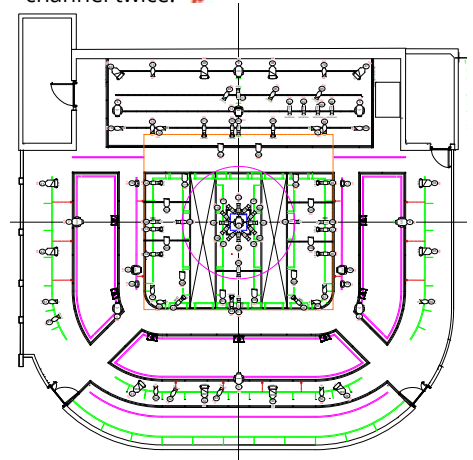
## MAGIC SHEET v4



Shall I put the scrollers on the Fresnels or the profiles? Which degree profile shall I use? Or shall I use zooms which might give me flexibility at the focus, etc.? The Everyman is further complicated as a flexible space where three-quarters of the theatre is comprised of bridges and one-quarter is fly bars. As we will be playing in the round I need my systems to be perfect opposites as each side is front for some and the back for others.

So, this time, I drew out a magic sheet first, showing each of the systems, and then I tried placing the units on the plan,

creating a fourth side using fly bars. Inevitably, I needed to go back to the theatre to check the rigging positions and especially if the rig could get round the proposed centre cluster of speakers. This done, the systems were evenly distributed, but it was hard to find them straightaway on the plan. I went back to magic sheet and channelled that, then transferred the channels back to the plan. This seemed to be much less of a "mind-bender" and made it less likely that I might inadvertently use the same channel twice. 🚫



Left: Magic sheet layout  
Right: Overhead lighting rig

# Starting out

Lucy Carter asks Zoe Spurr to share her experiences



This time I have asked Zoe Spurr to write about her experiences in the industry. Zoe is forging a great career for herself and winning nominations and awards for her lighting designs. She's recently won a 2019 Offie for The Old Red Lion's *Tiny Dynamite*, and as I watched the credits for *Bohemian Rhapsody* recently, I realised she is working on films as well! Zoe is at a different stage in her career to me, and working in different areas of the industry, and therefore has different experiences to share with you. It's much more interesting to hear of other people's points of view and thoughts than more of my moans and groans. It's also given me a bit more time for working on other ALD things. I do,

however, have a request. I am fighting every single producer I am working with at present to get my teams paid properly for the work that they have to do to get the shows on. It seems that producers think we are making up our workload and inventing days of work that are required to do our jobs. I want to make a plea to people to not do a day's work on top of those that you are paid for. We keep hearing from producers that they have never paid for so many days, or for prep days, MLA days, show watch days... the list goes on. If we all start insisting on and charging for every day we work – production electricians and programmers for all their prep time and meetings, associates for all the days they do and so on – then producers will have to start recognising the amount of work that is required. Also, do not to agree to half day's work – working for half a day means you can't do work on other productions on that day, so you need a full day's pay. A travel day should not be paid for as a half day either. The sooner we establish minimum daily rates for all roles the sooner we can all insist on better. We need to work together to make change happen. Let's try a bit of work to rule as well; keep telling them what

is required and when we run out of our paid days. Of course, we always welcome your comments on what we write, and we would love to hear from you via our ALD emails. Hope you enjoy Zoe's article.



You're at a party, and you're asked what you do. "I work in theatre. I'm a lighting designer." Responses vary. "Wow, a surgeon! That's a great job", "Oh, so you turn the switches on and off?", "Do you know anyone famous?" Outside of the industry there is little understanding of the existence of our jobs or what being a lighting designer/production electrician/programmer entails. How can we make the world of lighting more well known to the general public, and also as a career option for students to pursue? Theatre certainly isn't easy. In my early career days, money was tight, and I was working all hours doing various



*The Unreturning*  
*Frantic Assembly*  
Director: Neil Bettles  
Set and projection designer: Andrzej Goulding  
Costume designer: Lily Arnold  
Lighting designer: Zoe Spurr  
Photographer: Tristram Kenton

cast around you to make some theatre magic for the short time you are together. My journey into lighting design and passion for theatre was ignited at Stratford upon Avon

designer, or the process of making a show, but I loved performing and had always loved art, so that was my starting point.

My first day at college with the dream of learning more about acting quickly disintegrated when I realised it was dancing I loved, not acting, nor doing either as a career. However, a health and safety week in the studio theatre at Stratford College opened a door to a new world of technical theatre I hadn't been lucky enough to see before, and from that point on I didn't look back. I created the lighting designs for two practical exams with the help of "Techie Tim", and when looking into higher education my drama teacher told me about drama schools – again, unknown to me and even more unbelievably there were whole courses dedicated to lighting design for theatre! I looked around Central School of Speech and Drama on an open day and from seeing the buildings, facilities, lecturers and current students I knew that was where I wanted to be. I prepared an interview, had a full day there meeting prospective students and fellow theatre enthusiasts, and much to my surprise I was given a space! I deferred for a year with the hope of saving some money and gaining some experience in local theatres; after all,

crewing jobs. My mum, being concerned for my well-being, would ask, "When are you going to get a real job?", and every time I'd reply with a hopeful response, looking to the future – I'm doing the leg work; everyone has to start somewhere – hoping I was right. After the Donmar on Design event at the end of last year, there is a conversation already happening about how can we make our work be seen, appreciated and respected.

I consider myself to be incredibly lucky to have landed a career as a lighting designer. I love my job and am never bored. It's tiring, it's long hours, it's constantly being frustrated by misunderstandings or lack of understandings, but there is nothing better than having a creative team, company and

College, where I studied A-level drama, English literature, art and law. I'd danced for years at the local dancing school, and had performed in many amateur dramatic productions, competitions and charity shows, but had never even considered the technical/design side of theatre. When you're onstage you feel the light on you, you see the set around you and the costumes you are wearing, but all were pulled together on a tiny budget by Aunty Kath and Aunty Pat at the dance school, or the chairman of the am dram group with his wife DSMing – and, of course, the adrenalin of performing took concentration enough, distracting from the technical elements surrounding us. I got to the age of 16 without knowing what a creative team was, or a

# Starting out

## Zoe Spurr

I'd only ever lit two shows and knew nothing of the industry I was about to train in.

Just before I left Stratford College, my art teacher, who was the wife of Vince Herbert, head of lighting at the RSC, set up a meeting for us at the theatre. I was shown around the RST by Vince, which was one of my earliest memories of professional theatre and gave me real hope and excitement about the kindness of people in the industry. How generous it was of him to give up his time to show me round! The reason I'm recalling my journey to you is to say to aspiring LDs: DON'T GIVE UP! There will always be a right time and a right place; it's not a competition, and success (or your personal interpretation of success) will come at different times for every designer. To organisations, designers, producers and theatres: if someone comes knocking on your door wanting advice, shadowing experience, or simply to see backstage, please offer this to them, or pass them on to someone who might be able to facilitate this. I was turned away at all the theatres I contacted. People closed the door to me at a vulnerable stage of my career; if I hadn't already had my place at CSSD I may have given up. I spent the year before Central very disheartened, wondering if this would be the right path for me, and whether

to drop out and pursue something else.

Fortunately, I started Central raring to go. After a year working at Costa Coffee saving my pennies, I was ready to give everything to learning as much as possible and making this career work. While at Central we were encouraged to reach out to the people in theatre who inspired us. We saw a lot of different work early on in our first year, which opened my eyes to the sheer amount of brilliant work on offer to us to see. By watching the productions and analysing the lighting, set and direction, as students we were able to approach the creatives involved with questions to open up conversation and allow us to make connections. Recently, ten years on from this, students in the same position I was in have seen productions I've lit for Frantic Assembly and Headlong, and have emailed me with questions specific to lighting and design, which makes me so happy! The fact they're being encouraged by their teachers to recognise the design and aesthetics of the production is a step in the right direction. Frantic Assembly works with GCSE and college students up and down the country, and asked each creative on *The Unreturning* to write a couple of paragraphs about our role and our inspirations for the

design. This is on their website and made accessible to anyone who fancies a read, and gives students an insight into our roles and jobs that they might not have otherwise thought about. Wouldn't it be wonderful if more companies asked creatives for a simple breakdown of their process for the show, one that can be shared with anyone who has access to their website? Students and aspiring creatives would be given real insight into the production and would hopefully think more about design when watching their next show.

I'm still in touch with many of the LDs I approached while at uni, and these relationships have opened up great opportunities. A small offering of shadowing or assisting meant I was able to look at the professional world outside of CSSD. As LDs now working full time in the industry, if we continue to make an effort to offer placements/shadowing opportunities and meetings with emerging LDs we will hopefully inspire more people to aspire to a career in lighting. The "big" theatre buildings are great to see – working on this scale is, of course, very different to fringe spaces and might seem out of reach for someone starting their career – but even just seeing it makes the dream feel a tiny bit closer. A memorable week for me in my early career was facilitated by Jon Clark. He asked if I wanted to see *The Commitments* fitting up at the Palace Theatre, offering the opportunity to me and some other students to see a large-scale West End show in the making. I

learned so much that week and met some brilliant people. I recently lit my first West End show, and remembering the kindness Jon extended to me, I asked some people if they fancied being in the theatre with us as we created the show. I'm no Jon Clark, but I hope they found it interesting!

I've started to speak with producers at theatres, letting them know that if someone were to get in touch interested to learn more about lights, then to send them my way. If a few days, or even hours, at the theatre helps them on their journey, then I'm more than happy to facilitate. I've had two placement students with me recently, both of whom have been brilliant and enjoyed every second of being in the theatre. Both came to me through theatre contacts, as I'd previously shared my aim of getting more young and diverse range of people into lighting. So, keep talking about the issue to directors, theatres, set designers, and anyone who will listen or who may know someone who will benefit, and be open to offer out the opportunity.

Industry progression is about being in the right time at the right place, but it's also a huge amount of hard work. You don't get to the right place if you're not dedicated, eager, hardworking and passionate. My route was through shadowing, assisting, relighting, being an associate, and taking every design job that came my way, while working in production lighting and drawing plans to pay the rent. I got those jobs by

emailing LDs, noting whose work I especially loved. But in order for others to follow a similar path, we need more opportunities for emerging LDs. After Lucy Carter's article in a previous issue of *Focus* about the lack of understanding and conversation from producers regarding the members of the lighting design team, I feel we need to keep the discussion open in order to cherish our assistants and associates, making sure that everyone is paid properly, and is treated properly, and is included and recognised as a key member of the team. As an assistant/associate, I've previously been both welcomed warmly to the team and also sidelined and as good as ignored by other members of the production. I didn't have the credit as the lighting designer, but I was an extension of them and everything I actioned on the show as an assistant/

associate was filtered down to me from the LD. The best times are when the LD introduces an assistant/associate early on and includes them in all meetings/emails to make their presence known as a member of the lighting team, and to also keep note of the jobs they're doing throughout the process to help the LD. The exposure of their workload is very important to help highlight how much they're doing and the responsibility they have.

The topics I've touched on in this article have provoked many discussions, which are always great to keep going. Talk to anyone who'll listen. Everyone has a different experience, but if we can collectively make each other's lives a little easier, and a little more enjoyable, then we know we are going in the right direction. Here's to the next ten years! 🍷

*Collective Rage*  
Southwark Playhouse  
Director: Charlie Parham  
Designer: Anna Reid  
Lighting designer: Zoe Spurr  
Photographer: Jack Sain



# Diversity group update

*Jai Morjaria* with information from the diversity subcommittee

Here at the ALD we are trying to champion lighting design to be seen as a career that is sustainable and inclusive to all. As we hear of opportunities we would love to share them with our members and spread the word. So please get in touch if you are running any schemes or hear of any opportunities you think everyone should know about.



Recently I came across a brilliant scholarship scheme that one of our own members, Hugh Vanstone, has created. Hugh is a well known and experienced lighting design practitioner with work such as Matilda the Musical and his work as an associate at The Old Vic. The Vanstone Scholarship has been created to support students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. For this new scheme Hugh has partnered with Guildhall to address the issue that is at the forefront of the industry's mind: diversity. Hugh comments: "When I was preparing to light Dreamgirls I tried very hard to find an experienced

BME associate, and ultimately failed. This prompted me to act. I felt like I owed it to the industry to do something practical. So I did!" To find out more visit <https://bit.ly/2Eb6jft>.



Speaking with the creative learning team at the newly refurbished Kiln Theatre, I found out they are introducing a new and free backstage course called Act One Beginners. This course is designed to introduce young people from diverse backgrounds to the basics of lighting, sound and stage management and provide exclusive opportunities to start a backstage career. You will get to participate in a range of workshops as well as attending exciting London-based theatre performances. Creative learning director at the Kiln, Liam Shea, comments: "Kiln Theatre's mission is to bring unheard voices into the mainstream, and while we continue to boost representation from different backgrounds onstage we realise that this can only truly happen if those voices are supported by diverse teams offstage and

backstage." Aimed at young people who are underrepresented in the arts, whether practically or theoretically minded, the course aims to show them that there is a place backstage for them and careers available. You don't need any experience to join and the course runs every Wednesday from May through to July. This is a great opportunity if you know someone locally who wants to explore a new avenue and just try everything. To find out more visit: <http://bit.ly/ActOneBeginnersKiln>. 📌

# Stage Sight launches

Prema Mehta launches a new initiative

STAGE  
SIGHT



Stage Sight, a new collaborative network to help create a diverse off-stage theatre workforce, has been launched by theatre lighting designer Prema Mehta,

supported by the Society of London Theatre (SOLT) and UK Theatre.

Stage Sight was created by Prema as a direct response to the industry's need to widen its workforce and become more reflective of today's society, and to include people who come from a BAME background, people from a working-class background and disabled and D/deaf people.

Stage Sight's vision is to create an off-stage workforce that is more reflective of our society today, inclusive of ethnicity, class and disability. These roles can be anything from stage management to theatre technicians to members of the creative team. Stage Sight showcases good practice and success in this area. It is a collaborative network that is open to everyone and free to join.

It asks members to commit to making a practical change and to share their progress and learning.

It raises awareness of the need to achieve a more balanced off-stage workforce, and it encourages practical, simple steps to achieve this. It offers a range of resources which includes:

- a comprehensive list of our members' initiatives, detailing the practical changes they are implementing;
- a collection of case studies offering evaluation on projects for you to learn from;
- networking opportunities with other Stage Sight members; and
- access to guidance documents.

Theatre organisations and professionals are asked to commit to practical change in one of three areas; recruitment (making hiring practices more open), reaching out (raising public awareness of off-stage roles) and new pathways (developing new learning and training experiences), and to share their learning with the Stage Sight network.

The Stage Sight website acts as a showcase for inspiring projects and good practice, and an online community for

sharing ideas, resources, progress and learning. Quarterly members' forums bring Stage Sight members together to share ideas and progress, and to support each other's projects.

Stage Sight is for those already exploring ways to improve representation who have experience to share, or those keen to start making change and in need of ideas and guidance.

Prema says, "Many people don't know about theatre – we could all do more to reach out to larger pools of our community to widen our workforce and our pool of talent. It is fantastic that so many organisations have already joined Stage Sight, and I hope many more do too. Real change will only happen if the industry comes together to share ideas for opening our doors to everyone."

Organisations that have already committed to being part of Stage Sight include the Association of British Theatre Technicians, Chichester Festival Theatre, Disney Theatrical Group, English Touring Theatre, Hull Truck Theatre, Mercury Theatre Colchester, the National Theatre and the Young Vic.

To join Stage Sight, visit [www.stagesight.org/how-to-join](http://www.stagesight.org/how-to-join). #

# Call me by my name

Why we need to credit the creatives, by **Sofia Alexiadou**

I have this thing whenever I go back to my family house. I always spent some quiet time in the living room. Our living room has hosted some of the best gatherings and loveliest memories of my life: my dad's friends on his name day, when my uncle played the piano and they all sang, usually out of tune, my parties as a teenager that I had to finish early as my parents were desperate to go to bed and we wanted to keep on dancing, prepping for weddings or funerals... The living room for me has always been a focal point of my existence. Probably for one more reason: the family photo albums.

At the very bottom of the bookcase, there's a cupboard where my parents keep


our family photos. There must be at least six photo albums. One from their wedding, one from the day I was christened, one from my brother's christening and at least three more full of pictures of people I don't recognise. These have always been a mystery to me. I've spent hours going through photographs of people I couldn't relate to or wondering about the houses these photos had been taken in. Yet, they were part of my life, of my story. The story that roots me as a human being. There are no names on the backs of the pictures; my mother doesn't know who these people were or where they were and probably all the people who could enlighten me are long gone. So, there I always stood, trying to figure out the story behind a

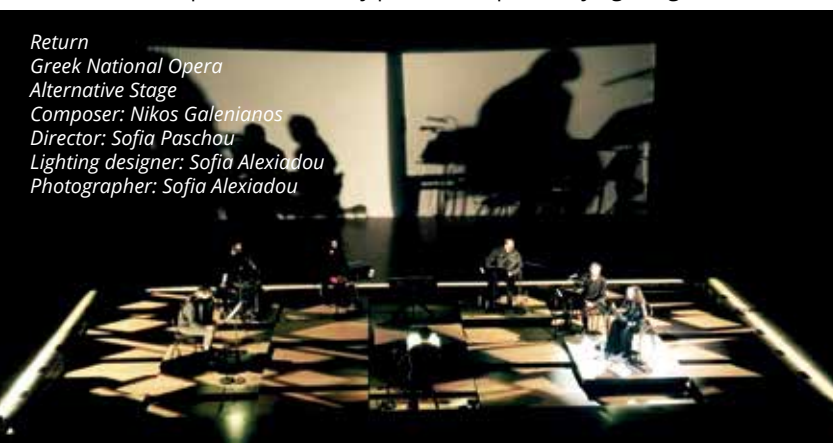
picture. And there was always a gap in my heart. A connection I couldn't make, a name I never knew...

Since I've been working in theatre I am part of other

families as well. Theatre families. We call them companies, formed by cast and creatives. For the time we work together, we form loving bonds as we embark on the adventure of putting on shows. The last leg of the journey is the opening night, and after the final performance the show stays in our memories and lives on only through photos taken during dress rehearsals. Every show has its theatre family album: a collection of memories that both actors and backstage teams have given birth to.

I think I am sharing this memory now because, as part of the creative team for shows, I always come across photos of performances that never credit the creative team. And it always throws me back to my family living room thinking, where was this taken, whose house was that... Whose set was that? The costumes and the lights? All those efforts though fit-up week and the stress of tech time?

Probably more so because in the UK, training backstage disciplines lies at highest level and the hours students spend behind the scenes, lighting or sound desks, in the workshops or props rooms covered in polystyrene, are endless. They don't take bows every night, but their work is the glue that holds the show together. Let's credit the cast as well as the creatives to give future generations that will go through these theatre family albums the chance to fill in the gaps of their past. Of our theatre history.   
*Sofia is a lighting designer and a lecturer in lighting design at LIPA.*



*Return  
Greek National Opera  
Alternative Stage  
Composer: Nikos Galenianos  
Director: Sofia Paschou  
Lighting designer: Sofia Alexiadou  
Photographer: Sofia Alexiadou*



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# Office Oracle

News and information from **Ian** and the ALD office

## 2019 AGM

The next Annual General Meeting of the ALD will take place on Saturday 25 May 2019. This year we shall be attempting to do things a little differently to normal, however...

To try to include more members in the day, particularly from outside London and the South East more generally, we shall be holding a second satellite event in Manchester with thanks to Nick Ware at the Royal Northern College of Music for providing us with a venue.

We have had to change the London end of the day though, and with many thanks to White Light, it will take place in their Studio 15 building. There is plenty of car parking space and is a ten-minute walk from ether South Wimbledon tube station or Morden Road tram stop.

Building on last year's full-day event,

the plan is to hold a range of professional development seminars in both venues during the morning, have lunch and then, with the wonders of modern technology, to link the two sites together for the main business part of the Annual General Meeting itself and perhaps a further discussion or Q&A after that. As part of the meeting we will be announcing the results of the election of directors to ALD Ltd as well as dealing with the normal business items due to be presented.

Full confirmation of all the details will be sent out via our email bulletins in the next month or so. If you do not receive these, you can contact [membership@ald.org.uk](mailto:membership@ald.org.uk) to have set it up. If you do not have an email address, please contact the Office directly for full details.

Attendance at the AGM is open to all members of the ALD, although only Professional, Fellow and Life members in benefit are entitled to vote at an AGM. If you are in any doubt whether you owe any subscription monies, again please contact [membership@ald.org.uk](mailto:membership@ald.org.uk) as soon as possible.

Any voting members who cannot attend the AGM will be eligible to appoint a proxy in their place. Details of how to

register a proxy will be circulated with the information about the meeting.

## Company director elections 2019

Following the incorporation of the ALD in 2016, we are now required to hold annual elections for Directors. ALD directors are nominated from and elected by Professional, Fellow, Life and Honorary members – the voting membership.

An elected director serves for a three-year term, when they can then stand for a second term. They must stand down for a minimum of one year after the second term before being able to stand again. Therefore, each year one third of the eleven director spaces are up for renewal, and with the date of the AGM now set, we are asking for interested parties to stand for nomination for the 2019 elections.

There is a total of four director positions available for election, and all those at the end of their term are eligible to stand for another term if they wish to. Should we receive more than four nominations, a ballot will take place with the process being announced to the voting membership.

The result of the ballot will be announced at the 2019 AGM. Full details

about the directors' duties and how to submit a nomination can be found on the members' side of the ALD website at [www.ald.org.uk/director-elections](http://www.ald.org.uk/director-elections). It can also be sent by post upon request if we do not have a registered email address for you.

### **Election timeline**

Tuesday 26 March: Nomination period opens

Thursday 18 April: Nominations close

Friday 26 April: Ballot papers sent out to voting members (if required)

Friday 17 May: Deadline for ballot papers (if required)

Saturday 25 May: 2019 ALD Annual General Meeting – election results announced

Nominations for election as a director shall be in writing signed by two voting members of the Association as proposer and seconder respectively and containing the signed consent of the candidate to serve and must be received by the ALD Office not later than 18 April 2019.

To ease this process, you can complete the Survey Monkey form at [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/aldelection19](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/aldelection19) or request a nomination form and return it to [election@ald.org.uk](mailto:election@ald.org.uk).

The result of the ballot shall be announced at the Annual General Meeting, and the terms of office of the members elected shall then commence.

### **Subscription fees**

2019/20 subscription charges are now due for all individual members. We are currently working our way through the approximately 600 payments that arrived in our bank account at the start of April, so please be patient while we catch up.

Any members still owing monies by the start of May will be sent a reminder email of their current balance. If you do not have an email address registered on our database, we will send you a letter informing you of any outstanding balance.

Members are advised that their subscription fees must be paid in full by the end of June, otherwise the continuation of your membership is at risk.

Professional	£85
Affiliate	£50
Associate	£45
Student	£30
Retired	£30

NB. Members of **ALL** categories are advised that membership fees **WILL** rise for 2020 in order that the ALD can continue to provide the existing services – even without wishing to expand upon them.

### **2019/20 members' yearbook**

Having compiled our last printed members' yearbook in 2017, we are now in the process of starting to think about the

next edition to send out to members with a future copy of *Focus* during 2019.

There is no doubt that the website online directory is the most up-to-date list of members, but members have expressed an appreciation of being able to have a printed version of the document to keep on their shelves. If you do not wish to have a copy sent to you, you can opt out of receiving a copy through the "Contact details and preferences" page of your ALD web profile.

The website is also the place to keep your entry for the yearbook up to date with the "Contact details and preferences" page having the option to edit your contact details to either be listed or hidden from your yearbook entry. There is also the option of not being listed in the printed edition at all. This is separate from the web directory visibility option and can be found at the bottom of the page mentioned above.

If you look at the last yearbook you received, you will also see there is a possibility to add a short entry of up to 250 characters long if you wish to. This can be found on the Professional Profile page of the "My ALD" landing page, which has been recently re-designed as highlighted in the last issue of *Focus*. This page also gives you the option of selecting your professional experience that feeds into the public search function of the website directory.

# Office Oracle

Ian Saunders

Remember to click the SAVE button at the bottom of every page to update the content before navigating away from it.

For further details of how to tailor your website profile, please visit and download the web-user guide which is available here: [www.ald.org.uk/ald-website-user-guide](http://www.ald.org.uk/ald-website-user-guide).

## USA London meeting

The second annual London meeting for members of United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 will be held on 20 May 2019 at 5.30 pm, at the Union Club, 50 Greek Street, London W1D 4EQ.

Once again we will be able to meet with Cecilia Friederichs and Carl Mulert from the New York office, to discuss all the aspects and benefits for members and to be updated on the ongoing business of the Union including recent negotiations with The Broadway League, which culminated in a major restructuring of the Broadway Contract; Houston Grand Opera; LA Opera; and the upcoming San Francisco Opera negotiation.

Drinks and refreshments will be served, and all Local USA 829 members are welcome. The first meeting last May was fun and informative.

## New member benefit – Theatre 503

We are delighted to be able to announce our first ongoing ticket discount with a theatre, with ALD members now able to access a discount rate at Theatre 503 in South London.

Wherever a “Theatre Union” concession option is listed for a show, members can purchase this ticket type. When you collect and pay for your ticket, you will be expected to present a current ALD membership card with the relevant expiry date sticker on the rear.

These stickers are sent out as and when we process your latest membership payment. If you do not have one of our new membership cards (see image to the right) then you can have a new one sent to you by sending an SAE to the Office.

A full list of all the benefits members can access as part of their membership can be seen on the members' side of the website: [www.ald.org.uk/members-benefits](http://www.ald.org.uk/members-benefits).

## Members' insurance scheme benefit

Professional and Affiliate members of the ALD continue to be able to add on our liability insurance benefit scheme to their memberships.

This scheme gives you up to £10 million of public liability and products insurance cover if you work as a freelancer, as well as £1 million of professional indemnity cover. We have had to find a new provider after our previous supplier informed us they would not be able to continue with the scheme for 2019/20. This has led to the cost of the scheme increasing to £50 per member for the year to end of March 2020.

However, this is still a competitive rate as organising equivalent coverage on an individual basis would cost around five times this amount for equivalent cover. Full details about the scheme and the policy document can be found on the members' side of the website: [www.ald.org.uk/members-benefits/combined-liability-insurance-policy](http://www.ald.org.uk/members-benefits/combined-liability-insurance-policy).



You will need to formally opt into the scheme as an addition to your membership, which you can do via this form: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/aldcombins](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/aldcombins).

### **ALD at PLASA Focus: Leeds**

PLASA Focus takes place on 14 and 15 May at the Royal Armouries in Leeds. Our stand is again located in the registration area of the Royal Armouries Hall, where you will also find the other associations (stand R-E04). Do come and say hello. We will also be able to take 2019/20 subscriptions by card, cash or cheque if you do not pay by standing order or direct debit. You'll also be able to check on your current details and ask about other areas of the ALD or website that needs clarification.

We will also be holding our now-traditional members' social at the end of the first day of the show, and our thanks once again to Hawthorn for hosting and sponsoring. Watch out for news of the venue in future emails or drop by the ALD or Hawthorn stands at the show to get details.

You can register to attend the show by clicking on the slider image on the homepage of our website or at <https://bit.ly/2D1sQuk>.

### **Backup Bike Fest**

18 May will see backup's first event of 2019, the inaugural Bike Fest. Pedal off around the Surrey and Sussex hills for a

day of two-wheeled action and fun for all levels of rider to raise funds for your favourite industry charity.

For the more hardened cyclists, including the Mamil (middle-aged man in Lycra), there is a glorious 100km ride through the Sussex and Surrey countryside, which will take in much of the famed Olympic and Prudential Ride London-Surrey 100 route, including Leith Hill, the highest point in Surrey, and the famous Box Hill Zig Zag.

For the less Lycra inclined, there is a 50km route, again taking in much of the lovely Surrey countryside, but also a number of isotonic watering holes en route for you to recharge your batteries.

The day starts and finishes at the HQ of Creative Technology, who are handing over the keys to their offices and generously supporting the first Bike Fest. Here you will be given your route and will meet the other riders. Then, our amazing catering partners, the Global Infusion Group, will fill you with bacon sandwiches before you leave and, upon your triumphant return, fill you up with more food and drinks. Then it's on to the prizes and the winner of celebrated backup yellow jersey!

Everyone is welcome for what is set to be a great day for the enthusiast and leisure cyclist alike and for everyone to enjoy with family and friends. [www.backuptech.uk/event/bike-fest-2019/](http://www.backuptech.uk/event/bike-fest-2019/)

### **2019 award winners**

(ALD members in bold)

#### **WhatsOnStage Theatre Awards**

##### **Best Lighting Design**

*Sponsored by White Light*  
Howell Binkley, Hamilton



##### *Other nominees:*

**Ben Cracknell**, Heathers the Musical  
**Howard Hudson**, Little Shop of Horrors  
**Neil Austin**, Company  
Tim Deiling, Six the Musical

##### **Best Video Design**

*Sponsored by PRG*  
Terry Scruby, Chess



##### *Other nominees:*

Daniel Denton, Misty  
Dick Straker, A Monster Calls  
Luke Halls, The Lehman Trilogy  
**Nina Dunn**, The Assassination of Katie Hopkins

#### **Olivier Awards**

##### **White Light Award for Best Lighting Design**

Jon Clark, The Inheritance



##### *Other nominees:*

**Neil Austin**, Company  
Howell Binkley, Come From Away  
**Lee Curran**, Summer and Smoke

## Diary dates 2019

<b>18 April</b>	Nominations for directors elections close
<b>26 April</b>	Ballot papers sent out to voting members
<b>14-15 May</b>	PLASA Focus, Royal Armouries, Leeds*
<b>14 May</b>	Northern members' social evening The Tetley, Leeds
<b>17 May</b>	Deadline for ballot papers to be returned
<b>18 May</b>	BackUp Bike Fest – Crawley
<b>25 May</b>	ALD Annual General Meeting Announcement of directors elections results
<b>5-6 June</b>	ABTT Theatre Show, Alexandra Palace, London*
<b>6-16 July</b>	Prague Quadrennial
<b>15-17 September</b>	PLASA Show, Olympia, London*
<b>TBC 2021</b>	World Stage Design, Calgary, Canada

Keep up to date with ALD events via the online diary: [www.ald.org.uk/diary](http://www.ald.org.uk/diary)

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

## Contact us

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Redoubt House, Edward Road, Eastbourne BN23 8AS  
[www.ald.org.uk](http://www.ald.org.uk) [office@ald.org.uk](mailto:office@ald.org.uk)  
Company registered in England & Wales no. 10079797

**President: Richard Pilbrow**

### The ALD Board

**Vice President: Rick Fisher** [rick.fisher@ald.org.uk](mailto:rick.fisher@ald.org.uk)

**Chair: Johanna Town** [chair@ald.org.uk](mailto:chair@ald.org.uk)

**Vice Chairman: Mark Jonathan** [mark.jonathan@ald.org.uk](mailto:mark.jonathan@ald.org.uk)

**Treasurer: Mark White** [treasurer@ald.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@ald.org.uk)

**Board members: Alistair Grant, Steve Huttly, Nick Moran, Peter Mumford, Stuart Porter, Katharine Williams, Kelli Zezulka**

### Ex officio officers

**Executive Director: Ian Saunders** [office@ald.org.uk](mailto:office@ald.org.uk)

**Company Secretary: John Leventhall** [office@ald.org.uk](mailto:office@ald.org.uk)

### Member representatives

**Professionals: Lucy Carter, Stuart Porter** [professionals@ald.org.uk](mailto:professionals@ald.org.uk)

**Companies: [VACANT]** [companies@ald.org.uk](mailto:companies@ald.org.uk)

**Students: Rory Beaton (lead)** [students@ald.org.uk](mailto:students@ald.org.uk)

**Meetings: Tom Wilkes (lead)** [meetings@ald.org.uk](mailto:meetings@ald.org.uk)

**Education: Nick Moran** [education@ald.org.uk](mailto:education@ald.org.uk)

**Equity: Robbie Butler** [equity@ald.org.uk](mailto:equity@ald.org.uk)

### Co-opted committee members

**Paule Constable, Prema Mehta**

([firstname.surname@ald.org.uk](mailto:firstname.surname@ald.org.uk))

### Focus Magazine

 ISSN: 1364-9299

**Editor: Kelli Zezulka** [editor@ald.org.uk](mailto:editor@ald.org.uk)

**Editorial team: James Laws, Rob Halliday and Sofia Alexiadou**

To submit ideas for articles, correspondence, corrections and any comments about *Focus*, email [editor@ald.org.uk](mailto:editor@ald.org.uk). Owing to space restrictions, we do not accept press releases for publication in *Focus*. However, company members may send press releases to the ALD office ([office@ald.org.uk](mailto:office@ald.org.uk)) to be posted on the News section of the ALD website. Company members only may advertise in *Focus*; please contact the office for details. Editorial guidelines for authors are available on request. *The opinions published within Focus are not necessarily those of the ALD. E&OE. Content deadline for the next issue: 15 May 2019*

# New members

Welcome!

## *Professional members*

George Bach, London†  
Chris Barham, Somerset  
Louise Birchall, Hampshire†  
Claire Childs, London†  
Joshua Gadsby, Bucks†  
Katherine Graham, Leeds†  
Marty Langthorne, London†  
Asuza Ono, London†  
Jamie Platt, London†  
Dan Street, Staffordshire†  
Alan Valentine, Berkshire†  
Ross Williams, Bucks†  
Adam Wright, Essex†

## *Affiliate members*

Charlotte Robinson, West Yorkshire  
Nathan Storm, Durham\*

## *Associate members*

Andrew Marsh, Dorset  
Nathan Lap Yan Wong, Hong Kong

## *Student members*

Tyler Forward, Kent  
Rory O'Hara, Ayrshire  
Kieran Paton, Ayrshire  
Adam Skrzymowski, Berkshire  
Max Watson, Oxfordshire

## *Corporate members*

Prolight Concepts Group Ltd  
Blitz Lighting – a GES company

\* Re-joining the association

† From Associate/Affiliate member

# Professional members' shows

## opening in April and May

From the "Diary" page of the ALD website. A full listing of all members' shows can be seen at [www.ald.org.uk/diary](http://www.ald.org.uk/diary). To be listed, enter show credits into your profile after signing in to the members' area.

### April

**1 Jack Wills** *Romeo & Juliet* York Theatre Royal Studio / **4 Joshua Gadsby** *Trap Street* Schaubuhne / **4 James C McFetridge** *Philadelphia Here I Come* Craic Theatre, Coalisland / **4 Zoe Spurr** *Toast* The Other Palace / **5 Claire Childs** *Boulder* The Marlowe Theatre Studio / **6 Jason Addison** (associate lighting designer) *West Side Story* Royal Exchange Theatre Manchester / **9 James C McFetridge** *Oklahoma!* Island Arts Centre, Lisburn / **10 Joshua Gadsby** *Cymbeline* Courtyard Theatre / **10 Jamie Platt** *The Herd* Webber Douglas Studio, CSSD / **11 Elliot Griggs** *Amélie* The Watermill Theatre / **12 Charlie Morgan Jones** *Shaw Goes Wilde* Susie Sainsbury Theatre / **13 Claire Childs** *Kaj Nazar* St John the Evangelist Church Hammersmith / **13 Malcolm Rippeth** *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* Curve Theatre Leicester / **17 Sam Waddington** *Other People's Money* Southwark Playhouse / **19 Kiaran L Kesby** (associate lighting designer) *Ain't Misbehavin'* Southwark Playhouse / **24 Matt Whale** (associate lighting designer) *Memoirs of a Sailor* Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Centre, Kuwait / **24 Will Evans** *Wave Me Goodbye* Theatr Clwyd / **25 Jason Addison** *Turn & Face The Strange – The Story of Mick Ronson* Hull Truck Theatre / **25 Johanna Town** *Miss Julie & The Creditors in Rep* Theatre by the Lake, Keswick / **25 Katharine Williams** *Lost At Sea* Perth Theatre / **30 Johanna Town** *Napoli Brooklyn* Malvern Festival Theatre & Tour

### May

**2 Joshua Gadsby** *Fleischhacker / Meat-hacker (Research and Development)* Guest Projects / **2 Malcolm Rippeth** *Dead Dog in a Suitcase (and other love songs)* Nuffield Southampton City / **7 Jack Wills** *Ballet Soul* Royal Academy of Dance / **7 Tom Mowat** *Mack and Mabel* Nottingham Theatre Royal / **9 Max Blackman** (assistant lighting designer) *Around The World In 80 Days* New Victory, New York / **10 Katharine Williams** *This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries and This Girl Does Nothing* Macrobert, Stirling / **11 Jack Wills** *MNDA Presents Steve Hutchinson In Concert* The Hammond Theatre / **11 Ben Jacobs** (associate lighting designer) *Anna* Dorfman Theatre – Royal National Theatre / **24 Palle Palme** *West Side Story* Tallinn Opera, Estonia / **30 Malcolm Rippeth** *Don Giovanni* Garsington Opera

# Osram PAR recall

Jo Town in defence of the parcan

Osram Lighting is recalling hundreds of our beloved PAR lamps! This is not a ban but a fault in the lamps' manufacture. See <https://bit.ly/2VAe3hv>.

This latest news reminds me how #SSL began back in 2012/2013 as "Save Tungsten" when Michael Hulls along with Jim Laws, Neil Austin and Paule Constable shared their passion for and love of tungsten. I

remember Jim's task of analysing all the light bulbs that we were in jeopardy of losing, including the beloved PAR lamp; it was an arduous task that he undertook again in the most recent #SSL campaign.

Their initial campaign really opened people's eyes to how and why we use light on stage and what that light needed to be. And this helped us start a dialogue about the future of lighting and the future of good LED lighting, the very future we now live in.

But what about our PAR? Is it possibly that this recall might be the beginning of



the end for a lamp that has been symbolic of the lighting industry for decades? Every rock band and every theatre has owned a Parcan; their visual input has helped bring lighting design into the public's consciousness.

The modern, now-loved LED light hasn't yet been morphed into a Par64. The Source 4 Par is great but not the same, and there is no LED PAR that touches the quality or beam quality of a tungsten PAR.

So, I am challenging the Company members out there. The lamp manufacturers. The LED specialists.

## Where is our PAR replacement?

To quote Michael Hulls: "There is nothing else quite like a Parcan! Particularly a Par 64 with a CP60 or 62 lamp with their rough edged purity, their ovoid shape and soft edges, the power and quality of light and its variance of distribution between the centre and the edges ... the range of colour temperature between very low level ambers and pure white at full... There is nothing else like it!" 🌟



A reminder that we are continuing to fundraise for #SSL costs incurred so far. The bill for the campaign is estimated at £35,000, covering personal expenditure by the team for travel, hotels, fares to Brussels, office expenditure and, of course, the very successful gobo campaign. If we collect enough, we hope to add a small additional sum to partially compensate a very dedicated group of people for lost work.

Therefore, we are asking for your help to raise this relatively small amount. If you are a manufacturer who is now more aware of the EU's plans than you were before, if you are a reseller or hire company whose stock has been spared due to this intervention, if you are a producer or theatre owner that could not possibly afford the implied refurbishment – then please contribute to this campaign. And, of course, we would welcome individual contributions from our members or non-members. Details on how to contribute are at [www.ald.org.uk/ssl-fundraising](http://www.ald.org.uk/ssl-fundraising) and [www.gofundme.com/savestagelighting-campaign](http://www.gofundme.com/savestagelighting-campaign).

Thank you in advance for your generosity. 🌟

# PLASA Leeds 2019

## Highlights of this year's show

**P**LASA Focus Leeds, the popular show for industry networking and product debuts, is back for 2019, taking place at the Royal Armouries Museum from 14 to 15 May. Free registration is now open for visitors who want to explore the many facets of live entertainment technology.

With the show floor selling out, 120 brands – representing each sector of the industry – will span across two halls. Many will use the show as a UK launch pad for new products, fresh from debuts at the international shows. Visitors can expect to see lighting manufacturers such as Elation, Robe, Chauvet, Avolites, ETC, GLP, GDS and Vari-Lite, as well as giant distributors and production specialists such as Ambersphere and Hawthorn.

The wide range of exhibitors guarantees the show's appeal to professionals working across live events, concert touring, production, performing arts and installation. Furthermore, the show welcomes several new exhibitors for 2019.

In addition to the show floor there will be a full programme of seminars, panel discussions and forums. Experts who worked on some of the most exciting projects over the last year will discuss

their creative and technical processes. Meanwhile, there will be need-to-know technical guidance, ensuring the free programme is rich with professional development offerings.

The show will also offer a range of expert-led training workshops where attendees can get hands-on with leading lighting consoles under the guidance of official brand representatives.

Sophie Atkinson, PLASA's Head of Events comments, "PLASA Focus Leeds continues to be one of the most anticipated events in the calendar; it's the perfect place for

people to get together, share knowledge and find out about the latest technology. Our team is currently building an exciting programme of seminars and workshops, celebrating some of the

# plasa**focus**

LEEDS | 14-15 MAY, 2019

most exciting projects from the north of England – we look forward to announcing the line-up in the coming weeks."

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# The development of Flight

Simon Wilkinson on the process of building Vox Motus' Flight

Flight is, to the best of my knowledge, unique. It sits at the boundary between storytelling and craft, between art and technology, between magic and mechanics. It tells the story of two orphaned boys and their epic journey across Europe, charting their moments of wonder, desperation, terror and, occasionally, joy. It does so using a pre-recorded headphone soundtrack, 200 or so meticulously crafted diorama, precisely timed lighting and a slowly moving revolve.

The concept was described to me back in August 2016. Jamie Harrison had just finished the illusions for *Harry Potter* and was starting to think about making something new. Vox Motus, Jamie and co-director Candice Edmunds' company, had been working on adapting Caroline Brothers' novel "Hinterland" for a while, but now they were interested in a different way of telling the story. What if we made a 3D graphic novel? Told a story with a sequence of three-dimensional models? Synchronised these models appearing and disappearing with an immersive sound track? Slowly moved the models past viewers each seated in their own, private booth? As Jamie explained, if 25 viewers

were arranged in a circle, and the models were on the edge of a revolving platform in the middle of them, the show could operate continuously, swapping viewers as one show ended and the next began.

Over the next six months the plan evolves. The opening venue is smaller than planned, reducing both the revolve size and the circumference in which to tell our story. Jamie comes up with the idea of going around twice – telling half the story with each revolution and weaving the images from both together, doubling the distance available.

We have a development workshop to work out the technology behind all of this. One challenge is to decide how to synchronise the show with the mechanics. The conclusion we come to is that the show should be driven by the revolve, with sound and lighting speeding up or slowing down with its movement. These changes will be imperceptible to the viewer but mean that over a 20-revolution day the last show is as precise as the first. Our revolve controller tells us the angular position of the revolve, and I produce an interface that translates into MIDI timecode for the show control systems.

The creative team is coming to this from a theatre mindset, and we are keen to take our usual tools with us. I cling to the comfort of building the show on an ETC console. We decide that the easiest way to rehearse the show is going to be building a show for the viewer in the first booth and then copying that show to the 24 other booths, adjusting the timecode triggers for each cue as we go. It becomes clear that this is far too time consuming to be a manual task, so I build a computer script to automate this using Eos's OSC support.

We move some test models on our development revolve and add birdies to fade them up and down. We all get excited by how mesmerising these tiny worlds are to watch and we press onwards. After many days with a 30m long piece of paper, Jamie comes up with a layout for the show. It's made of 220 models of many different sizes, ranging from tiny (4cm) to large (40cm). What becomes clear is just how little space there is for lights. The models are very tightly packed – some with millimetres to spare between them. No space for birdies here!

With 220 models, the complete budget (dimming and lights) for each model

was around £50. There are lots of lovely miniature lights available, but none at that price! I was keen, however, not to jettison my original design goals. I wanted each model to be lit theatrically – with high contrast and sharp shadows. A strong key light, some fill when required, a bit of backlight on the bigger models and a light box for the sky if required. Practically, I was aiming for two lights on every model, so the show could survive some failures.

I found a range of lensed 3W LEDs at a price we could afford and the eldoLED ecoDRIVE for dimming. One key light on each model was affordable, an occasional backlight wouldn't break the bank so long as I didn't get carried away, but using these for fill was financially impossible. What



we needed was an extremely cheap LED source with an inbuilt dimmer. I'd used RGB Neopixels for practicals in the past, but their white was poor. Some searching revealed a white/warm white/amber pixel, which seemed like the perfect solution.

We also started looking at how to work with the medium we were creating. Once we started construction the scene order would be set. Also, because our revolve had to move at a constant speed, we couldn't change how long a image takes to pass by or the duration between images. These were all determined by the physical size and position of the model. It seemed vital to visualise this before construction began.

The arrangement of our 30m long storyboard had already been captured in digital form. I took this information, and our storyboard images, and produced a Motion animatic. This showed the movement of each individual model past the viewer, along with the current timecode and revolve position. By virtually fading each image in and out we could model the lighting together with the revolve's movement. The timing of this animatic then became the time guide for the show – influencing the editing of the script, the composition of the soundtrack and the recording of the dialogue. Using this information, we could



*The control position in Edinburgh*

also automatically programme an Eos cue stack for the whole show, converting each fade to a lighting cue with the appropriate timecode. So, we had a 300-cue stack before a single light was installed.

The lighting was also designed based on this storyboard, determining light sources and positions for every model. This was a process of constant refinement, working out which models could be moved by a critical 5mm to create space for a light and trading fewer lights on one for more lights on another. Practicals were worked out with the model making team, ranging from the glimmer of the chandeliers in an upmarket restaurant to the glare of the streetlights above a soup kitchen queue, from the glint of a phone in the back of a truck to a line of headlights stretching into

# Flight

Simon Wilkinson

the distance along a motorway. We planned as much as we could and then we ordered. The lead times were not in our favour.

Construction began with the control boards, housing some 440 ways of LED driver. The structure on top of the revolve, our carousel, was split into 15 pallets each with its own board – containing a PSU and the required LED and pixel drivers. Through in the studio, a team of model makers painstakingly built and painted each world, integrating practicals and light boxes as they went. Environments were meticulously hand crafted, built from

fabric, card, resin and glue. The figures in the world were digitally sculpted and 3D printed, some 500 models arriving in daily batches from the print shop. Everything was then painted by hand before being installed into its pallet and passed on for lighting.

I'd decided upon a relatively limited gel palette for the show, along with cold or warm white LEDs, and we gelled and focussed and plotted each model as we went. This was the point of no return. After installation, there was no chance of revisiting the lights – they were boxed in by the models around them. While we were working a Nomad

ran the generated cue stack from internal timecode, fading each model up and down as they would in the show. This became a remarkably uplifting feature – a chance to see what the finished show could be!

Day by day, model by model, the show started to appear in front of us. We were working from the bottom up, so it took a while for coherent sequences to appear, as one model might be installed weeks after one chronologically before or after it. But slowly we edged closer to the finished show. Things changed during installation, as they inevitably do. A dream sequence changed from layers of hand painted transparencies to edge-lit etched Perspex, and we learned a lot about how to light the models to their best advantage as we went along. By and large, however, we stuck to the plan.



*The set under construction in Glasgow*





Towards the end of this, we moved out of the studio and into our preview venue. For the first time, the carousel was sitting on top of the revolve, and we could start combining all of the elements together. The creative team crammed themselves into a one-person booth to watch and listen as the world came to life. We played the revolve like a record deck, playing for a bit, stopping, discussing changes, adjusting levels, fade times and timecode, then going back and playing again. Thankfully, the technology worked. After a couple of days, we had a polished show, albeit for a single viewer.

Now we needed to take one show and turn it into 25. I launched the show copy script I had built six months before and

slowly, cue by cue, booth by booth, the full show appeared. A few hours later we were ready to run the full show for the first time. Somewhat confounding our expectations, it all worked. 25 booths were simultaneously playing in perfect time with the models moving in front of them.

Since that initial preview, *Flight* has played Edinburgh, New York, Galway and Melbourne, clocking up over 25,000 individual performances, and being chosen by the New York Times as one of the Unforgettable Theater Moments of 2018. It returns this May as part of the Brighton Festival. 🌸

*Production images (this and previous page):*

*Flight*

*Vox Motus*

*Directors: Jamie Harrison and Candice Edmunds*

*Designers: Jamie Harrison and Rebecca Hamilton*

*Composer and sound designer: Mark Melville*

*Lighting designer: Simon Wilkinson*

*Photographer: Mihaela Bodlovic*

# Dancing with robots

Palle Palme on lighting a unique performance

As the worlds of humans and machines collide and the relationships between nature, technology and artificial intelligence become daily more inextricably intertwined ... urban dance impresario Fredrik "Benke" Rydman made this mutually dependent alliance the subject of his amazing *Varoffer* performance, which ran at the Stockholm Kulturhuset Stadsteatern in Sweden at the end of last year.

Two radically different and beautifully fluid pieces made up this seminal work – the first was a 40-minute "solo" performance by Benke dancing with an industrial robot to a specially composed new soundtrack by Johan Liljedahl and Carl-Johan Rasmusson; the second comprised 20 synchronised street dancers moving to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in 5,000 litres of water with a massive mirror suspended

above the stage bouncing their images back into the audience to appreciate their symmetry and formation skills.

I have worked with Benke since 2003. I joined the *Varoffer* creative team around nine months in advance, and the initial discussions with Benke involved an in-depth outline about how the show should look. We established a workshop complete with scenery and lighting fixtures several months before the opening which allowed us to experiment with various products and techniques.

Both acts of the piece played in specific areas on the stage – Benke and the robot performed in an area approximately 8 metres in diameter, while the *Rite of Spring* dancers occupied a space around 12 metres wide on a custom 5cm deep carpet filled with 3cm of water on which they slid and glided.

I used Robe movers as low side and front light, with five on LX 0 also for front light, and four on the over-stage trussing. There were 24 LED wash lights dotted around on the overhead trusses, while the theatre's older Robe fixtures were hung in side-stage positions.





The first act with Benke and the robot was extremely intense, and all the Robe units were used very sparsely, primarily one at a time for backlight, catching Benke and the robot in the path of the cross beam, gently fading in and out in rhythmic harmony with the music and the movement.

For the second act more lighting came into play, although I had to be extremely

strategic in where these sources were positioned ... because anything overhead reflected and refracted off the mirror above the pool of water!

I used the lighting budget to have 20 special low-rise sidelight towers built, accommodating a total of 120 static profiles, which allowed me to hit the dancers in the pool in a variety of different coloured whites without catching the water in the light.

Some of these had super tight shuttering so only arms or legs were caught in the highlights, all adding to the sense of suggestion and mystery.

The challenges of lighting *Varoffer* included the diverse nature of the two acts with almost no changeover time ... both needed totally different lighting treatments. I had to be smart with how I used the whole rig, and which elements could be used in both acts, but I was delighted with how the play succeeded!

The extensive technical rehearsals with the robot also helped enormously and enabled us to realise that sometimes

robots have their own ideas about where to perform!

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*All production images:*

*Våroffer*

*Kulturhuset Stadsteatern*

*Choreographer: Fredrik Benke Rydman*

*Set designer: Lars Östbergh*

*Costume designer: Lehna Edwall*

*Lighting designer: Palle Palmé*

*Photographer: Hakan Larsson*

# Dancing with robots

Palle Palme

Dance is one of my favourite genres of performance to light, and every cue in this unique performance was inspiring. When I light a standard musical, I will typically have multiple cues for the music and for the positioning of the cast ... however, with this one, I probably only had around 60 positional cues for each act, so each and every one of them had to look fantastic!

I enjoyed being back at the Stockholm Stadsteatern for my second show there, following a production of Chicago a few years back. There, I worked alongside the excellent house programmer Pekka Hellsten and was also assisted enormously by the venue's head of lighting, Anders Tuveesson, who shared my passion and enthusiasm for the show and helped in every aspect related to the lighting rig.

The robot, IRB 6620, was created by leading Swedish industrial robotics manufacturer ABB, based in Västerås, and it took specialist robotic

programmers Robotdalen and Benke around 80 days to prepare all of IRB 6620's moves for the 40-minute piece! This process was initially completed in a warehouse in Västerås.

A ten-hour day rehearsal gave them

30 seconds of the show – performance art being totally alien to IRB 6620, which had to learn how to dance from scratch! That was just the beginning of rehearsals. When IRB 6620 was installed in the theatre for the first time, they spent



almost as much time again on stage, with rehearsals and sorting the numerous technical challenges!

IRB 6620 required two technicians standing by on each side of the stage, watching the action intensely and ready with an emergency stop button to stop the robot immediately if there was an anomaly in the dance like a slip or a wrong directional approach, as IRB 6620 could not detect any potential human errors alone!

I cannot imagine this being attempted by anyone other than Benke – he is a complete genius! 🍷



# Advice on getting started

Durham Marenghi's advice to students



**M**y first interest in lighting was when I was in my early teens. My mother was an amateur drama director and as I stood on stage in front of my friends and peers wearing a plastic swimming hat bedecked with leaves playing Oberon, King of the Fairies, among those laughing at me were two guys at the side of the stage in a caged-off area drinking beer. I decided then that I wanted to do whatever they did, and it transpired they were the lighting technicians.

At that time in the seventies there were no lighting design courses. The only real course was for BBC cameramen and you could then progress to TV lighting design, but in theatre, experience was the only option. I started working at a local amateur

theatre, the Preston Playhouse, and at the age of 17 was given my first show to light, the panto, on our ten-way Thorn "electronic" desk, which had replaced our wire-wound Junior 8 slider rheostat dimmers.

With our two-lantern FOH and very little else I got my first review in the local paper – "atrociously lit by Durham Marenghi". I took as a personal challenge and set about seeing how I could progress my career as a lighting designer. I had worked as a spot op at the Guildhall in Preston and as a casual electrician on the Wombles Christmas show there, but my mother was convinced, having paid for my education, that I needed a degree so that I could get a "proper job" when this lighting fad wore off.

We went to see a show at the Crucible Theatre in Bolton. My mother had arranged for me to visit the chief electrician after the show, I assume so that he could tell me to go and get further education. He did not and advised that I should go straight into the theatre as an assistant electrician. My mother never went back to that theatre again!

I found a degree for which I was qualified and had some bearing on

my chosen career and set off to the Lanchester Polytechnic in Coventry to study an honours degree in electrical and electronic engineering. In the first year at college, like most others, I discovered many things aside from education. I also started working in the students' union venue and met artists such as Emperor Rosco, who toured his own disco complete with dancing girls! I worked as a DJ in the college bars and with the Sex Pistols on their ill-fated university tour, where they were rarely paid due to "racist and sexist overtones".

To cut a short story even shorter, having started the first Northern Soul disco in the Midlands and built an electronic lighting board for the local Belgrade Theatre, the small matter of my end of term exams came into view. Having done no course work whatsoever I seem to recall taking a bottle of red wine into the examination room and sleeping through most of the morning, not a technique that I would recommend to those wishing to pass an exam.

Fortunately, my friends at the Belgrade Theatre offered me a permanent job as deputy chief electrician and I started my



*New Year's Eve at the London Eye 2018  
Lighting designer: Durham Marengi*

professional career. After a year at the Belgrade I moved to the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in Guildford, again as deputy chief, followed by an appointment at the age of 22 as chief electrician/lighting designer at the Young Vic Theatre.

My first production at the Young Vic was directed by the then creative director Michael Bogdanov, and I had some pretty wild ideas that I wanted to bring to the first production, a musical version of *The Ancient Mariner*. As Michael had a reputation for not suffering fools gladly I put my wild ideas aside and set about designing a lighting plot that would be very

night fit-up I sat down at 9am with Michael to start lighting, and he asked me to show him each channel and what it did. After half an hour he turned to me and said, "Well, you've only shown me two or three channels that I can use here so why don't you have another go and I'll see you at six tonight?"

This was not quite going as expected! Anyway, with my marvellous crew we set about rigging along my original "wild" concept and the show was a great success with this quote in the *Times* newspaper: "... the first of THE Durham Marengi's apocalypse-like light changes...".

"safe" using all my textbook knowledge from Pilbrow, Bentham and the like of how to design for theatre in the round.

My mother told me it must have been a spelling mistake, bless her, but I really did feel that I had finally arrived.

These days, of course, there are many courses in lighting design run by very reputable colleges, which I thoroughly recommend, but if you do take this route alongside your studies get as much work experience as you can. And not only in lighting – I went on to work at the Adelphi Theatre in the West End and during my time there as deputy chief I also freelanced as a stagehand, flyman and rigger to expand my knowledge of the support skills to the art that I love. 🌸

*Find out more about Durham's work at [www.durhamld.com](http://www.durhamld.com).*

# The importance of am dram

James Simpson on nurturing the next generation

I am standing outside my village hall in West Wickham, unloading scenery through the pass door onto the street. We are between the matinee performances of my local group's production of *Aladdin*. A young boy of 10 or 11 wanders over on his way home from watching the show and takes a cheeky look at what I'm doing. "Shhh," I say, "this is where the magic happens..." He runs off to his dad and sister, excitedly shouting that he has seen "where the magic happens!" He points to

me and the "stage door" so I wave him and his younger sister back. I show him the scenery, explain how the magic carpet worked, and let him operate the mangle; his sister peers around the corner of the door to see the bright lights of the stage and a couple of our junior dancers looking radiant in their finale costumes, hugging and celebrating a wonderful performance. "Daddy, could I be on the stage like them?"

I let the young lad wear my wireless comms, and, following my prompt, the team of technicians on the other end all say hello and tell him what they do to make the show happen. He has no idea, but his mind has just been opened to this new world that existed on the other side of the curtain. I tell him that if he ever wants to come along and help he would be welcome and we can teach him how to make theatre. After all, I was

younger than he is when I first came to Wickham Panto to learn lighting from my dad, and I ended up at the Royal Opera House! I don't know if the impression stuck, but if our little production in a corner of Bromley managed to inspire one young boy to get involved in his school production, or even consider theatre as a career path, then the massive effort that the entire team put in to make this production was worth it.

I really believe in the importance of amateur dramatics in developing future professionals and future audiences. I have never been shy about sharing my involvement with am-drams and the several groups I belong to and play an active part in. I know how it can be perceived by professionals – there is definitely a stereotype of your rural am-dram lumpy, which I can attest to holding true in many places I've visited. But their role is absolutely crucial to the life blood of professional theatre, something that even they themselves haven't appreciated.

My local panto group (which has been going since 1945) has over the last 20 years given over £30,000 to charity, seated



nearly 40,000 people to see our shows and, most importantly, produced at least 15 professional technicians, dancers and performers who all can claim they started their journey at our little village hall – not least, my two sisters and me, who have all gone into professional theatre and met partners who are also in theatre.

I wondered how many others in our industry also owe their careers to amateur dramatics, so I ran some surveys. Interestingly, of 500 people asked, 66% of them said they started in am-dram. So statistically, for every three people you meet in the industry, two of them started their careers with a local group. So, don't be shy about it; you are definitely not the only one!

And it's no surprise really; as a hobby for young people it has one of the most rewarding and emotional experiences that youth can provide. You experience the thrill and nerves of opening night, you make life-long friends, you get to play with technology that is way cooler and more dynamic than a computer game, you learn new skills and build your confidence. It is an education system within itself, without support, funding or the intervention of politics. It is a place to learn life skills that stay with you throughout your career.

There is another reason the professional industry should be interested in amateur dramatics. In Greater London alone there are over 5,000 amateur groups. Although

they are mostly charities or not-for-profit organisations, their revenue far exceeds the professional market. What this tells us is that more people go to see amateur shows than professional ones.

My first experience of opera was when my dad lit a local production of *The Magic Flute*. I was 10 and I operated the lighting desk for him. I didn't get it at first but after listening to Mozart over and over again I began to love the music and could recognise his other works. I would never have discovered opera if I were not made to listen to it. And the same goes for many of the audience who were there simply to support a friend in the show. Many may not have liked it, but many would have been getting their first experience of opera that day and would later become customers of the Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne or English National Opera as they decided to expand their new interest into professional theatre.

Unfortunately, that amateur opera company went bankrupt

several years ago, and so have many, many others as venues become more expensive, licensing costs go up and equipment becomes so technical that you have to pay for experts to come and operate it for you.

We need to nurture our grassroots, both to foster new technicians and artists, but also our audiences. A small investment in a local group would be a very cost-effective marketing strategy for theatre producers, and expert advice from those of us who have had the privilege of working professionally may inspire the next generation of theatre practitioners – it is why I still do it and, you never know, you may learn something from them too! 🚫



# Equity update

Now is the time to join the union, says **Robbie Butler**

I am very happy to report that progress is being made within Equity.

Annoyingly, because of some grey areas surrounding GDPR, we aren't able to access the members directory within the union as you have the right to anonymous membership of a union. However, I understand that designer membership is in the region of 400 individuals and, in light of recent developments, is growing fast.

It has been noticed that there has been a significant increase in the frequency of discussions surrounding exploitation and poor working conditions within the industry and as these discussions grow, so too does the momentum within the union.

Equity is now working strenuously to address poor working conditions, starting with the UK Theatre and SOLT agreements for designers. They have submitted extremely ambitious claims to UK Theatre and SOLT. They entirely rework the payment structure for designers and request tighter definitions of what the fees cover.

Rather than requesting a large increase on the minimum design fees, we have claimed a baseline increase of RPI+2% on the existing minimums. From there we have requested an additional attendance fee which would be a day-rate system.

In the West End we have claimed that this would be £350, £300 and £250 per day in categories A, B and C respectively.

In subsidised UK Theatre houses this would be £250, £200 and £125 per day, again depending on the scale of the work you do.

The claimed day rate is a sliding scale based on the tier and sector in which you are working. All of this, of course, is subject to agreement with UK Theatre and SOLT. If they deliberate among their own members and come back to us offering less than our claim, we need our membership to be a strong collective in order to be able to confidently accept or reject it. And if we do reject it, we then need to be able to rely on one another – no matter our echelon – to take appropriate industrial action if necessary.

The tricky situation is this: Equity can accept any deal with a simple majority vote, but UK Theatre and SOLT must have a unanimous response from their members. This is why we have an uphill battle on our hands. I don't believe that producers are our enemies, but the baseline that we call a minimum is defined by UK Theatre and SOLT's "weakest" members, so while the majority of producers could theoretically be in favour of our claim – indeed, in some cases this would just mean bringing



the minimums up in line to the actual going rate – we are all at the mercy of the smallest fish in the pond, and it is those fish that we are going to need to lobby in order to get this through.

This is make or break. Whatever negative preconceptions you have about the union being useless, it's time to put them to one side. The union's engines are revving up and it's time to contribute. Be forward-facing with your membership: put the Equity logo on your lighting plans, reach out to the producers that you work with and encourage them to support to the claims, reach out to other designers and encourage them to join: do anything that you can to further our cause. I'm not saying that the union is perfect – we all know that it isn't – but it is improving day by day, and if you're not on the inside then you are powerless to change it. We as a workforce need industrial organisation, and Equity is all that we have in that regard. If our upcoming negotiations fail, moving to BECTU isn't going to solve

anything. It's not lack of trying on the part of the union that's the problem here; it's resistance at the other end.

Furthermore, we need to move away from the idea that the union is the staff that sit in an office. The union is its members, and if for some reason it is weak, then that is as a result of inaction or indifference on the part of members.

Once these negotiations are out of the way and all signed off we are due to re-examine the ITC and fringe contracts. I hope that there will be milestones reached in the UK Theatre and SOLT agreements that we can then use as a template for improvement here.

The committee elections are due to take place in May. If you would like to get involved, you can sign up on the members side of the Equity website. There aren't just spaces on the Equity Directors and Designers committee that need to be filled, however; lighting designers can fill seats on the women's committee, the deaf and disabled members committee, national committees in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the LGBT+ committee, the young members committee and the minority ethnic committee, and you can also get involved with your regional branches.

If you have any further questions you can email me at [equity@ald.org.uk](mailto:equity@ald.org.uk). Furthermore, if you are available to attend the AGM, our industrial organiser at the union will be in attendance in London and we will be linking in digitally with Manchester so you can learn more about how the union works and ask your questions in person.

### ***A good news story***

Although these actions weren't taken by a union it goes to show that collective activism makes a positive change.

The news may have recently reached you that at the beginning of this year 312 Irish artists had written a letter expressing the concern that the Abbey Theatre (Ireland's national theatre) wasn't employing enough Ireland-based artists. It resulted in €300,000 in Arts Council funding being withheld from the theatre.

The Irish Society of Stage and Screen Designers (ISSSD) is now reporting that there have been constructive developments at the Abbey and that in March a panel representing the interests of actors, agents, casting directors, educators, directors, writers, producers, technicians

(Association of Irish Stage Technicians), and designers met with the Abbey to discuss their concerns.

Since then some forward steps have been made to improve things in the short term. These include:

- a commitment to using Irish designers;
- networking opportunities for international artists with national artists to be facilitated;
- an immediate re-instatement of €500 vouched expenses for costume designers;
- reinstatement of the head of costume role at the Abbey; and
- a review of fees practice and a minimum pay scale that will be reported on.

An effort to align Abbey and Peacock rates is also underway.

In the UK, if we were to instigate similar changes, Equity is the vehicle that we would legally need to use to create a tangible positive change.

I know I'm not the only one who's tired of being overworked and skint. This is our opportunity to change the status quo. Enough is enough. We must commit to bettering the condition of our industry. Join the union. 🍀

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