



ALD #

FOCUS

The journal of the ALD
"More art, less tools..."

December 2020/January 2021

In the spotlight this issue:

- ALD awards winners
- Magic Mike in Australia
- Lighting during Covid
- Mark Jonathan's final article
- ..and much, much more...

Price to non-members £5.00

Rent
Hope Mill Theatre, Manchester
Director: Luke Sheppard
Designer: David Woodhead
Lighting designer: Howard Hudson
Sound designer: Paul Gatehouse
Video designer: George Reeve
Production electrician: Tom Johnson
Photographer: Pamela Raith

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From the chair...

What a year! 2020 will most certainly go down in theatre history, unfortunately not for the shows we might have produced but for the amazing people who work in our industry. People have stepped out into the limelight and been creative, proactive fighters. My peers have been there for me and many others as caring, compassionate helpers and listeners throughout these sometimes dark months, and as an industry we should be proud of who we are.

In the beginning months, many of our co-workers made PPE, with figures way up into the thousands, while many corporate and live events teams and venues worked alongside the NHS to build and furnish critically needed resources. As summer approached, many of our producers tried to open their doors, make work outside and help keep buildings and communities together. There are many producers and commercial companies who have worked tirelessly to ensure there is an industry to return to.

Within the freelance world we have formed communities: associations and individuals have helped and supported one other, whether it's a Zoom gathering

for talks and training or a quiz night or a social drink together alongside jokes on Facebook and Twitter just make us smile in the morning. Many creatives have formed mini industries; I have been inspired by people's ability to adapt and work in new fields, turning their hobbies into a business. I have seen our industry work tirelessly to create pools of funding for artists and colleagues, and there has been lobbying and demonstrations.

At the ALD I have seen collaborations and friendships form with other creatives in our industry, such as the newly formed Scene Change for designers; Freelancers Make Theatre Work, bringing together and supporting all freelancers; the Freelancers Task Force, supported by venues; and We Make Events, live event teams lobbying, fundraising and demonstrating.

The creation of AAPTLE by the ALD and the ASD has brought these newly formed groups together with our more established associations – SMA, SBTD, PMF and ABTT to name a few. AAPTLE grows in strength, and we now see examples where the unions are taking more notice as the entire workforce starts to speak with a unified voice. We are raising our knowledge of



Johanna Town
ALD chair

unconscious bias and our awareness of inclusiveness, as well as supporting each other as associations. I would like to thank everyone in all these associations and groups, many of them from the lighting industry, who have contributed so much of their personal time to try to help make us a better, more resilient industry to return to.

I must also take a moment to give a special thank you to my own team, the ALD Exec, who have tirelessly worked for us all year. The talks, training and socials take time and commitment to make happen. We can also celebrate the ALD Bootcamp, Lumière 2020 and Team Lumière and everyone who contributed their time to these initiatives – a big thank you.

Before I sign off I would like to give a special thank you to Mark Jonathan. Mark has been amusing us with the trials and tribulations of being a lighting designer for many, many years, but this is going to

From the chair...

Johanna Town

be his last issue, as he steps down as our intrepid correspondent from around the world. Mark has been writing his column since 2006 and has only ever missed one issue. We think that makes it 85 in total, which is quite incredible. So thank you, Mark, you will be missed in the pages of *Focus*, but I am sure you will back as a guest writer, which we can all look forward to. Thank you.

I am aware that for many this Christmas is going to be tough, and the ALD is here for you if you need someone to talk to. We will return and this industry is going to be better, because the people in it love it, and they care and they want to see it rise up again better than before.

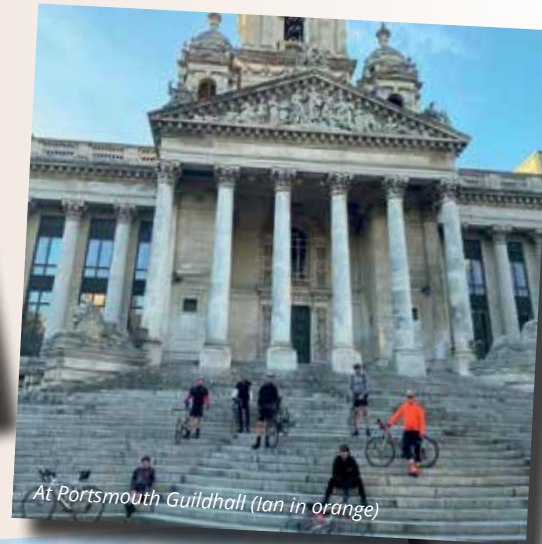
My warmest wishes go to you all, and I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Jo 🌲



A postcard from...
Ian Saunders, Portsmouth

The recent We Make Events fundraising and awareness cycle ride saw five brave souls from the events industry cycle 1,500km over 16 days, visiting over 100 venues that had been hit by the shutdown of our industry. ALD Executive Director Ian Saunders joined them on two of the legs on days 13 and 14: Bournemouth to Portsmouth and then Portsmouth to Brighton, a total of around 120 miles. 🚴



At Portsmouth Guildhall (Ian in orange)



At the Brighton Centre with Backup chairman John Simpson



The start of day 14 with the Victorious festival crew

What's in a name?

David Ayton ponders "the ALD"



What does the name "the ALD" mean to you? As much as we are all aware that the Association of Lighting Designers was founded nearly 60 years ago, does its more modern name, the ALD, serve us well for who we represent now, and for the future? We now serve a membership of around 900 people working in job roles unimaginable 60 years ago – lighting designers, production electricians, programmers, technicians and developers who successfully install bigger rigs, with ever-growing complex control systems that include integration with other departments, and get everything up and working in less and less time.

What's been highlighted during the pandemic is how disparate we are as a freelance community and how fragile our existence has been. As much as we've all rushed from job to job, we haven't ever stopped to appreciate that we've been making a living on the fees that producers and managements feel they can get away with paying us. The not-so-stable and varying employment structures have left many exposed to little or no government support. From this forced pause, there have been many Zoom meetings and discussions about how the industry should change in the wake of coronavirus, how we should ensure that our future careers have more solid foundations, how scheduling and our work-life balance should improve, but in the inevitable excitement and rush to get the first shows on when we re-open, will this all have just been wishful thinking? I certainly hope not, but only with us all sticking together can we try to force some positive change on the industry.

As freelancers we have often been informally organised. We all have an idea of an acceptable day rate or fee for a job. The phone calls and texts to friends and colleagues to ensure pay parity on the same job, or on shows by the same producer,

have been our way of being organised for years. The chats over a well-deserved pint at the end of a long tech day where differing pay or conditions between departments are exposed ensure that everyone knows to ask for the same on the next job. But (in my own experience) as working days were getting longer, overnight breaks were getting squeezed and the battle for per diems when working away from home were ongoing, how can we make substantive change as we get back to work in 2021?

I'm fortunate to have been involved with some discussions involving BECTU – Nick Woolley, our ALD BECTU rep, and I had a good catch-up with ex-RSC lighting technician and now BECTU negotiations officer Kevin Carson, and at AAPTLE we had an informative discussion with arts and entertainment Assistant National Secretary Helen Ryan and Paul Evans from the London Production branch, representing film and TV. I'm sure you all have your own opinions of BECTU, and I'll let Nick keep us up to date with the ongoing unions situation, but the details of just how much better the pay and conditions are in the film and TV world was a real eye-opener to me. Of course we've all heard about it anecdotally; however, the fact that it is

accepted that the day rate is for a ten-hour day, and there's overtime payable when the day extends beyond ten hours, just shows the kind of conditions that can become commonplace. Can you imagine the production manager saying that lighting should stay and get the plotting notes done until 1am so they can have the stage clear the following morning for the carpenters when they know that it would cost them a lot more?

Now I'm not saying BECTU membership for us on the more technical side is the answer – it's clear that that level of unionising will not be achieved in a short space of time, and getting managements to recognise any new unionised workforce won't be easy. Furthermore, let's allow some time and space to see what comes of the ongoing discussions with BECTU being led by AAPTLE members. However, what this does highlight is what can be achieved by being organised – so I propose to you all now that we take our informal organising to the next level. Please get involved – start using the ALD contract and deal memo checklists when negotiating, contribute to the fees database (it's anonymous) so we know what people are actually getting paid. Only with this information can we produce a meaningful suggested fees campaigning document. Encourage your colleagues to become members. The ALD, or any trade union for that matter, is not a service – we exist purely to facilitate our members to do things for one another.

The success of this will be judged by how pay, terms and conditions change over the next few years. But, and there's always a but, this will require everyone to stand up for themselves, as we can only stand together when each individual is willing to refuse that lower fee. What is clear is that there can be real strength in numbers – so now back to my original proposition, how can we make the ALD appeal to every member of the lighting team?

I joined the ALD in 2014 when programming for Rick Fisher. It was the fourth or fifth show we'd done together, and he'd been badgering me into signing up for a while. I can't remember if I knew then that the ALD was for everyone working in performance lighting or not. Were it not for Rick, who knows when – or even if – I would have joined. What's clear to me now is that there is a perception that we are just for lighting designers – which is far from the case. We recognise and appreciate that every single member of the lighting team is needed to create a show and, as I've hopefully persuaded you above, there can be real strength in numbers. We need to be much clearer that the ALD is here for every member of the lighting team.

So this is where you come in. Is it just the name that makes us seem exclusive to the designers? Do we need a name that is more inclusive of the larger lighting community that we now represent, without

losing our valuable brand identity? What else could we be doing to ensure we attract those working in every lighting role to sign up and become members? Please, please, please get in touch with your thoughts – and thank you to those of you who have already made your voices heard on the subject. Who knows what 2021 has in store for us all, but one thing I'm hopeful about is that by sticking together, maybe, just maybe, it can be a more prosperous year for us all.

Resources:

You can email both Lucy and me at professionals@ald.org.uk.

The ALD is a member of AAPTLE – the Alliance of Associations and Professionals for Theatre and Live Entertainment. Visit www.aaptle.uk for more information. Meeting minutes from AAPTLE are available on the members side of the ALD website: ald.org.uk/aaptle.

The contract and deal memo checklists are available in the Resources section of the ALD website for lighting designers, video designers, associate lighting designers, production electricians, programmers and lighting technicians. These are to be used as a starting point, and not every clause in them will be appropriate for every contract. The checklists are evolving documents, so please get in touch with any comments or suggestions. 🌸

Living the dream

Mark Jonathan writes his last regular article for Focus



Dear readers, I am informed that my first article was 85 issues ago in 2006 and, apart from missing one, I have written in every issue since then. I have decided that this should be my last article for the time being. When I started writing, urged on by the then new editor, the late Andy Collier, my idea was that I would set the ball rolling, write one article and then each subsequent issue a different lighting designer would write the article. Haha! I should have known better. Some years before, I had written an article for the National Theatre programme and, after its publication, the NT resident playwright, David Hare, complimented me on my effort and said he had learnt a

thing or two. I thanked him and said I had learnt something too. "What was that?" asked David. Quicker than a snap blackout I replied: "The reason I do lightin' is coz I don't want to do writin'!" Well, isn't that the case for us all? Certainly, I was soon to discover that lighting designers were not going to queue up to write the equivalent of Alistair Cooke's Letter from America and so I continued to write my "letter from a beleaguered lighting designer".

I must pay tribute to the editors, the late Andy Collier and, since 2013, Dr Kelli Zezulka, who stepped in, ensuring that *Focus* continued without a pause. Both brought gentle qualities of understanding and patience as they subtly coaxed articles not only from me but from the rest of the cohort of lighting people who mostly didn't do writin'. The subtle enquiry of "how are you getting on" and the regular reply of "it shouldn't be long now" covered the lie that I hadn't even started.

There has been a fair amount of water under the bridge, and I've regaled you with my adventures from all over the UK, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland,

and the USA, from planes, trains and mountaintops, as I mounted plays, operas, ballet, drama, musicals, ice shows and even juggling. Of course, it was lighting the world's greatest jugglers in the ROH Linbury that, while focusing, I coined the phrase "Light his balls... No! The ones in the air!"

Writing this article reminds me of all the performance forms that use our talents that we have been denied doing for most of 2020. Since we were forced to stop work, along with my colleagues, I have been kept busy with work for the ALD but I have found writing for *Focus* harder. In my first issue I was about to leave for Munich to light at the Bayerischer Staatsoper when I laundered not one but two passports at 11pm the night before I was due to travel. In those "glamorous" days I had two so I could travel on one while the other was at the US embassy. This was in a month where I had a week that involved commuting between a revival at the ROH on days off from *Salome* in Munich. The final week culminated in an opening in Munich on Friday, an opening at the ROH on Saturday and a flight to LA on Sunday. Those were the days!



Marko lighting during the first stage rehearsal

The passports were sodden, and I was advised I would not be able to fly the following morning. I had to re-apply for both my passports, and getting a second one is not easy. I had to go through the whole rigmarole of getting a US01 visa at the US embassy while losing valuable time when I was supposed to be in Munich with a Hollywood film director who wasn't used to being "stood up". If this wasn't enough of a nightmare, the costs involved included buying a new return plane ticket to Munich as not turning up for the outbound flight cancelled the return as well. I added up all the costs of getting new passports, new US visa, flights and the German opera management who charged me for the apartment for the days I wasn't in residence. The costs were in excess of £1,000. I contacted my house insurance: "Am insured for washing my passports?" I asked.

"No sir," came back the blunt reply. "No one would be so stupid, would they, sir?" Sod you, I thought.

I had an off-piste, platinum travel insurance policy. I called them.

"No problem, sir. You are insured, and in fact if you and your passport end up at the bottom of a crevasse we will repatriate both your body and your passport. You are insured excepting the excess. How much have you spent?"

With a sigh of relief, I say: "The passports cost me £196.50."

Back came the response: "Ah, the excess is £200." "But...", I remonstrated, "there were lots of other costs that take the expense to over £1,000."

"Ah, that's what we call 'consequential loss', for which, sir, you are not insured."

My cry of "bollocks" could be heard all the way from London to Munich.

In my articles, I rarely dared to talk about the technique of lighting for fear that I might be trying to pontificate to my grandma on how to suck eggs or, in your case, dear readers, how to light a match. I also avoided politics, that is, until BREXIT! I'm afraid I laid my cards on the table and became political. The departure

from Europe and the havoc that will be wrecked if BoJo doesn't get a deal, or even with a deal, is coming home to roost. ALD members are already asking what they have to do to fulfil contracts in the EU, and I'm wondering how many passports I will need if we need separate visas from each country in the EU. Hopefully, I shall get an Irish passport soon with belated thanks to my Irish grandfather. I just have to present my grandfather's birth, marriage and death certificates along with my father's birth, marriage and death certificates, my birth certificate, and four passport photos authenticated by a lawyer or similar – and pay the fees. Thanks a lot, Boris.

Meanwhile, some of us are back at work in a socially distanced sort of way. I was excited that I was scheduled to light the opera *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and that even with the recent lockdown, as it was at the Royal Academy (and therefore educational), we could carry on. The prescribed safe ways of working were carefully studied both by the creative team and stage managers. No one was admitted to rehearsals without a temperature check, and the numbers in the large rehearsal space were limited to 17, making it

Living the dream

Mark Jonathan

impossible to get everyone in the room at once. The director deftly directed the cast so that they were always socially distanced, which included the amusing addition of a Perspex screen between Tytania and Bottom on an oversized double bed. The rehearsal kitchen was closed and masks were worn except when singing. There was much discussion about the orchestra. The pit was not big enough for a socially distanced orchestra and that, along with

the need for more stage space, led to the orchestra being recorded, allowing us to raise the pit to create more stage space. The fit-up went well and the cast joined on stage, looking great in their costumes. The production was double cast, meaning every rehearsal had to be done twice. This is normal practice for opera schools. However, as we started on stage one member from each cast felt unwell; they were tested and stayed at home while we carried on with

the stage and piano rehearsals. We had to wait for four days for the results to come in, which sadly confirmed that they had Covid. We were advised to stay at home for 14 days, which took us past the opening night – in fact, to the last night of the production. Meanwhile, the musical scheduled to follow the opera had to be cancelled when 22 students were found to have Covid. Things were not looking good. We were all heartbroken that the stage production had

to be abandoned; however, the students were able to do a concert performance. Heartbreak also now abounds in Tier 3 sectors of the UK as casts who were allowed to rehearse Christmas shows are not allowed to perform to a live audience. Those in Tier 2 walk the same tightrope as my opera did as they try to ensure that no one gets Covid. To use the pantomime line: I hope Covid will soon be “behind you”, but there’s no denying that inoculating every population across the world is not easy.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream
Royal Academy of Music
Conductor: Sian Edwards
Director: Christopher Luscombe
Set designer: Simon Higlett
Costume designer: Lottie Higlett
Lighting designer: Mark Jonathan
Movement director and photographer: Ewan Jones*





*A Midsummer Night's Dream
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I just got a random email asking me if I would like to be a volunteer inoculator. I suppose I could wear a white coat and say “sharp scratch”. However, I had already decided that, in the absence of work, I shall escape to the Alps, if allowed, and hopefully ski in deep powder snow in Switzerland and France. This, of course, is a return to my more youthful years where I worked in theatre in the summer and in winter sports for the winter. Since lockdown I have been running daily and doing multiple exercise classes. I've lost four stone (60lbs for US readers!), and I'm ready. You may get a postcard in *Focus* from the Alps.

It's sad also to report that this year there will be no Christmas Lighting Lunch, a tradition that has happened every year since 1993. My erstwhile colleague and organiser Jason Larcombe suggested that a year off might give me time to dream up some new jokes for the annual speech. If I were giving the speech I would also be asking you to raise a glass to absent friends, and it's with great sadness that I report the death of production electrician Jerry Hodgson. You can read an obituary by Martin Chisnall later in this issue. I knew Jerry from when he left RADA when we first worked together. I was later to work both

at the NT and the ROH with his life-long partner Elaine Grimes. We shall toast Jerry and send our love to Elaine, both of whom came many times to the Lunch.

I hope you can still enjoy your Christmas and hope that 2021 will herald theatre coming back to life in all its many forms. I should say that since I started “writin” that quite a number of you have proved that you can also do both lighting and writing – so I know that *Focus* will be fine.

A bientôt, adieu, bis bald, addio, farewell... until next time. 🍀

Leaving lighting design

Laura Kressly talks to three lighting designers about leaving the industry

Over the last few years, it's become more widely acknowledged that starting and sustaining a career in theatre is much easier for those from privileged backgrounds. People who are middle or upper class, Oxbridge educated, white, cis, male and British are more likely to succeed in theatre than those who don't tick most or all of these demographic boxes. They are more likely to come from families with existing connections

in theatre and the arts and have financial safety nets that enable them to work for free or low pay. It's also easier to engage in other time and money-consuming activities like networking, having speculative meetings, seeing a lot of theatre and the inevitable hustle that's part of freelance life. People from privileged demographics will also be more able to weather the global industry shutdown that resulted from this year's

pandemic and carry on with their careers once we've figured out what the post-COVID theatre industry looks like.

But what about everyone else? As theatre's closure stretched from weeks into months, the government's self-employed income support scheme (SEISS) proved inadequate, and common day jobs in hospitality, events and other sectors were also hit. Many creatives lost most or all of their income streams. Social media – particularly Twitter – was full of first-hand accounts of hardship. Workers from across the sector worried about paying rent, affording food and not knowing when they'd next have any money coming in. As a result, artists and practitioners began discussing not just jobs they could do instead, but entire careers. A stable income, a healthier work-life balance and a better quality of life are no doubt hugely



The Bed

Little Angel Theatre

Director: Samantha Lane

Set designer: Sophia Lovell Smith

Lighting designer: Sherry Coenen

Photographer: Ellie Kurtz



Sherry's allotment haul

appealing to many who struggle to balance freelancing and other income streams under

the best of conditions. Those who are underrepresented in theatre, and who are likely to find it harder to maintain a career anyway, may be even more tempted to leave the sector.

ALD member Sherry Coenen is considering it. Though she doesn't want to leave the industry, she says, "I can't take the feeling of uselessness for much longer. It's been ok while the weather has been nice and I can garden and cycle, but I'll go mad being stuck indoors unproductively all winter." Though the chancellor has since announced SEISS will be extended through the second lockdown, Coenen was worrying about the prospect of not having any income. "I will have to do something for money. If I do have to leave the job I trained for and love, then I'm going to go for something

with proper hours, an actual wage and advancement."

The prospect of career progression is particularly enticing. She explains, "Pre-COVID, it was initially hard to make the contacts needed to get work. I didn't train here so when I finally went freelance I was generally older than anyone on the teams I was hired to, and the pay was well below a livable wage. Then once I was semi-established on the fringe scene, it's been a struggle to get anything mid-scale."

Tom Lightbody has recently returned to lighting design after nearly a decade away, so has experienced similar difficulties,



Tom's son and budding lighting designer

though the trend of low pay rates is a particular problem. Having worked on a few shows over the last year and a half, he says, "It is incredibly frustrating that the majority of the few advertised positions are so woefully underpaid, and so much of the rest of the work seems to be available only for those on the 'inside' and is never even advertised. There seem to be relatively few people



Tom's vintage bicycle restoration

Leaving lighting design

Laura Kressly

prepared to take risks on early career LDs and to pay them a respectful fee." He's not considering leaving lighting design, though. "I'm in an exceptionally fortunate position where my wife has a steady job and I have a sideline repairing and restoring vintage bicycles, which between them provide enough stability for us."

However, Lightbody is the main carer

for their young child. "The key support I feel I need is really around the availability of work, and in particular work that can flex around my childcare commitments," he says. It's already well known that theatre is not particularly forgiving of people who are parents or carers, but fortunately organisations like Parents and Carers in Performing Arts (PIPA) are

advocating for and working towards more flexible work environments.

Not everyone has these safety nets, and it may not be possible to stay in theatre when there's no work on the horizon and limited financial support from the government. Chris Withers ended up leaving not just lighting design but theatre entirely, for a career in the NHS. When asked about this decision, he explains, "I was increasingly struggling with the low fees that had largely remained static whilst my living costs rose year on year. The other big issue for me was often finding I had very little in the way of a support structure at work. Sometimes stressful situations need more support than a rant in the pub at midnight. In June I had the news that my furlough income was being withdrawn through the months of July and August. I don't have a family



Talented Mr Ripley

The Faction

Director: Mark Leipacher

Designer: Holly Pigott

Costume designer: Frances Norburn

Lighting designer: Chris Withers

Photographer: The Other Richard

For the next issue...

We want your contributions! Designers, technicians, programmers, in-house, freelance, amateur – all welcome!

- *Send us a **postcard** from anywhere in the world! 100 words maximum, plus 2–3 images.*
- *Tell us about your **favourite production**. It can be something you worked on or something you saw. 150 words maximum, plus 1–2 images.*
- *If you are working on an interesting production, in an interesting place, or with an interesting premise, **write an article** about it! Anything up to 1,000 words, plus 3–4 images.*
- *Keep updating your **show listings**. We want to know what you are working on and where.*

Send all contributions to editor@ald.org.uk before 15 January for the February/March issue. 📧

who are able to support me longer term so I had to act fast."

He's not sure if this change is temporary or permanent, but he hopes to see positive change in the industry. In terms of what he needs in order for him to return to lighting design, he says, "There would have to be a serious rethink on how the industry is financed and structured. I refuse to believe there isn't the money to do this when opera stars get paid £20,000 per performance and certain West End producers are amongst the richest individuals in the world. I think if the industry asks the difficult questions now and answers with difficult but imaginative solutions then we can tempt talent back that was previously lost."

There's no question about the hugely damaging effects of the pandemic on freelance artists, particularly those not eligible for any government aid. Given the persistence of low pay, inflexible working conditions, and insufficient opportunities, it's clear that only those who are the most privileged will be able to get through this. Like Chris Withers said, lighting design and theatre as a whole need to make major changes in order to keep its talent. 📧

Followspots and me

Sam Ohlsson has a solution for documenting followspots

 FOLLOWSPOT M A N A G E R

I work as a freelance lighting programmer, visualiser and draughtsman. I studied stage management and technical theatre at LAMDA, where the lighting aspect of productions beckoned. I began my professional career during my time there with my first job being a followspot operator on *We Will Rock You* at the Dominion Theatre, London. Since then, I have worked on numerous West End shows from *Wicked*, *Dreamgirls*, and *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* through to the RSC and the Royal Opera House. I have also had experience of large arena show tours, films, corporate events and international theatre productions.

Every lighting designer has their own style of documentation. Paperwork and accuracy are all significant elements of the work I do. I always take great care in updating all aspects, from the lighting plan to the followspot cue sheets, in order that the shows run to the designers' specification.

Having worked in a variety of theatres and productions, where an assortment of lighting cue sheets have been employed, from PDFs, spreadsheets and even rough notes on a scrap of paper, I felt a simpler, consistent but adaptable system

was necessary to improve the flow of information through the production process.

My initial thoughts were triggered while working full time as LX chargehand on *School of Rock*. The task of trying to update the cue sheets for the operators was difficult and frustrating at times.

Largely due to software and equipment limitations, within the department, and the lack of access to the software used to produce the initial lighting designs, numerous problems and issues were created.

Early in 2018, after discussing the application with different professionals in the industry, and being lucky enough to have the advice of other application developers, I made a start.

My original motivation was to create an easy method of cue data input, and the production of a visual and hardcopy record which could be a dynamic tool for the lighting designer, the lighting programmer and the follow-spot operator.

I created a basic app design specification, at which point it became obvious that not only was experience of the lighting environment required but also a significant knowledge of coding and programme development was essential.

This is where the second skillset came into play. Fortunately for me, my father, Chris, has had over 30 years of coding and testing experience in the IT industry. The combination of show experience and IT knowledge has been invaluable in creating and testing the software. If it wasn't for him this application wouldn't have come to light.

I sat down with different designers, programmers and operators to review the app specification, all of whom gave very useful advice and insights on what they would require from software to manage all of the operations needed. Taking their recommendations, we evolved and improved the software.

Our aims for FollowSpot Manager are to make the tasks of creating and ensuring followspot lighting cues are actioned with accuracy and consistency, as intended by the designer. We have created a free trial for anyone to use the application for 30 days. If you need any more information contact me at sam@followspotmanager.co.uk, or if you have any questions then head to the website: www.followspotmanager.co.uk 📌

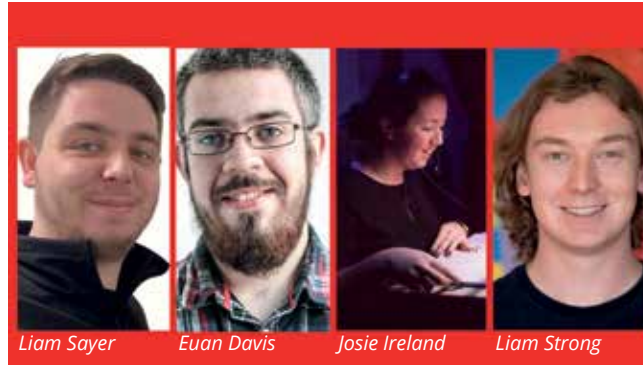


ALD awards winners 2020

The ALD has announced with great pride the winners of this year's Awards for Excellence, which exist to highlight the new generation of young production talent emerging from UK universities. The winning students have all created award-winning portfolios that succeed in demonstrating their skills to best advantage, in a disrupted year where the number of lighting opportunities available to them may have been reduced.

Winners are traditionally announced at the Annual Lighting Lunch but will this year be being showcased in *Focus* and through the ALD's social media channels.

Indicative of the ALD's widening membership base, the **Fred Foster Award for Production Electrics**, the most recent addition to the awards portfolio, proved to be a popular choice, receiving a large number of applications this year. Guildhall School of Music and Drama's **Liam Sayer** rose to the top of the ranks to win this award. The judges appreciated his attention to detail, his innovation and



Liam Sayer

Euan Davis

Josie Ireland

Liam Strong

problem solving. They also commented that his testimonials were impressive and shone alongside a clearly articulated work ethic.

The coveted **Michael Northen Award for Lighting Design** was won this year by **Euan Davis** of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA). The judges were very impressed by his research and demonstrated collaboration abilities, which he used to break a complex play into parts to find a language for each piece. They also commented on the flair he showed in the use of his rigs.

Josie Ireland, studying this year for A-Levels, received a well-deserved **Francis Reid Award for Best Emerging Lighting Designer**. The judges praised Josie's use of video with lighting as well as her versatility and clarity as a designer. The judges were impressed with how she integrated feedback from previous years' applications to inform and evolve her work.

The **Blue-I Theatre Technology Award for Excellence in Video** went to **Liam Strong** (Guildhall

School of Music and Drama). The judges felt he had worked incredibly hard on his portfolio, which demonstrated the beautiful designs he had created. One judge commented that Liam was one to watch as "the next big thing in video!"

ALD chair Johanna Town said, "I'm overwhelmed this year by the response to the awards and the dedication demonstrated by the entrants. Each of the winners has demonstrated real flair in their chosen discipline as well as determination – and that gives me great hope as they begin to forge their professional paths." #

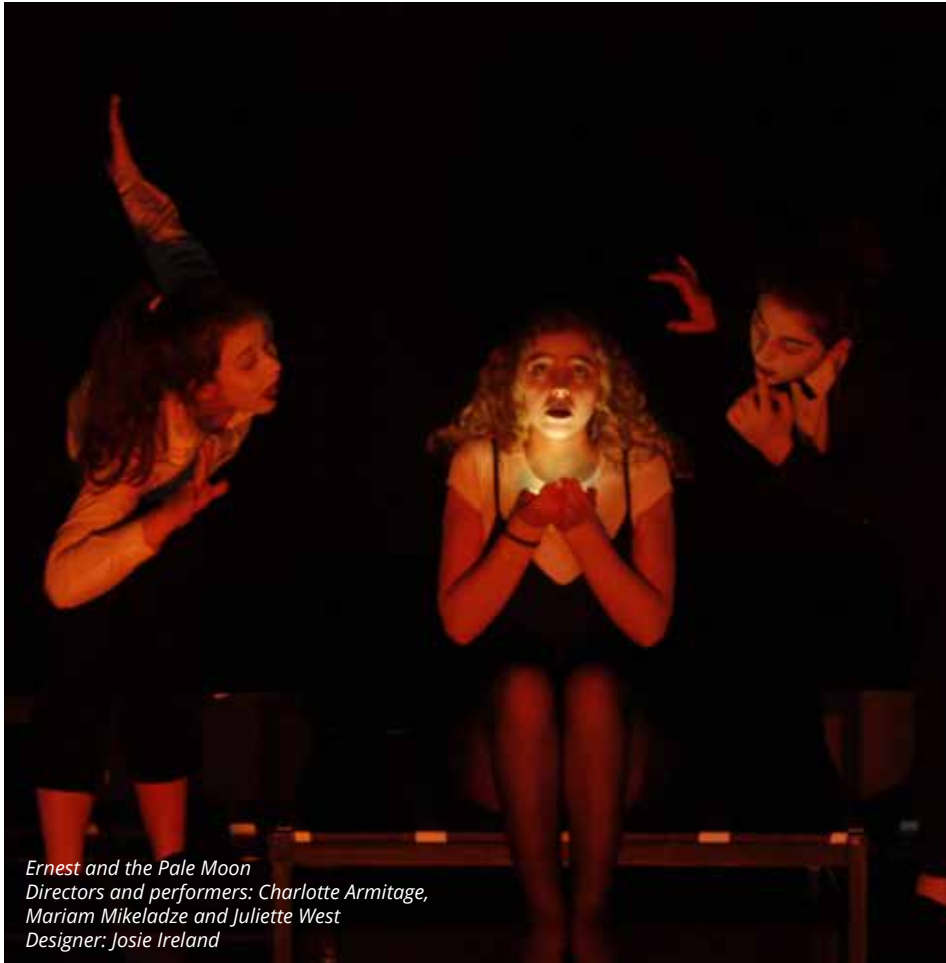
ALD awards winners 2020

Josie Ireland

*Francis Reid Award for Best
Emerging Lighting Designer*



*Legally Blonde
Directors: Olivia Blythe, Mhairi Forgan
and Charlotte Armitage
Costume designers: Phoebe Menges and
Maddie Wakefield
Lighting designer: Josie Ireland
Photographer: Laura Hirons*

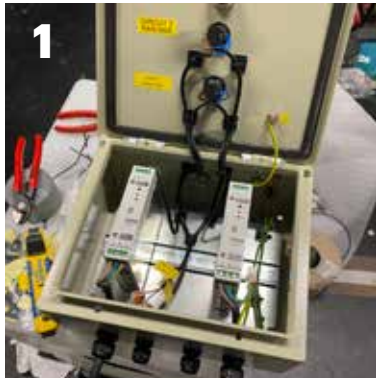


Ernest and the Pale Moon
Directors and performers: Charlotte Armitage,
Mariam Mikeladze and Juliette West
Designer: Josie Ireland

Ernest and the Pale Moon
Directors and performers: Charlotte Armitage,
Mariam Mikeladze and Juliette West
Designer: Josie Ireland



ALD awards winners 2020



Liam Sayer

Fred Foster Award for Production Electrics



Photos:

1. Custom-built rain controller – included LED indicators for ease of operation
2. Rain test – we tested various water delivery methods
3. Light tunnel – as part of the Waddesdon Christmas Markets, Guildhall Live Events installed and made this pixel-controllable light tunnel. This is me replacing a pixel on site
4. This was the power distribution for a one-day “flash mob” theatrical piece performed on the Barbican Highwalk at night



Euan Davis
*Michael Northen Award
for Lighting Design*

*Love and Information
Royal Academy of Dramatic Art
Director: Simon Dormandy
Designer: James Turner
Lighting designer: Euan Davis
Sound designer: Katie Cogan
Photographer: Linda Carter*

ALD awards winners 2020

Liam Strong

Blue-I Theatre

*Technology Award for
Excellence in Video*

*The Angel Esmerelda
Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Director: Martin Lloyd-Evans
Designer: Gregor Donnelly
Lighting designer: Robbie Butler
Video designer: Liam Strong
Photographer: Mihaela Bodlovic*



Earthquakes in London
Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Director: Abigail Graham
Designer: Sarah Beaton
Lighting designer: Sofia di Lorenzo
Video designer: Liam Strong
Photographer: Mihaela Bodlovic





Office Oracle

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

2021/22 subscription fees

As advised in previous issues of Focus, email bulletins and at this year's AGM, the Executive Committee has decided that due to the Covid crisis the proposed increase of membership subscriptions in April 2021 will no longer take place and fees will remain at the 2020 level until such time as we feel the industry is back to some semblance of normality.

Therefore, current members should expect to renew at the following rates:

Professional	£102
Standard Affiliate	£60
First year Affiliate	£48
Associate	£48
Student	£36
Retired	£36
Corporate	£660
Commercial	£300
Non-profit org	£60

Direct debit payments

At the start of 2020 we started offering members the opportunity to pay by monthly direct debit to help spread the cost and manage cash flow. That was extremely fortunate timing given the last nine months, and around 50 members now pay at the start of each month rather than paying in a single lump sum each April.

While we are aware that our members have been placed into exceptional circumstances due to the ongoing Covid crisis, the ALD has continued to work on behalf of its members through lobbying, representation and information gathering to keep members informed and engaged since the crisis started.

To encourage members to retain their membership we are offering all current members the chance to spread their payments even further – over 15 months instead of 12 – from January 2021 to March 2022.

The indicative monthly rates will be as follows:

Category: 12 months/15 months

Professional:	£8.50/£6.80
Standard Affiliate:	£5/£4
First-year Affiliate:	£4/£3.20
Associate:	£4/£3.20
Student:	£3/£2.40
Retired:	£3/£2.40

If you are already paying by monthly instruction, or have any balance still on your account, we will add the current balance to the 2021/22 fees and then divide by 15 to create your own payment plan. Please note that will round up to the nearest 5p for each monthly payment.

Therefore, a Professional member who started paying monthly in summer 2020 after taking the three-month payment holiday will reduce their current monthly payment from £11.30 to £9.85 through to March 2022.

If you would like to take advantage of this payment plan, please contact the ALD Office as soon as possible so the details can be sorted out before a payment in January 2021 is taken. This is especially important if you already pay by monthly direct debit. If you miss the submission date for the January payment round, we will re-work the payments for 14 months, so you should still be paying less each month.

Combined liability insurance scheme

The combined liability insurance scheme fee will be set once we have received our renewal cost from our insurers in March 2021. Please note that due to the expected

reduction in our income, the ALD is no longer able to subsidise 15% of the cost of this benefit per member as we have for the last three years so the price is likely to increase for each member opted into the scheme.

It is worth noting, however, that even with this expected increase, the cost – which will remain in addition to membership fees – will still be considerably cheaper than trying to organise your own personal policy with the same levels of cover.

If, however, you decide that you no longer wish to be covered through the ALD, please contact the ALD Office so that we can remove you from our list, as the cost to us is directly related to the number of members we have on the scheme.

We will write directly to each member who is still opted in at the end of January as another reminder before we send the final numbers for the quote.

If you want to know more about this benefit of membership that is available to Professional and Affiliate members based in the UK you can find full details and how to sign up on the members' side of the website: www.ald.org.uk/members-benefits.

Members' warning

We have received information that there is an unsolicited email being sent out with the title "ALD COVID-19 DONATION SUPPORT".

We want to make it completely clear that this IS NOT an email from, supported by or endorsed by the ALD or any members of the Executive Committee. Everyone was unaware of it until it was brought to our attention.

It is spam and should be treated as such – ignored and deleted.

As far as we are aware from those instances we have been informed about, it seems to be targeting members who have an email address listed on the public directory of the ALD website. We will of course be monitoring this, and we request that you contact the ALD Office if you are concerned.

Focus back issues

As you would expect we always have a few extra copies of *Focus* printed for each edition for future use. Usually these are sent to new members, who receive the last

two issues in their welcome pack, and we have a selection that we hand out on visits to colleges and from our trade show stand at events across the year.

This issue completes 14 years since we converted to this landscape format and we have back issues for most editions sitting in storage boxes that are taking up an increasing amount of space that we really need to free up.

Therefore, if there are any editions since 2007 that you would like to have on paper rather than reading on the website – www.ald.org.uk/focus – then please contact us to see if we have any available outside of our own archived copies. We will need to charge £1 per issue to cover postage costs but if multiple issues are requested, we could probably be flexible on the price.

ALD online meetings

This current situation has meant having to re-work our usual list of venue or show visits as members' for meetings in the next couple of weeks, but we have created a hub page on the members' side of the website which contains

Office Oracle

Ian Saunders

the latest list of confirmed events:

www.ald.org.uk/meetings.

We are aiming to hold events on a monthly basis at the current time where it is in our control to do so – so keep the last Thursday of each month free if you are interested in participating.

With events being set up at short notice, as well as news of current issues and opportunities coming from all directions, our email bulletins remain the best way to ensure you receive all the information you may need at the current time.

If you have anything you would like to introduce or know someone who would, please email meetings@ald.org.uk,

Do we have your correct contact details?!

During this period of the year we often receive copies of *Focus* returned to us as “Unknown at this address” or “Addressee gone away”. These are often (but not exclusively) for our students and recent graduates as they change address at the end of the academic year. We email every member we receive a copy back from, so if you have not received a printed

copy recently, please contact us to check whether you have been taken off the list...

Please ensure that you update your information on the website directly via the Contact Details & Preferences page or contact membership@ald.org.uk. An incorrect address can result in your not receiving membership renewal notices and places the continuation of your membership at risk.

The website also requires each member to have an email address to be able to operate it to its full potential, so please ensure that your current or preferred address is on our system. If you are reading this and you have never registered an email address with us but wish to access the members side of the website and/or receive our email bulletins, please contact us as soon as possible so we can update your details.

Did you graduate from your course this summer?

When you join the ALD as a student member, we ask you to inform us of your proposed graduation date so we know when you are due to finish your course.

If that was listed as being the summer of the 2020, we will have now changed your membership category to the Affiliate membership for early career professionals, and with that you will be able to start accessing the same benefits as the Professional members do, with the exception of voting on Association issues.

Under the Constitution of the ALD, with the exception of the Sponsored Student Scheme, memberships continue to run until such time that you inform us that you wish to leave. No contact will be assumed to mean that you are happy to continue as an Affiliate member and to pay the relevant subscription rate as of April 2021.

The sooner you do this the sooner we can ensure you are sent a reminder for the correct level of subscription for 2021/22, or if you have chosen to stop your membership, do not send you a reminder.

Christmas office closure dates

Please note that the ALD Office will close over the festive period at end of business on Tuesday 22 December and will re-open on Monday 4 January 2021. Season's greetings to all and see you next year! ❄️

Jim and Pat Laws

Congrats to **Jim and Pat** on their golden wedding anniversary

I've been involved in conversations about a museum of lighting or theatre technology for more than six years now. Others have been having them for much longer. If we were smarter, we'd realise that such a museum already exists, in the Laws' barns in Suffolk; we'd buy Jim a museum-keeper's hat, encourage him to charge admission, and watch the crowds roll in. He is our historian of lighting and so much more....

And Pat is, one suspects, the power behind that historian. She is not a lighting person (props, I believe, was her trade), yet she's put up with this growing collection forever, and politely humours us lighting geeks when we do visit to learn about the history of our craft.

Jim, we thank you for never throwing anything away. Pat, we thank you for never making him throw anything away; I'm sure you don't believe it, but the world is a better place for someone having let all of this history survive.

Congratulations to both of you on "going golden". I was trying to think of the perfect gel number, probably something in the Cinemoid range...

—Rob Halliday



Pat and Jim Laws
Photo by Matt Maller



Jim at home in his lighting history museum/barn
Photo by Rob Halliday

You don't have to look very hard within the theatre industry to see the impact of this wonderful couple. Having met at Pitlochry Festival Theatre just over five decades ago, their shared knowledge of theatre crafts makes them the perfect team, and they are greatly admired by many. Mr and Mrs Laws' passion for their work in live performance and the respect and love they have for each other is truly unique and inspirational. Many congratulations on your golden wedding anniversary!

—Matt Maller

I first met Jim at Beccles train station; he'd kindly offered an afternoon of his time to show me around his barns full of lighting history while I was writing my MRes thesis. Pat made us lunch (including some amazing homemade ice cream), and I marvelled at their collective generosity. Since then, we've met up yearly at trade shows, and a catch-up with Jim and Pat over coffee and cake is always something I look forward to.

Jim graciously indulges my interest in lighting history (I have several boxes of his old copies of *Tabs* in my study!) and continues to teach, particularly in the area of candlelight, which seems appropriate for a golden anniversary! Congrats and lots of love to you both.

—Kelli Zezulka

Diary dates 2021

- 11–12 May 2021** PLASA Focus Leeds*
9–10 June 2021 ABTT Theatre Show*
5–15 August 2021 World Stage Design, Calgary, Canada
5–7 September 2021 PLASA show, Olympia, London*

Keep up to date with ALD events via the online diary:
www.ald.org.uk/diary. Keep up to date with members' meetings
information at www.ald.org.uk/meetings.

* The ALD will have a presence at these events.

Contact us

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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. 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) to be posted on 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 January 2021

Professional members' shows

opening in December

December

3 December Jamie Platt *Dick Whittington* Above The Stag Theatre

3 December Malcolm Rippeth *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk (live stream)* Bristol Old Vic

4 December Pete Watts *The Big Panto Adventure* Concordia Theatre Hinckley

4 December Ben Garcia *Europe* LAMDA Linbury Studio

4 December Harvey Nowak-Green *A Doll's House* The Courtyard Theatre

5 December Ben Garcia *You Got Older* LAMDA Linbury Studio

5 December Tim Mascall *Potted Panto* Garrick Theatre, West End

6 December Joshua Gadsby *The Cunning Little Vixen* Royal Northern College of Music

9 December David Howe *Mischief Movie Nights* Vaudeville Theatre, London

11 December Pete Watts *Beauty and the Beast pantomime* Malthouse Theatre

11 December John Rainsforth (lighting and video designer) *Arbuthnot & Dame Bella's Christmas Adventure*
The Customs House

12 December Michael Grundner *Sound of Music* Theater St. Gallen

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

Jerry Hodgson

Martin Chisnall remembers his friend and mentor, who recently passed away

Like so many of my generation, my introduction to Jerry Hodgson was through the National Youth Theatre.

I still remember my interview at London's Shaw Theatre. Two men sat across the table in the upstairs office. Michael Croft chain smoked throughout and made me feel nervous, but the other man was different. Much younger, and wearing shorts, tall, maybe even lanky. I could just discern a smile under his beard. He showed interest as I nervously displayed my hand-drawn lighting plan from my school play, and he asked just the right level of questions to elicit an answer without panicking me.

This was Jerry.

Jerry was head of lighting and sound for the National Youth Theatre and, by default, chief electrician at the Shaw Theatre.

Every summer during the school holidays he would take a group of budding theatre technicians under his wing and nurse us through a variety of productions, not just at the Shaw, but in an eclectic mix of other venues, such as the Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre and St Pancras Church.

He was a natural, easy going teacher who enjoyed sharing his knowledge. He had great patience as we all slowly fumbled along. He showed us how to read a lighting plan, demonstrating how to mark it up with pencil lines drawn at metre increments to aid accurate rigging (a technique I still use today.) He gently encouraged us as we learned to rig and focus lights and taught us how to program the MMS, never getting flustered as we inadvertently deleted as many "memories" as we managed to record.

And we had such fun. We made gobos from Lithoplate and visited other West End theatres to borrow more lights. (Jerry seemed to know everyone.) We had day trips to Margate and liquid lunches in the Eliza Doolittle next door (for those were the days). Jerry showed us theatre wasn't a job; it was a life choice.

At the end of the summer, when most students returned to school in their hometowns, I stayed in London to attend university. I stayed in touch with Jerry and our friendship grew. He employed me as a casual, doing fit-ups and get-outs at the Shaw. It was my first paid work in

theatre, culminating in "board opping" the Christmas panto, *Mother Goose*.

When Jerry left the Shaw to become chief electrician at the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, he took me with him as the new assistant electrician: my first full-time theatre job.

He always had great faith in me, even though I had so little experience. I did my first tour move for Jerry, my first NEC motor show with Jerry, my first corporate Christmas party, my first Palladium fit-up.

Jerry was a great early adopter of technology. At the Shaw he bought a ZX Spectrum computer the day it was released and set it up in the control room for all of us to "have a go". He bought a wet bike which he rode in London docks, and didn't seem to get upset when I crashed it into the pontoon. He was the first person I knew with an email address.

In recent years we had seen each other only intermittently. Jerry and his partner Elaine had moved to Somerset and Jerry did less theatre, concentrating more on the summer festival circuit, finding a niche in generators and power distribution.

I last spoke with Jerry just a few months ago during the first weeks of lockdown. Out of the blue he called me just to say hello and see how I was doing. It was a warm summer's afternoon and we talked easily and freely, the way two men often don't, reminiscing about old friends and times.

I recall one day, over a beer, Jerry revealed he had got me the job at the Lyric because he had felt guilty. He had worried he had ruined my future by luring me into theatre and causing me to drop out of university.

In truth, Jerry had not ruined my future; he had formed my future. My career is all his fault, and I don't think I ever got to say thank you.

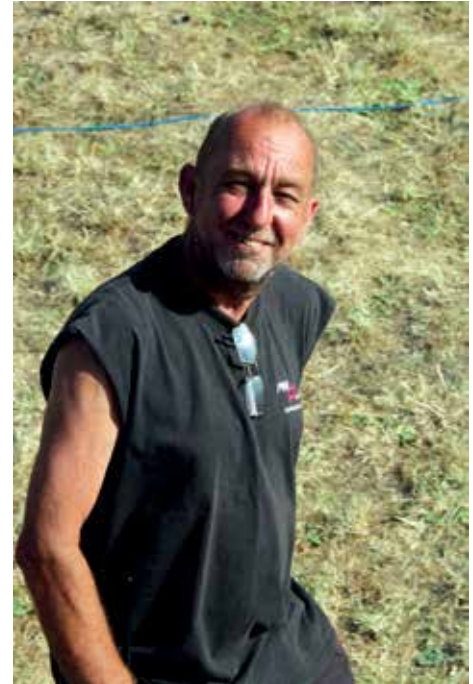
Thank you, Jerry. 🍷

















*Above:
NYT "Class of '89" reunion from summer 2019*

*Right:
Jerry Hodgson
Photo by Alistair Milne*












Both photos courtesy of Rob Halliday



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ABTT Fellowship

Bruno Poet introduces Prema Mehta

I'd like to introduce a lighting designer who has been a huge inspiration to me, especially during the lockdown and pandemic.

Prema got the lighting bug at school, and cemented it during her time at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and now has over 200 shows to her credit. Recent work includes productions at the Royal Court, Sheffield Theatres, Shakespeare's Globe, Storyhouse and The Young Vic. She has been exploring lighting in the virtual reality world and has an incredible variety of projects in the pipeline, most of which are currently on hold. However, right now, she is designing the lighting for *The Come Back* at the Noel Coward Theatre.

Erica Whyman from the RSC describes her as a wonderful collaborator: "She is a consummate listener, she is bold, sensitive, ingenious, and she cares very deeply about telling the story. I admire her leadership in the sector, her tenacity, and her courage. She was immediately a creative friend, because she lives her values and because she cares so much about everyone doing their best work."

An active member of Freelancers Make Theatre work, she is on the board of Unicorn Theatre, She is an associate artist at the Young Vic and on working groups at

Central and Guildhall schools. She works with schools, colleges and universities, and in youth offender centres to encourage the next generation of lighting designers from backgrounds under represented in theatre.

She has worked tirelessly to highlight the lack of offstage diversity and founded Stage Sight to change this. Her vision is to create an offstage workforce that is more reflective of our society today, inclusive of ethnicity, class and disability. The theory behind Stage Sight is to share ideas that work and to spread them nationally: a theatrical hive mind working for a better future.

Hannah Bentley from the Arts Council describes her inspiring commitment: "She is driven to ensure that those who come after her face fewer barriers – she has worked with no wage or funding, often juggling production weeks and lighting plan deadlines with conversations with funders, CEOs and artistic directors about effecting change. She is always busy on Twitter and keeping her committee on track!"



During lockdown she has been determined to ensure that freelancers have had a voice and that organisations didn't go back on the commitments they had made. With no work and no self-employment support she turned her home into Stage Sight HQ and worked round the clock writing funding bids, attending endless zooms, coordinating and planning and driving change.

A passionate leader, she also has a brilliant sense of humour, and loves a good G&T – and I can't wait for lockdown to end so I can meet up and buy her a few. She is of the most inspiring people I know.

From ALD chair Johanna Town:

Prema has been an inspirational member of the ALD Exec for many years and, as a young designer wishing to change the face of our industry, has been an incredibly strong voice for our industry and its need for change, which has been most welcome. Prema is an inspiration to many of our young members as an aspiring lighting designer; we are very lucky to have her voice and her aspirations influencing the next generation. The formation of Stage Sight is one of the most important developments in British theatre and has reached out and touched so many different areas of established theatre practice in such a short space of time she more than deserves this fellowship. As chair of the ALD I would like to congratulate her on her fellowship – from the whole of the ALD and its members. 🍀

New members

Welcome!

Professional members

Mike Clarke, Wallasey

Affiliate members

Jessica Addinall, Hull

Nina L Field, Bronx, USA

Alan Mooney, Cork

Associate members

Phil Baines, Dronfield

Kathy A Perkins, Durham, USA

Sudip Kumar Sanyal, Kolkata, India

Sponsored Student members

Roberto Esquenazi Alkabes, London

Anna Athanasiadi, Glasgow

Jesisca Ellen Caira, Guilford

Jennifer E Cashman, London

Nicola Crawford, Bath

Pauł Koloman Kaiba, Cardiff

Harry Anderson Lacey, Dorset

Leon Leitner, London

Patrick McCool, London

Max F Sharp, London

Ned Siuipys, London

Working during Covid

Robert Henderson works socially distanced

On 15 March this year I helped the crew de-rig and pack away the hired equipment for the show that had been cancelled that morning, minutes before the tech was due to start. I then caught a train home, where I was to remain for the next seven months. The next day the industry that I had worked in for the best part of forty years was almost completely shut down. Like so many others I was left wondering when, indeed if, I would work again.

Over the past few years, along with my work in professional theatre and events, I have also spent a considerable amount of time working with various schools, providing lighting design for their examination performances and other projects. I was therefore delighted when one, Queens Gate School in London, decided that they would press ahead with their GCSE and A-level examination performances in November and would require my services.

The school does not have a dedicated performance space but has a small "ballroom" with some permanently installed lighting bars, 18 ways of dimming and a handful of Fresnels at one end of the room. Usually we rig a pipe and

drape system to create an "end-on" black box performance space, adding LED Fresnels and small moving wash lights to supplement the existing lantern stock. There is usually a "floor package" to create low level sidelight positions and footlights. Access to the space is difficult as it is on the first floor of the building and the ground floor is also several steps up from pavement level. As a result, the equipment is usually wheeled up a ramp into a room on the ground floor, and the contents of the flight cases then transferred individually to the performance space above. It normally takes a team of five people about six hours to unload, rig the space and be focused ready to start the tech. However, this process would require a radical rethink in order to make it Covid-19 secure.

First, the decision was taken to significantly reduce the size of the rig so that it could be installed by two people socially distancing at all times. The pipe and drape system would be dispensed with and the black masking hung directly on the existing lighting bars with a number of Studio Cobs and Robin LED 150 units outrigged from the same bars. The floor

package would also be removed to create as much floor space as possible for socially distanced teaching when the performances were not taking place.

One of the major problems in devising Covid-secure working methods is that the transmission routes of the disease are still not fully understood. In particular, the role of aerosolised droplets and how long they can remain active and suspended in the air is still hotly debated by scientists. To mitigate this, it was decided that the two people involved in the installation process (me and my assistant, Tom Burgess) would wear face coverings at all times and would never need to be within two metres of each other and a lot of the time much further apart. Also, the space would remain well ventilated with the windows being left open while working and only closed for a short while to enable focusing. This methodology continued into the tech rehearsal and performances, with all adults in the room wearing face masks throughout and only the performers being maskless when required. Again, the windows were kept open whenever possible and we teched in half hour blocks with a break in between to reventilate the room.

I had detailed discussions with the lighting hire company (TSL Lighting in Basingstoke) about what precautions they were taking with hire equipment. Their approach is that all equipment is picked and packed at least 72 hours before delivery and then quarantined. We also agreed that rather than all the equipment being packed into as few large flight cases as possible, it would be distributed among numerous smaller crates that could be carried by one person. The van was packed two days before delivery to guard against the possibility of aerosolised particles lingering in the confined internal space.

On delivery, the driver opened the van doors and then returned to the cab while Tom and I unloaded the crates individually to kerbside. We then alternated carrying the crates directly up to the first floor performance space. Once all the crates were loaded in, they were sprayed and wiped down with a hospital grade sanitiser before opening. We then divided up the rigging tasks into stage area and front of house and worked individually, each with their own designated Zarges access ladder. For a lot of the time we were never closer than about five metres and always a minimum of two. When we were ready for focusing, each of us focused the units that we had hung to avoid the possibility of cross-contamination. The empty crates were then placed in a separate room for storage and given a spray with sanitiser as a precaution.

During the whole process hand gel, alcohol wipes and sprays were freely available. Personally, I wore light vinyl disposable



gloves whenever possible, including when I was programming. This was not so much because I felt they gave me extra protection but rather that you are less likely to touch your face when you are wearing them, and they also protect your skin when using hand gel, wipes and sprays.

Interestingly, a suggestion that came out of a recent ALD online discussion



Production desk essentials

Working during Covid

Robert Henderson

about the production LX Covid document was that we should work in teams with people who we are not familiar with as this would encourage a natural level of social distancing. I have to say that I felt far more comfortable working with someone I knew well and therefore could trust to follow the appropriate guidelines.

Usually I would set up my lighting desk within a couple of metres of the performance area to enable better communication with the performers during rehearsals and then move to the back of the room to operate the actual performances. On this occasion I set up the control position at the back from the start. It was protected at the sides by pop-up Perspex screens, and a clear “no-go” area was marked out three metres in front. I was the only person who touched the desk at any time. Throughout the entire production process, I doubt if I came any closer than about ten metres to the performers. As part of the schools’ precautions they would always enter at one end of the room and I at the other end. On the rare occasion I needed to venture into the performance area to switch off equipment immediately after the cast had left, I also



wore a visor in addition to my mask. Possibly over cautious, but while the role of aerosolised particles is still not fully understood, it was probably worth doing.

Once we started programming, I was surprised how normal it all felt despite the seven-month break. There were some small differences in the style of

performance. While the cast worked physically closely there was no actual touching and lines tended to be delivered away from fellow performers. Personal props were indeed personal. If, for example, you needed to use a chair as part of the action then you were the only person who touched that chair and it was your responsibility to bring it to the stage. Whereas we would normally pack about forty or so parents into the space as audience, this time there were six invited staff and fellow students who were all socially distanced. Although the loss of the floor package did not allow me to be quite as subtle and creative as usual, I was pleased with the results and just grateful for the chance to work again when so many of my colleagues are not.

At the time of writing all the equipment is still rigged ready for another show in a few weeks. After talking to TSL it was decided that there was no point in derigging everything, returning it their shelves and then having to go through the whole process again, with all the risks that would entail – an example of the flexibility that everybody in this industry will have to display as we struggle to get back on our feet.

Before the equipment is finally derigged it will be left untouched for 72 hours after the last performance to guard against any remnants of contamination, particularly the drapes which require a significant amount of handling to fold and pack. The previous Covid procedures will be followed for loading out.

Nobody in the process has displayed symptoms of infection since; however, given the incidence of infection at the time and the relatively few participants, it is unlikely that anybody involved was infectious to start with. Whether these precautions would have prevented spread if they had been, we can't be sure. However, common sense would tell us that the barriers we put up would have provided protection given what we know about transmission at the moment. I was possibly more cautious than strictly necessary but given that I am knocking sixty I was not taking any chances. As the industry gets back on its feet it is vital that we follow whatever procedures are required to keep ourselves and our colleagues safe. 🍀

Photos:

Queens Gate School, London

Lighting designer: Robert Henderson

Assistant lighting designer: Tom Burgess

Photographer: Robert Henderson

A very middle-class kidnapping

Philip Gladwell is in quarantine in Sydney



It's day 13 held in a fairly nice room but with guards outside to keep me in.

I thought I would write a little about my experience of travel to, and quarantine in, Sydney. I am here to tech and open *Magic Mike Live Australia*,

which will do a six-month sit-down in Sydney before moving to Melbourne and on and on...

First, everything takes longer than normal! At check-in, the agent has to call the Australian embassy to get permission for your arrival, as officially the Australian border is closed. I am fortunate enough to be travelling a little nearer the front of the plane, but I did observe the queue to the other side of the rope barrier was very large indeed, which is a surprise as planes can only take 30 people on each flight. That said, there are very few passenger flights

to Australia at the moment. I flew with Singapore Airlines, which was excellent. The onboard service is greatly reduced: they stay away apart from the minimum but will bring you anything you need if you ask.

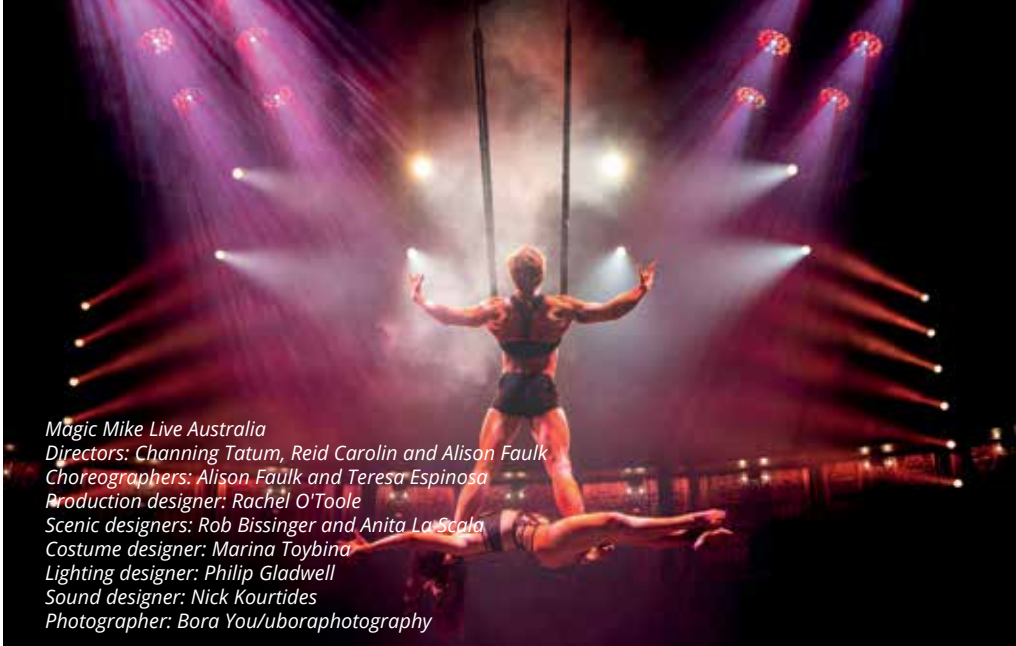
Heathrow is quite busy but closed down, except a few food outlets. Most of the business lounges are also closed. Security seemed slower than usual to me. I assume extra precautions are in place to protect the staff.

It is important to realise that at every step of the way they have to assume you are contagious and therefore have to contain you and your potential spreading ability. So, of course, it goes without saying that apart from in hotel rooms by myself or eating, a mask is worn the whole time – yes, the whole flight.

Thirteen hours later I arrive in Singapore. Every transit passenger is “stage managed” for the entire stay in the airport. You feel very much like you are being politely detained. You put on a green wristband to identify yourself as transit pax and are ushered into a large transit holding area. After queuing, with exact distances marked on the floor, your temperature is

taken by non-English speaking “nurses” wearing disposable aprons, gloves, masks and visors. There is a premium area for business passengers, but it's bleak and depressing! There's no real dining – just water, coffee and biscuits. The only benefit is that there's an outdoor area for smokers, which can be nice for grabbing some real, if very humid, Singaporean fresh air, the last opportunity for a long while! I had an eight-hour wait between flights and stayed in a transit hotel, but once again you are taken politely but strictly in a chain-gang line that you are instructed not to break away from to the hotel (past more temperature checkpoints), signed in and clearly instructed not to leave until you are escorted back to the bleak lounge to wait for boarding. The hotel does provide a meal of your choosing. Mine was pretty good, actually – I played it safe and had Singapore noodles! There's no real access to good shops or airline lounges in Singapore, and the airport is basically closed, which is weird given how amazing that airport usually is.

Landing in Australia, you have to wait a while to be deplaned by the authorities. It's longer on the plane than usual. You first



Magic Mike Live Australia

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Choreographers: Alison Faulk and Teresa Espinosa

Production designer: Rachel O'Toole

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Costume designer: Marina Toybina

Lighting designer: Philip Gladwell

Sound designer: Nick Kourtidis

Photographer: Bora You/uboraphotography

go for an interview with a health worker (temperature taken again), who asks the usual questions about symptoms and explains quarantine to you. After that it's fairly normal (in an empty airport): immigration, customs, and then you're ushered onto a coach at the front of the airport, all under military guard. The army put your bags on the bus. It took about an hour or so of being on the coach before we left under police escort. At this stage you are told which hotel you will be taken to (cue frenzy of Google searches from the

entire bus to see what it's like). The whole plane goes to the same hotel.

On arrival at the hotel, it was another hour or so of waiting on the coach while the police process you into the hotel. Once inside, after normal check-in, the police take your details and interview you, and you are then shown to your room by the hotel staff (in as much PPE as they can muster), and then that's it, you're in! You're not given any keys as you are not allowed to leave. You are given a welcome pack with contact numbers for nurses,

psychologists, police, etc. At this point it's worth noting that although the quarantine is mandatory it does cost \$3,000.

The day you arrive is day zero; day one starts after you have had one night in the room. You are given a Covid test on day 2 and day 10 by nurses that come to your room's door threshold: you can't leave, and they can't come in! I found the test unpleasant but totally fine. I will be having weekly testing on site when I get out so it's just a fact of life now!

My room is pretty nice. I have a large window (that opens) with a good far-reaching view and a little kitchenette. The room is like many middle-of-the-road hotels you have stayed in before. It is clean with a bed, sofa, dining table, large TV, etc. It is fourteen steps from one end to the other. None of the *MML* team have had bad experiences with their rooms. Some have balconies, some are without opening windows, some look out onto brick walls, but all are comfortable and spacious enough. Apparently, the hotels are VERY reluctant to move you once you are in so you need to make a very quick decision if you want to cause a fuss and be moved. The sooner you do it, the better

A very middle-class kidnapping

Philip Gladwell

chance you stand. The police make these decisions, not the hotel manager.

The food situation seems to vary a bit. The catering is supplied by outside catering companies, not the hotel as you might expect. You do not get a choice in what meals you are served after telling them your dietary requirements. I have heard the food described as “gravy food”, which I don’t disagree with. On the whole, it is fine. Lunch has been pretty good, and I have often skipped dinner. You get a little knock at the door and a brown paper bag is left for you with a meal, all in compostable packaging. Some hotels seem to have really taken to the quarantine guest experience. Mine has been delivering little treats, ranging from Tim Tams (Australian chocolate penguins) to colouring books to toffees. My colleagues have differing stories of hotel engagement during our 14-day situation, ranging from none to cocktail hour with half-price drinks delivered to your room from the hotel bar, to online wine tasting with different wines being delivered to your room (complete with charcuterie board) and a sommelier on Zoom to guide you through your evening.

There is, of course, complimentary Wi-Fi access so Face Time with family and Zoom meetings can still happen. I even did some pre-viz with Liam Jones (my associate and brilliant programmer), which worked pretty well. New normal?

You can have deliveries brought in: Amazon, groceries, takeaway food, etc. There are obviously a million good eateries in Sydney so you can get whatever you desire, really, if you don’t like what’s being served. The best find is “Jimmy Brings”, a small but good selection of drinks and snacks that can get to you chilled (if appropriate) in under thirty minutes. We love Jimmy. You are not allowed to send anything out: no mail or (in our sound team’s case) hard drives!

You receive a daily call from a medical professional asking if you have any symptoms (it’s a long list that they clearly have to say all of every day) and – in different ways each day – probing to see if you might be about to throw yourself out of the window if you are fortunate enough to have opening windows. It’s great that they care, and it doesn’t just feel like box-ticking (which, of course, it is) but someone checking in on you and offering

to answer questions or find things out on your behalf if you need that. They can arrange prescriptions if needed and help track down lost luggage if you happened to have a rushed connection and lost your luggage in Dallas as our sound designer (Nic Kourtides) experienced. Five days with hand luggage only!

I understand that the hotel will do laundry if you need that. I am holding out for the washing facilities in my apartment when I get out.

Exercise-wise, there is enough room to work out, and I have been trying very hard to keep my steps up! I have my wife’s old Fitbit, and I have managed to achieve over 10,000 steps a day. I know you can hire in a spinning bike for a two-week period or other bits of training equipment. One of my colleagues brought his Brompton and a bit of kit that lets it function without going anywhere to work out. I have been listening to podcasts on a powered speaker while marching up and down my room each day. I have been enjoying catching up on old episodes of James and Bruno’s podcast, Making Theatre.

I brought with me an Apple TV so I can stream my laptop or phone to my large

TV which means I can watch Netflix and Amazon Prime. I am lucky that Gaz Clowes (our wonderful production electrician) has sent me over my production desk screen so I have a bigger desktop for working on.


















If you can tune into it, this is actually a fantastically creative period, with none of the usual distractions of life. Most people you know in the UK are sleeping for most of your day so you can really get on with things. I have two shows for next year that I did very little on before getting here. It felt quite good to sit down on day one and start: File, New. I brought three books with me, and I have read one and a half of them.

A doctor and the police (with a navy guard) have just turned up to give me another wrist band and tell me I can leave at 4pm tomorrow. Woop woop. 🚀



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