

FOCUS

ALPD #

The journal of the Association for Lighting Production and Design
December 2021/January 2022

In the backlight this issue:

- Mental health
 - Resetting better?
 - Mountview's Les Mis
 - Opera in Vienna and Toronto
 - ...and much, much more...
- Price to non-members £5.00

Fair Play

Bush Theatre

Written by Ella Road

Cast: Charlotte Beaumont and Nick King

Director: Monique Touko

Set and costume designer: Naomi Dawson

Lighting designer: Matt Haskins

Sound designer and composer: Giles Thomas

Movement director: Joseph Toonga

Assistant movement director: Orin "oriyo" Norbert

Photographer: Ali Wright

Contents



From the chair

ALPD chair Johanna Town looks ahead to 2022.

Page 3



Professionals

Lucy Carter on the good and bad of 2021.

Page 4



Marko in Vienna

Mark Jonathan reports from Theater an der Wien.

Page 10



Lighting Les Mis

Rob Halliday is at Mountview's "The Mack".

Page 16



Office Oracle

All the news from Amanda and the ALPD office.

Page 22



Mental health

Mig Burgess has the latest figures.

Page 30



Toronto adventure

Charlie Morgan Jones gets a dream job in Canada.

Page 32



Save Stage Lighting

Rob Halliday with a short update.

Page 37



Resetting Better

Tom Lightbody reflects on new working practices.

Page 38

From the chair...

I would like to wish all our members a very happy new year, and I hope that the year is bright and light for us all. The chair's opening seems very hard to write on a wet January afternoon. I am lucky to have shows running and in rehearsal, but I wake every morning wondering what's going to be in the inbox today – did the show go on last night? Did anyone come to see it? Is a job going to move or be cancelled today? Will I get to rehearsals or might this be the day it all stops?

Two years on and entering our third winter, I don't think anyone thought it would still be like this. We stopped for a while, yes, but so did everyone else. Now it feels like a struggle. The unknown, the constant shifting of events, is hard to live with, and it's very hard to get excited about a show that may or may not come to fruition. You're probably thinking this doesn't sound like me – I'm usually the bright one, the one who goes, "it's all going to be all right; we can get through this and come out the other end intact."

Yes, that is me, but with every issue it gets harder to write those words when the closing of venues doesn't stop and time keeps passing and I see and read about the industry I love so much being under such utter stress. That's why I am sharing how today feels, because sometimes it's good to know that you might not be the only one finding it hard at the moment, and it might help to know that sometimes other people find it hard too.

I think most people know that I love what I do. I love being a lighting designer and working in theatre; I wouldn't want to do anything else. I have loved seeing all our members' work on Twitter and Facebook and the celebration of work we have all managed to achieve. I can't wait to have meetings again and socials face to face, to celebrate the amazing shows that have been produced. I can't wait to talk to the creators and the facilitators of these shows to learn how they were made and how all the kit works and to just have a good old chin wag with friends. I look forward to this very much.

Johanna Town
ALPD chair



I wrote that on Monday and then on Wednesday I had a brilliant day talking to the ALPD Exec. We were looking at the future of the ALPD, at what we have achieved over the past year and what we should strive to fulfil in the years ahead. It was fantastic to be talking with such a committed and inspiring bunch of younger members now on the Exec and such a mix from all the different factions of our industry. To spend a day listening and helping them steer their ideas and ideals for their future was inspiring. I look forward to a year of continued building of the ALPD, filled with ideas on resources for members and campaigns on sustainability in all areas. So, thank you to everyone on the Exec who gave up their day – I look forward to carrying this energy forward into 2022.

If you want to help or have ideas to improve your industry then get in touch and join a working group or the Exec.

Ups and downs

Lucy Carter reflects on the good and bad of 2021



So that's 2021 done. What a shocking year. Or actually the year before was shocking and this year has just been unsettling and turbulent. It's been a while since I wrote for Focus because, to be quite honest, it's been a struggle to know what to say and to not write negative ramblings and disappointed thoughts.

Despite actually only working for two thirds of the year I have been very fortunate to have lit four shows since May. That's actually not an output I am used to; it's a bit slow,

but thankfully some money is coming in again.

It's exhausting, I have to be honest. I am grateful and delighted to be working, but I can't deny it all feels difficult and time consuming. I guess going from zero to full speed ahead again is hard, but why so hard? My email inbox is impossible to get on top of! Plus, I feel nervous about the future of the industry and of the virus and what might happen next. Having had the rug pulled out from under us before, I now feel on very turbulent ground constantly.

Something very good happened when I went back to work though! Hurrah! Something positive, I hear you cry! During the pandemic pause, as I like to call it, I was seriously questioning if I wanted to keep doing what I do. I was in so many Zoom rooms discussing how it could and should be better when we went back to work and hearing so many

horror stories about the treatment of freelancers and venue staff alike that I lost all respect for the places and companies that employ us. I heard about enough disrespect for the makers of theatre, the creatives and technical teams, to last me a lifetime and I didn't know if the creative part – the actual designing I do – was worth all the hassle and unpleasantness. However, getting back behind the production desk and painting with lumens felt so joyous and like coming home that it reminded me why I have dedicated so much of my life and sacrificed so much of my family, friends and personal time to do it.

However, I feel dirty. I feel like I have got back into bed with an industry that didn't learn from the last two years, that hasn't come back better or fairer or with freelancers at the heart of it. The industry is bouncing back and it's



still got many more readjustments to make, and we should be patient and give the buildings and producers time to develop new practices from the learning we all did. But I really hope that this isn't it, that what I am experiencing isn't as far as the changes go, because I am hearing about more and more exploitation and unfairness and huge expectations on staff and freelancers,

and that doesn't reconcile with what we were discussing in those advocacy Zoom rooms.

So many colleagues are drowning and finding it extremely hard; so many shows are being squeezed into the same production slots that people and equipment and materials are scarce. It's not easy.

I want to share some things that I have been asked just since starting

The Dante Project
The Royal Ballet
Choreographer and director: Wayne McGregor
Composer: Thomas Ades
Designer: Tacita Dean
Lighting designer: Lucy Carter
Co-lighting designer (act 1): Simon Bennison
Dramaturg: Uzma Hameed
Lighting supervisor: Billy Slocombe
Programmer: John Lawrence
Photographs by Andrej Uspenski ©2021 ROH

back: things that are not OK and that I have had to fight extremely hard against.

Having been given a travel and accommodation allowance for a project in London, I calculated the number of train trips and nights' accommodation I would need and made sure the allowance covered those. However, the technical period expanded and became three days longer, meaning three extra days' accommodation, but they didn't want to give me any more allowance. So I told them I would stick to the contract dates and be three days late to the technicals. Why are freelancers – and especially regional freelancers

Ups and downs

Lucy Carter

– expected to help fund their own attendance for work?

A producer tried to avoid paying for the lighting design rights for an existing production to go to the US, saying the month-long run there was just another stop on the UK tour! Why are producers trying to get away without paying creatives for their continued use of the rights for their work, especially since we have been out of work for so long?

A venue expected me to consult on a live broadcast but was not going to pay me extra for the work I would need to do on top of my agreed contract. Again, freelancers are being expected to do work for free.

The producers booked and advertised a transfer of a show I lit before even negotiating the rights to do it with the creative team, leaving the offer for the rights until the last minute – and not until my agent

approached them and asked them what was happening. Planning to exploit a production further without asking the people who own the rights to the creative elements is disrespectful and undermining.

None of this feels like an industry that has recalibrated to consider the freelancers at its heart, does it? I wonder why I reach burnout so quickly when I'm having to fight all these issues on nearly every show.

I love the actual designing and lighting of the shows, but I now understand why I question how I earn my living, because constant issues like these, and a constant feeling of being disrespected and undervalued, takes the pleasure away.

However, let me tell you some positive stories. There are many venues, companies and producers who are trying to do the right thing and succeeding. Some venues during the pandemic were making

a massive effort to keep creatives working and earning some money. I believe that there is a positive drive to create a more diverse workforce, and I am seeing a more varied list of names appearing in programmes and seasons as they are announced. That is something to celebrate and applaud producers for. That effort can and must only continue and get better and create new momentum. However, now's the time to push forward and not accept that as the only element of the new beginning, but to continue to discuss and put pressure on the industry as a whole to grow into a more financially rewarding and reliable career path for all. That involves reassessing payment structures and work hours, ensuring that the makers share in the decision-making and financial successes and that they are respected and valued for their skill and expertise.



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You can help push the industry in a better direction by consistently asking for better fees, day rates, terms and conditions, etc., as the more we all ask for what we need to do our jobs the more the message gets through. The more we accept a bad deal or allow bad practice the longer it will continue. Every time you explain why you need prep days to be paid, or why you need decent accommodation to be provided, or why you need to be paid for travel days, the more normal those things become. Don't accept unacceptable situations; just ask for what you need and be clear that what you are asking for is reasonable and justifiable. Ask the ALPD for advice and guidance if you need it.

The ALPD is imminently about to send out a large set of documents and information to as many producers, venues, companies and production

Ups and downs

Lucy Carter

managers as we can to educate and assist them in creating better working situations for all of us. This will include our contract and deal memo checklists, the members' code of conduct, and the new professional process documents. We've compiled these in the hope that people will develop a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of everyone working in the large ecology of lighting for live performance.

Lastly, the ALPD executive committee held another strategy planning day at the end of January and with that in mind we would love to hear from you about what you would like us to develop, things to continue to work on and new avenues we can explore, to help, inspire and support you. That is why we do what we do on the ALPD executive: it's all for you, our members. 🌸

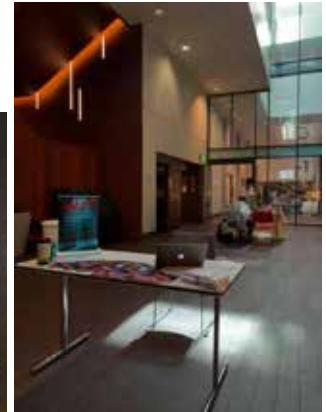
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Students working group update

The ALPD Students working group has welcomed some new faces to the team: Ben Garcia, a third-year student from LAMDA, plus Josie Ireland and Oliver Hynds from Guildhall. It's great to have some fresh people onto the ALPD team, and we are hoping to do a student-based social event when it is possible to do so. Jack Wills will also be moving off the Exec around summer 2022 to ensure the representation of students is kept relevant and recent.

The ALPD Student working group also continues to welcome anyone else who is interested in helping out and any ideas that would benefit our student members. Please message us on Facebook or email us: students@thealpd.org.uk. 🌸



Some photos from our recent visits...

Marko in Vienna

Mark Jonathan reports from the EU



I know I'm not the only LD who has been trying to sustain their career working abroad and having to combine both

the continually changing regulations regarding Covid and, in my case, another job in the EU. This time it's Vienna, Austria, where I find myself returning to the Theater an der Wien. This will be my fourth opera there but my first post-Brexit. I'm excited to see this beautiful city again and the very special theatre built at the end of the 18th century by Emanuel Schikaneder. The opera buffs among you will know that Herr Schikaneder wrote the libretto for Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. He was extremely talented both as an actor, producer,

dramatist and singer, playing the role of Papageno in the first production of *The Magic Flute*. The first music director of the Theater an der Wien was Ludwig van Beethoven who had a flat in the theatre. When I worked there previously I loved to sit there and sense the spirits of the great creators who had been there before me and perhaps to inherit some of their brilliance. At least not to let the side down as I imagined the spirits of Schikaneder and Beethoven urging me, the Englischer Beleuchtungsmeister, to show them what he could do.

My agent doesn't hesitate to ask Vienna if they will pay for my post-Brexit work visa and Vienna waste no time in replying that it was "we who chose to leave" and therefore "no". "But it's only €75," says the agent, "so, not too bad." Not too bad, I think, compared to Spanish and Norwegian visas, and I wonder how

long it will be before Austria raises its prices.

"Have you pointed out to the management that they have offered the same fee that they paid when we first negotiated in 2010?" I ask the agent. Indeed the management was well aware of that and pointed out that I was already paid a few thousand euros more than other LDs. I'm sure the fee won't be going up anytime soon. I privately admit I was just happy to have a job.

I get an email in June from Thomas in the lighting department asking me how I was getting on with my rig plan as they now needed it to prepare for the rig in November. Thank goodness I'm blessed with some imagination as I concoct a





Giulio Cesare in Egitto
Theater an der Wien
Musical director: Ivor Bolton
Director: Keith Warner
Designer: Ashley Martin-Davis
Choreographer: Mandy Demetriou
Lighting designer: Mark Jonathan
Video designer: David Haneke
Photography © Monika Rittershaus /
Theater an der Wien

rig based on the series of complex model photos provided by Ashley Martin-Davis and some storyboard notes from the director Keith Warner. The set would be a rundown faux-Egyptian gold cinema with a screen that would be used for video as well as using the opera house's massive built-in revolve and elevators therein. So there was a bit for me to get my head around. The theatre has a new head of lighting in Gwen Lohmann,

and he has increased considerably the quantity of moving heads. It retains its lighting desk, which leaves me feeling uncertain as I know the desk is really unsuitable for our use and I have yet to have a fulfilling experience with it.

The opera to be presented this time is Handel's long but beautiful *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*. We had already been instructed many months before by the director

general that the opera would need to be presented in two acts with only one interval rather than two intervals between the three acts as it was highly likely we would still be under Covid restrictions. How right he was. I was happy that I didn't have to go into quarantine on arrival but the November night that I arrive is the last that restaurants are allowed to open. I have my "last supper" with designer Ashley Martin-Davis. He has just arrived from designing an opera in Dijon where, he tells me, in the market at the fish stall there was a no entry sign with "pas de Anglais". Not only that, but his taxi driver from the airport also had a pop at him about Brexit. It's a

Marko in Vienna

Mark Jonathan



Both pages:
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nightmare that we are no longer in the EU and now we have to cope with anti-Brit propaganda stirred up by our government's incompetence to actually get their oven-ready deals to work. We both wonder if our days of working abroad are numbered. I'm wearing my EU badge but it comes with a union jack entwined in it, and we decide it's not clear about its intention so I take the badge off.

The next day I set off for the rehearsal room, which is on the outskirts of Vienna. We have to take our food with us as not even the opera house canteen was allowed to open. The city is locked down and everywhere is closed except for supermarkets, bakeries, pharmacies and some takeaways. We have to carry papers in case we are stopped



every day, which involved a gargle test that had to be videoed and uploaded. The sample could then be left at the stage door or any supermarket to be sent to the lab. The result arrived very efficiently at 3am. This certainly gave one some feeling of security that everyone was being tested.

Rehearsals were already behind as both singers and the pianist had gone down with Covid. Our projection designer was so ill with Covid that he's stayed in Switzerland but has to work via a Zoom link as we film excerpts for him that are needed. I find myself

to confirm we are travelling to work. I can see it's all going to be a bit grim as I sit behind a Perspex box with the designer. I look behind me and the opera staff are all in their Perspex cubicles. Opera singers are singing with masks on, which makes it harder for me to see who's

singing. Our production will have four countertenors, and while I think this heightens the musical splendour of the piece, it certainly added to the amount of ego bouncing around in the room. With my arrival I was inducted in the gargle test procedure. The whole city had to do a PCR test

lighting for the film crew and some scenes are done with a green screen. At the end of the day I feel like I have fast tracked into film lighting and think, yes, I can do this. The set was also behind schedule and by the time we got to the theatre the schedule had to be revised as we lost lighting

Marko in Vienna

Mark Jonathan

sessions and stage sessions due to the delayed arrival of the set and then the added restriction that there were 16 technicians off sick and we actually ran out of staff. Time was not on our side and despite my pleas for more time earlier in the process it was only provided at the last moment. Although I thought that I was past getting nervous, on this occasion I was up against an extremely complex staging, and nerves prevailed. Our opening night was delayed and the scheduled opening became a public dress. Allowing the public in would not have been my choice as it just added to the unnecessary pressure; however, the ovation at the end confirmed that we had a success. A day before the scheduled opening night, fortuitously theatres in Vienna were unlocked, but not restaurants or hotels; these were to remain closed for another week. This would

mean that visitors to Vienna couldn't come as their hotel reservations were cancelled. Having a drink to recover from a long day's rehearsal was restricted to what one might choose to do in one's apartment. Most of my days off were swallowed up in rescheduled rehearsals, but I was glad I could meet up with LD Hector Murray who was lighting at the Burgtheater, covering for Natasha Chivers.

Amid the stress of trying mount an opera in lockdown, on the penultimate day I run a 5k around the city to calm my stress as I try to project manage the sale and purchase of my house, as the original dates drifted. On the same day Jason Larcombe and I agree that the lighting lunch must be cancelled. The hotel refused to refund anything but accepted a postponement. By the time the date of the lunch arrived I



Hector Murray and Marko

knew we had made the right decision, despite Boris Johnson's assurance that we should party. Clearly, the lunch could easily have been a super-spreader event in the lighting world. I was especially sad not to be able to proceed as there were quite a few awards to give out as part of the ALPD's celebration of its 60th anniversary. I sincerely hope that we can run the lunch on Friday 25 February and that we shall all be able to meet up then and celebrate. In the meantime, I wish you all a happy new year and hope that life returns to a semblance of normality. 🍀

ALD fellowships

Celebrating the association's 60th anniversary

The ALPD has named eleven new fellows who have joined its membership for life. A further two honorary members were also welcomed into the ALPD fold.

For the ALD's 60th anniversary we wished to bestow these fellowships in recognition of the immense contribution each individual has made to the association and to the lighting community as well as the industry as a whole. The presentations will be made during the annual Lighting Lunch, to be held at the Park Plaza Hotel, London, in February (rescheduled from December – see Marko's article on the facing page).

Johanna Town, ALPD chair, comments: "It is an extraordinary year for the ALPD, which has followed on from a truly extraordinary period for all of us in the lighting profession, the theatre community and far beyond. It is for

this reason that we wish to celebrate and thank our new fellows and highlight the lifetime of work they have given and the opportunities they have created for others."

The new 2021 fellows include:

Paul Pyant for his immense contribution to the art of lighting design

Howard Eaton for his contribution to performance lighting

Durham Marengi for his contribution to performance lighting

Ian Saunders for his contribution made to the Association

Paule Constable for her leadership in campaigning on behalf of the people who work in performance lighting

Les Bone for his contribution to performance lighting at the ROH

Laurie Clayton for his contribution to performance lighting at the National Theatre

Bryan Raven for his leadership in campaigning on behalf of the people who work in performance lighting

Coral Cooper for creating and supporting opportunities for women in performance lighting

The international fellows are **Anne Valentino** for her contribution to the development of programmable lighting control, and **Kathy Perkins** for her contribution to the art of lighting.

New honorary members of the association are **Jon Cadbury** and **Sarah Rushton-Read**.

Congratulations to all, and thank you for your extraordinary work and for all you do for our industry. 🍷

Les Mis at Mountview

Rob Halliday lights this iconic musical

It all came in a rush in a single phone call. Mountview's new theatre was finally to get its gala opening after eighteen months of staging shows seen only by remote, streaming audiences. As part of that, it finally had a name – “The Mack” – to honour its principal benefactor, Cameron Mackintosh. Given that, he'd been asked to suggest a show to mark the opening. His proposal: *Les Misérables* – the full version, for the first time by a drama school, rather than the cut-down school's edition.

Would I like to light it?

Can I confess to being a bit of a sucker for *Les Mis*? It is one of the great shows, and one which I was proud to have been involved with from the time of the 1995 tenth anniversary concert and then the original “classic” Nunn/Caird staging from the 1997 British tour through to the transfer from the Palace to the Queen's in London. That production

features what I think of as one of the all-time great combinations of design and lighting, by John Napier and David Hersey. If you're interested, you can read more about that here: https://thelightingarchive.org/designer.php?designer_id=22.

So the answer should have been an unconditional, immediate “yes”. But there was just a hint of fear: if you've been involved with a show for a long time that production becomes deeply lodged in your brain, and in the case of *Les Mis* some parts of David's original lighting felt as if they were an intrinsic part of the show. But yet they are his work, his invention, his creation: I had no desire just to copy them. But would I be smart enough, imaginative enough to think of something different, let alone better? And would the show actually allow for something different?

The answer to the second question turned out to be an emphatic yes.

Mountview were to be allowed to approach the show with a completely fresh eye, and the two directors (apparently you always have to have two directors on *Les Mis*!) were intending to do just that. This pairing was an interesting one. Matthew Ryan has a long, long involvement with the show, having been in it, and then having re-mounted the original production (and also its sibling, *Miss Saigon*) around the world. I knew him from there, and have lit shows for him many times since. His co-director, Shiv Rabheru, was completely new to the material. I'm not sure he'd ever seen any version of the show. That's a fascinating combination, and between them they had a fascinating concept: to lift the show out of its time, almost lift it out of its place, and to land it now in time, anywhere a dystopian regime could provoke outrage and, ultimately, rebellion from a bunch of idealistic students in



All photos in this article:
Les Misérables
Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts
Directors: Shiv Rabheru and Matt Ryan
Designer: Lee Newby
Lighting designer: Rob Halliday
Associate lighting designers and programmers:
Alex Hannah and Tristan Tereszczuk
Production electrician: Billy Highfield
Followspot operators: Freddy Sherwood and
Michael Mulcahy
Photographer: Marc Brenner

location. Which, increasingly, feels like it could be anywhere in the world.

To accommodate this, designer Lee Newby created an immense scaffolding structure, three stories high and wrapping around the stage, which itself would be extended a metre forward from its usual front line in a bid to bring the show out to the audience and also, practically, just to accommodate the sheer number of people in the company – 38 in total.

And, yes, I did have new ideas. But even so, David Hersey is a friend, so I did talk to him – in effect to say, I have new ideas but please forgive me if I accidentally stray into any of the old ideas however hard we try not to. Matt Ryan and I also felt it was important that we gave due thanks to the original creative team in a note in the programme, since their work so shaped the show and would always

be there lurking somewhere deep in our subconscious.

The other interesting challenge: this was my first new show back. I've done a selection of shows over the last eighteen months, some in theatres, some remotely, but they've all been re-makes or re-mounts.

This would be the first time having to dream up new ideas, having to sit down and draw a new plan from scratch, having to walk into a theatre and focus new lights to realise those ideas, then having to pull the headset on and start from nothing in – well, it turns out, exactly twenty-one months. The last time I'd done this was for another show at Mountview; checking back on the

Les Mis at Mountview

Rob Halliday

load-in plan for that show I realised it was dated 20 January 2020, whereas the Les Mis load-in plan carried the date 20 October 2021. These are the bookends to my coronavirus experience.

It's a bit nerve-wracking starting again. But, it turns out, a bit like riding a bike. A few wobbles, a brief moment of panic, then it all comes rushing back and you're off...

First thing, find space. Lee and his associate Ethan Cheek had taken the set right to the back wall of the theatre. But it really felt like we would sometimes want to light through the set rather than just lighting within it. Could we edge it forward? Just a little? Please...? I think we agreed on 500mm, not much of a gap but just enough to squeeze in some GLP X4 Bars, supplied on an extraordinarily generous hire deal by Christie Lites. And since they'd be on a fly bar could they move up and down during the show, since with such a tall set it felt like it would sometimes be useful to pull the height of things down. More negotiation there, since the intent had been to brace the scaffolding off to the back wall but now that would have to be re-thought. I'd forgotten just how big a part of lighting design negotiation with other departments is, but thanks to our production manager, the always helpful Davin Patrick, it was all agreed.

Next thing: why not try some of the new lighting products that had launched into the world during lockdown. In particular, having loved what it could do in a demo I really wanted to



see what ETC's Lustr3 could do in a real show. ETC, as ever, were up to help – but just didn't have any, a combination of having to deliver them to real customers and supply constraint from the global electronic component shortage. They did have two of the Daylight HDR version, and these became our followspots, FOH but out to the sides, and completely fantastic – compact, silent, able to shift colour between scenes or even during scenes, and such a beautiful light on people. ETC also lent us two of their Desire Fresnels using the full x8 colour system, two of their SolaWash 1000 moving lights and four of their ColorSource Linear battens. These were mixed in with Mountview's stock (since our band were to be in the studio theatre, I cheekily raided its fixture stock as well as that of the main house). This gave a powerful, versatile rig – but also one that brought rushing back

all of the frustrations of dealing with this technology when you take a bunch of different lights and just try to set them all to the same colour. It works if you've been able to manually pre-mix your colours. If you have ETC lights and console (the house Gio in this case) it works from the colour library. If only that worked with everyone's lights...

Making all of that work was a great lighting team, put together by Mountview's head of lighting Louisa Smurthwaite. From the start we'd discussed how best to use people so they felt involved in the whole process of making the show but also didn't just get stuck in one job. This meant that we gave Alex Hannah and Tristan Tereszczuk the modern dual roles of associate lighting designers and lighting programmers, so helping with the planning then alternating between running the console and

calling spots during the tech, while the ever-enthusiastic Billy Highfield was the production electrician. They, and the rest of the crew, did great work. Billy never stopped in his pursuit of my lightbulb "starcloth" with individual "character" bulbs for those who die during the show and the falling low smoke for the sewer scene. Alex had an inspired moment for solving the followspot control problem (the desk would control colour and master level, but we wanted the spot ops to control their fades; without money to build faders or rent a show control gateway, the traditional way of doing this, Alex just raided the rest of the college for two fader wings, two laptops, two client dongles and solved it that way). Support came from Mountview's Hakan Hafizoglu and Tom Mannings, and from programming mentor, the brilliant Imogen Clarke, delighted to be

Les Mis at Mountview

Rob Halliday



back in a theatre after a lockdown working for NHS-111.

And then you start focusing, lighting, tech. Or, at least, you do a few days late once the scaffolders re-appear from another job to finish the set. The usual clash of building trade deadlines versus theatre deadlines! By that point, just from the rehearsal room runs, it was clear this was going to be a pretty remarkable show. But it was also a reminder that however many conversations you try to have, there can still be surprises in every direction once you move into the theatre – particularly when the set is three levels but the rehearsal room had only one. Oh, they'll be up there for that?! The spot ops, Freddy Sherwood and Michael Mulcahy, ensured the key people were always just magically lit wherever they were. Having two directors does also present an interesting challenge,

particularly when it sometimes feels like one tells you one thing, then a few moments later the other one tells you the opposite...

Plus *Les Mis* is a big, long, complicated show. It never stops. Those of us who knew the show of old tried to warn those who were new to it, but you never really quite get it until you've been through it. We ran out of time during tech, but you always do, don't you? Kudos to stage manager Natasha Guzel for driving us ever onwards, and in particular to DSM Anna Matthiesen for dealing calmly and coolly with the ridiculous number of cues I'd decided the show now needed, however much I reminded myself that the original only had 230 or so. Thanks also to Stephen Jameson, in the home stretch of his time as Mountview's principal, but still with the skill he's had for as long as I've

known him, of appearing with just the right word of encouragement at just the right time. We just kept on lighting until the audience showed up. And then, since the principal roles were double cast, there was then another dress rehearsal, so we kept on lighting a bit more...

It's hard to judge your own lighting when you're in the thick of it. But I went back to watch the last night – the sadness of drama school shows is doing all this work, then having it end just a week later – and, if I do say so myself, it passed the test I use to judge whether lighting is working in the context of a show: it made me jump when it should, it made me gasp, it made me smile, it made me cry, sometimes with sadness, sometimes with joy. It transformed the scaffolding into many different places, the cast into many different people. It supported the remarkable

performers on their journey through the show. And it did all that without looking like the original (I will confess that it does share with the original some use of Rosco 68... I think of it as homage rather than copying, and it's just such a good colour!), though our modern setting – police lights and helicopter search lights and light bulbs and laser sights and hi-viz jackets (quite a thing to light!) – helped with that. Any production of *Les Mis* in which the opening image is a prisoner brutally, needlessly shot in the head is not your traditional *Les Mis*. But, as when you reinvent Shakespeare, the result is that the show shifts in front of you, familiar words taking on new meaning, new relevance, new urgency. That's perhaps the mark of a truly great show: that it can take that, and grow from it.

It was thrilling to be part of. 🍷



Office Oracle

News and information from **Amanda** and the ALPD office

2022/23 subscription fees

The Executive Committee has once again decided that, due to the continued Covid crisis, membership fees will be held at the 2020 level for one more year.

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 organisation	£60

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 2022. The cost – which is 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 ALPD, please contact the ALPD 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 you can find full details and how to sign up on the members' side of the website: www.thealpd.org.uk/members-benefits.

Did you graduate from your course recently?

When you join the ALPD 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 the 2021, 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 ALPD, 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 2022.

The sooner you do this the sooner we can ensure you are sent a reminder for the correct level of subscription for 2022/23, or if you have chosen to stop your membership, do not send you a reminder.

The ALPD website

We encourage you to log in to the website from time to time and check your own profile – are your contact details up-to-date? Do you need to add something to your listings? I know, from the emails and calls that I receive in the office, that producers DO look at our online directory when they are looking for lighting people, and I encourage them also to check out our Resources section, which is full of useful guidance for both employers and freelancers. If you have any problems logging on to

the website, or any suggestions for improving it, do get in touch and let us know.

Website top tips

Not logged in to the website before? Here's how to start:

When first visiting the site, go to www.thealpd.org.uk and click the "Log in" button at the top right of the home page.

- Enter EITHER your email address OR your username. You can choose your login to be EITHER your email address and password or a user name and password. The default user name format is "Forename [space] Surname", e.g. "Joe Davis".
- Click on "Request New Password".
- You will be sent an email with a link back to the site which will allow you to set your own specific password (these must have a minimum of eight characters).
- DON'T click "Apply to join the ALPD" or "Sign up today" - those links are for non-members to join.

If this does not work please email membership@thealpd.org.uk and we'll send you a temporary (but secure) password or update your email to the correct one.

For future visits, you'll be able to use this new password in combination with email or user name.

Once logged in, you have the benefit of ALPD membership to advertise yourself in the directory amongst the community of performance lighting professionals and publicise your shows, pictures, contact information and professional (or other) profile.

Follow the instructions above to log in and get the advantage of an up-to-date web presence, all as part of your ALPD membership fee.

To be continued in the next issue of Focus... ✚

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Thank you for your support! For Commercial members, see the back cover.

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Diary dates 2022–2023

25 February	Annual lighting lunch (rescheduled)
10–11 May 2022	PLASA Focus Leeds*
4–6 September 2022	PLASA show, London*
20–23 May 2023	Showlight, Fontainebleau, France

Keep up to date with ALPD events via the online diary:
www.thealpd.org.uk/diary.

Keep up to date with members' meetings information at
www.thealpd.org.uk/meetings.

* The ALPD will have a presence at these events.

Contact us

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To submit ideas for articles, correspondence, corrections and any comments
about Focus, email editor@thealpd.org.uk. We do not accept press
releases for publication in Focus. Company members may send press
releases to the ALPD office (office@thealpd.org.uk) to be posted on the
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 ALPD.

E&OE. Content deadline for the next issue: 10 February 2022

New members

Welcome!

Professional members

Owen D. A. Leishman, Como, New South Wales

Michael Poynor, Limavady

Associate members

Anna Matthews, London

Sponsored Student members

James JD Burden, Kent

Cory A Gibson, Sidcup

Gulika Nagpal, Northolt

Isaac Tapping, West Sussex

Alfie Turner, Sidcup

Fellows

Les Bone

Paule Constable

Howard Eaton

Kathy Perkins

Bryan Raven

Anne Valentino

Laurie Clayton

Coral Cooper

Durham Marengi

Paul Pyant

Ian Saunders

Honorary members

Jon Cadbury

Sarah Rushton-Read

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.
- Any other ideas? Email the editor and we can chat!

Send all contributions to editor@thealpd.org.uk before 10 February for the February/March issue. 📧

Professional members' shows

opening in December and January

December

1 Rick Fisher *Red Riding Hood* Theatre Royal, Stratford East, London / **1** James C McFetridge *Cinderella* Belfast Waterfront Hall Studio / **1** Joe Underwood *Dick Whittington* Market Dreyton / **1** Jack Wills (production electrician) *Jack and The Beanstalk* Campus West Welwyn Garden City / **2** Matt Whale *King Lear* The Mack / **2** Charley Luke *Hardwick Big Birthday Bash* The Clapham Grand / **2** Jason Addison *Wish* Cast, Doncaster / **3** James C McFetridge *Cinderella* Belfast Waterfront Hall Studio / **3** Andy Webb *Cinderella* Aylesbury Waterside Theatre / **3** Zoe Spurr *Beauty and The Beast* Nottingham Playhouse / **4** Alex Forey *Julius Caesar* Jerwood Vanbrugh Theatre (RADA) / **6** Charlie Morgan Jones *Hello, Jerry!* Royal Academy of Music / **7** Jacob Gowler *Cinderella* Sutton Coldfield Town Hall / **8** Sandy McAlister (lighting programmer) *The Untold Truth Of Captain Hook* The Mac, Belfast / **9** John Rainsforth *Cinderella* Rickmansworth Watersmeet / **9** Jane Lalljee *The Wind in the Willows* The Brewhouse, Taunton / **10** Matt Whale *Beauty and the Beast* Falkirk Town Hall / **10** Joe Price *Five Children And It* The Egg, Theatre Royal Bath / **10** Gareth Hughes (lighting programmer) *Sleeping Beauty* Crewe Lyceum Theatre / **11** Matt Ladkin *Sleeping Beauty* DeMontfort Hall Leicester / **12** Michael Grundner *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* Musiktheater Linz / **13** Chris Mould *Music Concert 2021* ALWF Theatre, Arts Ed / **14** Claire Childs *Under the Frozen Moon* The Marlowe Theatre Studio, Southern Maltings / **15** Jason Addison *Cinderella* New Theatre Royal Portsmouth / **15** Sascha Logan *Stevenson Brit Is Born: A Tribute to Knebworth 1990* Obie Theatre At The Brit School / **15** Gianni Bertoli (assistant lighting designer) *Alice! In Wonderland* Magic Mirror Theatre – Fabbrica del Vapore / **17** Matt Ladkin *Sleeping Beauty* The Core, Corby / **21** Jacob Gowler *Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* The Great Hall at The Leys

January

4 Claire Childs *The Straw Chair* Finborough Theatre / **5** Palle Palme *Grease the Musical* Swedish Tour / **12** James C McFetridge *Ever After* Craic Theatre, Coalisland / **14** Malcolm Rippeth *Syllable* Laban Theatre / **28** James C McFetridge *Jukebox Cabaret* Bardic Theatre

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

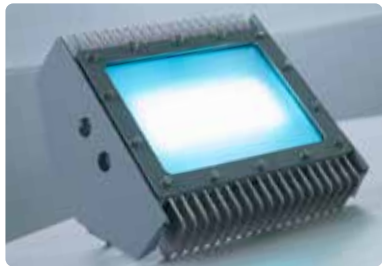
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CASE STUDY:

The Alnwick Garden

'Energy efficient feature lighting installed in historic UK Visitor attraction'

MARL International supplied and controlled the lighting installation, this included over 90 individual light fittings, the hardware cabinets, mains and DMX cabling, IT communications systems, software control, design of the lighting scheme, installation, programming, commissioning and will also now provide on-going support for the team at The Alnwick Garden.



To create the effects sought, MARL designed and manufactured five new products consisting of special 6m, RGB flexible strips, specifically to maximise performance in this type of large scale outdoor lighting application. MARL added high performance RGB floodlights, customised blue linear strip lights, white up-lighters and step lights. The custom lighting hardware was designed, manufactured and assembled by MARL at its manufacturing facility in Ulverston.

Mental health and wellbeing

Mig Burgess with the latest research into the industry

In summer 2021 the backstage wellbeing survey was launched in response to the pandemic and was a follow-up to the UK's first technical backstage mental health evaluation which was conducted in 2019. These two studies combined put us at the forefront of knowledge and research into well-being and mental health in our working sector, and sees the UK with world-leading data in this area.

The 2021 wellbeing survey had some more refined questions so we can obtain more detailed statistics on prevalence in our backstage community. It also focused on the effects of the pandemic, looking at how we fared as a working community during lockdowns, but also how we coped with the devastating effects it had on our industry as a whole.

I thought I would take the time to refine the survey data results and report back more specifically on the data obtained for the lighting community.

237 people who identify with working in the lighting profession took the survey, and this was the highest working category in the survey at 20% of the overall survey sample (survey overall sample size=1,234).

79 or 34% of those lighting professionals identified with having a mental health condition. (*The lighting prevalence average is slightly lower than the overall survey sample prevalence average of 39%.*) 166 of these people identified as working either full time or part time as a freelancer. 70% of the lighting professionals work freelance in line with the overall survey statistics.

Of the 79 lighting professionals that identified with having a mental health condition 50, or 63%, of them also identify with working full time or part time as a freelancer, which shows a direct correlation between mental health illness and contract type.

In our survey, of all the people that identified with having depression, 69% were freelance, and of those that identified with having anxiety 65% were freelance. This is clear evidence of a correlation between poor mental health and working conditions. I feel a two-pronged attack is needed to improve things for freelancers, and education is the key. First, we need to educate the industry and advocate for change, acknowledge the high rate of freelancers in our sector, take ownership of them and work to make changes to improve working conditions for them to promote better wellbeing (watch this space for an ABTT freelancers guidance note). Second, we need to spend more time educating people entering the freelance profession and prepare them for the conditions they find themselves working in. More education is needed on planning

workloads, financial planning and reminding young people to prioritise their own wellbeing is needed. If working conditions aren't going to change much (as we can see from the reopening of industry after the pandemic) then we need to educate so that the next generation won't tolerate it and will change.

145 lighting professionals or 61% of the lighting sample size found no work during the pandemic period. (This is slightly higher than the overall survey sample size average of 59%)

43 people or 18% of people in the lighting sample are thinking of leaving the industry. That's nearly one in three people who are considering leaving our profession, and we all know at least one person who has made the change and left our backstage community. It's time as an industry we work to retain our skilled workforce making it a safe and attractive place to work. I feel it's only through making changes in this area will we ever be able to tackle the workforce shortages we are currently facing.

71 lighting professionals, or 30% of the lighting sample size, identify

with being a manager or supervisor of people, and 56 of them (78%) said they were confident with talking to staff about mental health. However, 137 of the lighting sample size (57%) said they weren't confident to talk to anyone at work about their mental health. My challenge to you if you are a manager is: Can you put your hand on your heart and be confident that your staff can come and talk to you about their mental health? Do you have time to listen? Would you listen? What would you say if they were brave enough to open up? You can be a part of this cultural change backstage, making our working environment a more open and inclusive place to work. We need to look to change this very clear statistic.

76 or 32% of lighting professionals felt that bullying and harassment has been a cause of poor mental health for them. This is a worrying statistic and a really simple area to resolve. Creating a culture of change where people are free to talk and be heard on matters of grievances and harassment is easily implemented at a relatively low cost. Working to

train managers to listen to staff will also benefit wellbeing as everyone can feel safe and confident that they will be heard and listened to when talking about something as personal as mental health. We need to create a safe working environment where we aren't scared of judgement and stigma and can be honest about bullying and our own wellbeing.

I will end on this statistic: 57% of the lighting sample size (137 people) don't think there will be adequate mental health support for when they return to work. Not the most positive of stats to end with but I really hear these people and understand the complacency. We have world-leading amounts of data on wellbeing and mental health in our backstage workforce, yet many of us are witnessing very little change in response to this clear and significant data. That being said, the reason I worked on these studies is that people can't shy away from hard data and facts, and we have this now in abundance, so this data is my gift to you. Use it to demand a change in your workplace, so we can all work towards a more open, kinder, more inclusive backstage environment. 🌸

Schicchi in Toronto

Charlie Morgan Jones gets to Canada

Almost all of the first conversations about work that I have with Amy Lane begin “This is absolutely top secret...but...”.

In March 2021, Canadian Opera Company was on the lookout for a new leader and Perryn Leech – at the time, general director of Houston Grand Opera – was the man for the job.

Amy’s known Perryn for some years – they worked together on *Don Giovanni* at HGO – and in his first week at the COC, he made a very loose, informal offer to Amy to direct *Gianni Schicchi* for their new online platform. Unlike a lot of opera companies, the COC had remained completely dark since the outbreak of COVID and Perryn wanted to – nay, needed to – change that.

“Top secret, but would you be interested...?” WOULD I? Amy = tick. Canada = tick. Puccini = tick tick tick. Yes. I’d definitely be in.

But this “offer” has some extra special, very personal, meaning for me.

Perryn Leech, of Houston Grand and Canadian Opera fame, used to be the technical director of the Welsh National Opera. And my wonderful mum, in the smallest of worlds, used to teach his daughter.

When I was 14, Perryn kick-started my journey into the world of opera. He gave me the right ins and introduced me to the right people. I did work experience at Welsh National Youth Opera, and Dorset Opera – all because of him.

And now, eighteen short years later, he’s offering me a job in Canada. It’s pretty unbelievable.

Over the next few months, contracts come in, production meetings happen over Zoom, the spectacular Antony McDonald is bought on to design set and cossies and Alexander Gunnarsson is designing vid. Delicious. All moving forward!

I’ve never lit on film before – but I know it’s pretty different. The colours and intensities we know “in the real world” mean nothing through a camera lens, so I mentally prepare for that.

And then suddenly, it’s time to fly. After the (now) traditional swab and early morning gagging, I’m cleared to travel.

Canada has only just opened up and their rules are incredibly strict – at check-in BA has to load a whole different system onto their computers just for the Toronto flight – it takes its sweet, sweet time, and I can already feel my precious moments with the bacon and hash brown rolls slipping away. Alas.

I count my hours at Terminal 5 in glasses of “lounge champagne”, and this whole hoo-ha has taken at least two.

It takes just as long the other end – at Pearson we’re thrown into queues

Gianni Schicchi
Canadian Opera Company
Director: Amy Lane
Set and costume designer: Antony McDonald
Lighting designer: Charlie Morgan Jones
Video designer: Alexander Gunnarsson
Film director: Taylor Long
Photographer: Taylor Long

snaking endlessly around the airport, in a seemingly impossible join the dots drawing. I'm interviewed by a border guard about why I want to come into the country, and thankfully he takes a liking to my watch... so we mostly talk about that.

I'm let in, go straight to my apartment, and get ready for dins. We are up and running in Toronto!

The team has all arrived before me, so rehearsals are well underway. I've got four days of solid time in the rehearsal room before it's time to focus – and the piece is good. Charming, hilarious, handso... sorry, that's my dating profile – but Amy has wrung every ounce of comedy out of this glorious piece. It makes me roar with laughter, and it's incredibly touching too.



In the theatre, there's an amazing IATSE crew who are ready to focus the lights. I've been gifted a superb assistant, Mikael Kangas, and a great in-house programmer, Josh McGill, and looking after the whole thing is COC's head of lighting, Daniele Guevara.

We focus quickly and, as I've seen a rough sketch of the whole opera, start plotting the next day.

I have a two-monitor set-up. (But none of the EOS, which the

Canadians find baffling!) One monitor shows the wide stage shot and the other shows all of the ten camera angles together – like a Schicchi Zoom screen.

Team Video white balances to our “working state”, and we are a-GO!

Holy cabooses. Lighting on film really is different, isn't it?

10% to my eyes is 700% on vid. Oranges look green, blues look black, greens look yellow ... let's have a coffee break.

Schicchi in Toronto

Charlie Morgan Jones



After the best coffee ever (from Hot Black Coffee – it does exactly what it says) – I regroup and start again. The trick is – and this may seem obvious – don't look at the

stage. Even though it's there in front of you – a gaping, 20-metre expanse of set and light – do not, under any circumstances, look at it. I feel like Orpheus.

Gianni Schicchi
Canadian Opera Company
Director: Amy Lane
Set and costume designer: Antony McDonald
Lighting designer: Charlie Morgan Jones
Video designer: Alexander Gunnarsson
Film director: Taylor Long
Photographer: Taylor Long

The first couple of days we're ahead of schedule, so we're sans light walkers. The ever-helpful stage management and production management step in if there's anything I desperately need people for, but otherwise it's pretty smooth.

Then. Monday morning. I walk into the auditorium to see them white balancing again. After we've plotted the entire opera.

The ever-calm CMJ – if you know, you know – freaks out. All the colours I've remade for camera are going to look wonky! If my life were a film, this would be the shot where I looked

to the heavens, arms spread out, shouting “Whyyyyy?” as the camera slowly pulls away into the sky.

Who’d play me in a film, I wonder? (If you answer Jonah Hill you owe me a pint... of wine.)

Anyway. It turns out, the vid department knows exactly what they’re doing (and I’m an eejit) ... they were just looking at some bits. Everybody stay calm. Nobody move.

The music has been prerecorded, so we’re able to rehearse with the full sound – it’s amazing for the cast, but also for me. It makes a huge difference to cue times and feels if you’re hearing something on a honky-tonk piano compared with a 50-strong orchestra.

We sail through stage and orchestra rehearsals. The cast have had the set in the room, so they’re pretty used to it. And we manage a run two days earlier than expected!

Taylor Long (video director) wants to do a camera run on stage with a handheld, and I helpfully show him the lights he has to avoid. He has about 300mm centre stage where there’s no light and no shadow from him in the cross light.

SOMEHOW, genius that he is, he manages to get amazing shots and not a single shadow of him! It’s particularly impressive as he’s six feet tall!

There’s a moment in *O Mio Babbino Caro* – the most famous aria in opera (maybe) – where I’ve lit everything from the stage left prosc, and Taylor also picks up from stage left. So what looks beautiful from end-on to us in the auditorium is flat and boring (lighting-wise!) on the video. Thankfully, as always, we have very open departments, and it’s just a quick chat to tell him what I’m after in this scene and

see if he can do anything to help. He reshoots from the front and it’s easily one of my favourite moments in the film.

Midway through the second to last run, Mikael and I notice that one of the cameras is showing pretty green. It’s annoying that I’ve not picked it up before – I was probably looking at the stage. What a wally.

Taylor adjusts it, but as I understand, short of “fixing it in post”, which is arduous, it means that camera from that run is basically unusable. A shame... but one of those things.

We have our final run, and it’s perfection. Ultimately, Taylor ends up using that run for most of the final edit, splicing (ooh, a film word, get me!) in small bits of the other runs to make a smooth, cohesive filmed version of *Schicchi*.

Schicchi in Toronto

Charlie Morgan Jones

What unbelievable joy making this was. The best people in one of the best rooms I've been in. An absolute pleasure.

Some people go abroad and don't get to see the city they're visiting – well, we aced Toronto. We had dinner up the CN Tower; cycled all across Toronto Island; flew over Niagara Falls in a helicopter; saw a Blue Jays baseball game; ate the best food and drank the best drink.

I'm also thrilled to say, that working with Perryn was one of the most incredible experiences. He's completely professional, unbelievably creative, captivatingly charming, and a total rascal. I'm pleased to now call him a friend, and I know we'll, all of us, have amazing adventures in the future.

We fly home. It's quite sad. We're all a little down. It's partly because

we've had no opening night, really. And partly because we've had so much fun.

I immediately go on holiday with one of my best pals – a necessary tonic.

And then three short weeks later, after Taylor has edited the piece, our Gianni Schicchi premieres online. A pal and I pile over to Amy's and we sit in front of her living room TV, glass of Veuve in hand, watching the most unusual premiere ever.

But it's good. Thank GOD. It's really good. I'm really very proud of what we created.

Canada, its people and its culture will be in my soul forever. 🍁



Save Stage Lighting

A short update from [Rob Halliday](#)

So the UK has been out of the EU for a year now. When we left, EU law was largely copied-and-pasted into UK law (with the occasional nudge from us, in the case of the Ecodesign rules that govern lighting, to make sure the correct version was copied and pasted). But the UK government can now set its own rules for things that used to be governed by EU rules, and it seems that it is starting to think about doing that for the Ecodesign rules.

Unfortunately, in the first (and admittedly very early) proposals about this, it feels a bit like we're spiralling right back to where we were with the EU four years ago. UK government sees the EU Ecodesign rules as ridiculously complex, and as part of its dogmatic "we must get rid of all this EU complexity" approach the first suggestion is that they'd like to get back to a very simplistic "a light source must meet an efficiency of this

many lumens per watt of electricity" approach. Their first pitch is 120 lumens/watt from 2023, increasing to 140 lumens/watt from 2025.

I don't think any decent entertainment lighting fixtures can currently meet these figures (or, indeed, even the 85lm/w figure the EU proposed back in 2018), and it's unlikely any will be able to do so in this timeframe. So the danger is, tools we know and love (even recent, efficient ones) fail to meet the standards and so can no longer be sold. That's the bad news. That and the potential complication, from a manufacturer's point of view, of a different set of rules applying in the UK versus Europe.

The good news: we're there right at the start of the conversation this time. We've been talking to the people at the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) about this for a year

now, long before they first even outlined their thinking, participating in their workshops and talking to them directly. We've pointed out that the EU started off with a simple proposal but it got complex for a reason. We've made the point that there needs to be a consideration for light quality as well as light efficiency, not just in entertainment lighting but in lighting everywhere in life – I've started describing this as a "quality of life" issue, not just a "quality of light" one. Since the current BEIS team was not involved with Ecodesign last time, and doesn't necessarily know anything about lighting, we're trying very hard to be supportive, helpful educators: an invitation already offered and accepted to bring them in to a theatre and show them just what we're talking about.

That'll be in mid-February. More news after that. 🚩

Resetting Better

Tom Lightbody trials new ways of working

Led by the Production Managers Forum (the PMF), the Reset Better Charter was born in the dark days of 2020/21, taking the opportunity to step back and look critically at the production process in order to make suggestions as to how it could be improved as and when the industry got moving.

In their own words: "The pandemic of 2020/21 gives us an opportunity to assess how we might return to a 'better industry'. The exact nature of what a better industry might look like is, of course, incredibly subjective."

The Charter itself is a call to arms and offers a simple set of principles for organisations to commit to. There are also a number of "toolboxes" for different scales of production to help people on the path to resetting better. It starts, most importantly, by putting people at the centre of the process.

In November I was involved in my first "Reset Better" production:

Beauty & the Beast, at the New Vic theatre in Staffordshire. Working as assistant LD to Daniella Beattie, who is also the head of lighting there, I was part of the team that brought together their most ambitious production of the year. The experience was a positive one overall – and certainly better than a crunched tech week of back-to-back long days – but there are a few ways in which I felt it could be improved for next time.

I don't think a single production is really enough to judge the process fairly, so doing it once and then going back to the old ways entirely defeats the object here. It's only through trial and improvement that

we will get closer to a process that works for us all. As individuals we have a part to play in that, by feeding back to the companies and organisations who employ and engage us, and by sharing our experiences with each other.

With the above in mind it's important to note that this

experiment with the Reset Better principles was a first for the New Vic as well as for me. There are also a number of factors that are unique to them, just as there are in every producing house, so while I try to look objectively at the experience there are doubtless aspects that may not be relevant elsewhere.

For example, I was one of only a very small number of freelancers on



Beauty and the Beast
New Vic Theatre
Director: Theresa Heskins
Designer: Laura Willstead
Costume designer: Lis Evans
Lighting designer: Daniella Beattie
Assistant lighting designer: Tom Lightbody
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the production – I'd say 90–95% in fact were salaried staff – so it's safe to say therefore that what may have been better for the majority was not necessarily better for me. This is only right and fair, and it's inevitable that this will be the case on any production, but where there is more of a parity between salaried and freelance staff I would hope more consideration would be given to what's better for people in each situation.

One of the most striking hallmarks of a Reset Better schedule is the shorter working days through fit-up and tech. For *Beauty & the Beast* this typically meant no-one working more than two sessions in a day, allowing time to carry on a more normal life outside of work. For the full-time staff it meant more time to relax at home or with friends, less reliance on partners to walk dogs, look after kids, shop, cook, etc. It also meant fewer late-night buses or bike rides home, more home-cooked meals, time to exercise, and overall a better work/life balance. I certainly found my work was better and more focused for a proper break every day, and it's nice to be able to concentrate on work without feeling as though the rest of your life is spiralling slowly out of control, or like you're leaning too heavily on a long-suffering partner.

Despite the shorter days we were still working six-day weeks and that meant I wasn't able to get home for a weekend with my wife and kids, meaning I was away from



Resetting Better

Tom Lightbody

them for a full fortnight. These long stints away are part of the reason I don't tour full time, and I would certainly think twice before committing to something similar again.

Looking in a bit more detail, something else that came out of the two-session days was that with fewer meal breaks there were fewer opportunities for teams to stagger those breaks. While there were the same number of sessions overall, losing those extra opportunities did have an impact on the efficiency of our team. It's a tricky balance to strike, but perhaps the production electrician could have worked afternoons and evenings, with the LD and programmer working mornings and afternoons. I know the stage team found a huge benefit in being able to work uninterrupted every evening (they had mornings off), rather than trying to shoehorn their

work into meal breaks, so this is a great example of how something that works for one department possibly isn't ideal for another.

I know it took a lot of planning and several drafts to get the schedule right, and while for the most part it seemed to work well there were a few unintended consequences to stretching out the tech period. For us in the lighting team this was most noticeable when we realised the focus was scheduled to take place before the final rehearsal run through, and before half of the set was in. We managed, of course, but it did mean revisiting certain things, which chewed up precious time later in the process. Such tweaks are easy at the New Vic where pretty much everything is accessible from the grid, but that sort of impact would invariably be larger elsewhere.

It also became apparent towards the end of the tech process that it wasn't necessarily just the length of

days, and associated burnout, that had been causing such a crunch in the past, but that the sheer volume of time available wasn't enough to ensure that everyone was producing their very best work. It felt as though another three or four carefully planned sessions would have really allowed the process to breathe a bit more. From a lighting perspective, for example, we had done three performances (four if you include the dress) without any scheduled time to do notes.

One could argue that's nothing unusual, but it felt like a missed opportunity in the context of "Resetting Better" to allow everyone more of what they needed to do their best work: time. This feels particularly poignant in the context of a theatre trying to ensure that no-one on the team goes into overtime hours. Squeezing everything into a rigid framework like that is all well



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One thing that it wasn't really possible to assess, but I feel is important to acknowledge, is the issue of fees. My position was self-funded thanks to an MGCfutures bursary, and with basically everyone else in a salaried position there was never any need for a conversation about how freelancers should be recompensed for the extra time they would

and good, but the stress of trying to perform under that pressure isn't necessarily any better than the stress of working longer hours – and the results aren't necessarily any better either.

be spending dedicated to the project. For what it's worth I did manage to fit in some extra work (plan drawing for another LD, and some prep for my next design) in my down time, but filling down time with extra work

does rather go against the principles of Resetting Better so for this sort of scheduling to be sustainable I do think fees need to be a part of the conversation.

In short, I think that the Reset Better initiative is a bold and important one, and I'd love to see more producers and theatres start to adopt it. In the vast majority of cases "better" isn't going to mean perfect, but it would be hard to get much worse than the model we predominantly work to at the moment.

By putting people first, and acting with care, respect, empathy, understanding and kindness, there is certainly hope here in what at times can feel like a harsh industry. For us to survive, and indeed thrive, we need more places like the New Vic to be taking a stand against the status quo.

For more info on the Reset Better Charter, visit resetbetter.wordpress.com. 🍷

Ken Miller

Matt Cox of Malvern Theatres pays tribute

Ken Miller, one of the true heroes of stage lighting, has passed away, aged 84.

The first of a breed, Ken set new standards, establishing the role of production electrician in theatre, working for many years with Michael Northen. Ken's career spanned several decades and he toured frequently into every major (and minor) house in the UK.

He started working with his father in a factory at the age of fifteen but after two weeks he walked out and, passing the Dudley Hippodrome which was loading in, he asked for work – and that's how it all started. His career was varied: from touring opera around the world to end of the pier shows, where he might be found operating lights dressed as a policeman, ready to rush down to the stage to make the bust and get the show's last laugh.

He toured with Marlene Dietrich in the early 1960s and would delight

everyone with his impersonations – in particular, a story of her performing *Where Have All The Flowers Gone*, followed by an unwelcome drop of rotten rose petals that had not been replaced for a week! Ken worked with many great lighting designers, directors and stars, although, to quote Ken, "The only stars are the ones in heaven."

More recently in the 1990s and early 2000s Ken toured with Triumph Proscenium Productions where his skill, charm and wit were introduced to a whole host of new, budding theatre staff. On the first occasion he came into Malvern, the crew were stood waiting and on their best behaviour only for him to come in looking them up and down, with his usual cigar in hand and said, "I've been sent as a warning to the rest of you: get out while you can!" But in reality Ken was a shining example who encouraged and inspired so many people he came



into contact with.

In our current world of high tech, where lighting desks link to cameras and computer software, it is almost inconceivable that a 5cm² flip notepad, stored in Ken's shirt pocket, could contain the entire focus plot for a complex number 1 touring lighting rig. A pad, an adjustable spanner and a cigar – nothing else required.

Ken leaves behind his daughter Rosie and son Edward, of whom he was incredibly proud, along with his adored newly born granddaughter, Poppy, to whom he sang *Thank Heaven for Little Girls* only a month or so before his death.

He was one of the great characters of British theatre. Ken – The Silver Chief – thanks for everything. Rest well.

As a footnote, Ken didn't wish to have a funeral, but if you'd like to share some of your memories of Ken with his family, you can email memoriesofken@gmail.com. 🍀

Michael Hall

1934–2021

Michael Hall was born in 1934 and, after working on airborne radar during National Service, entered the lighting business in 1954 as a management trainee involved with cold cathode colour and photometric physics. He became a senior lighting engineer at Osram GEC, and in 1975, while researching studio lamp design in Hollywood, Michael met Stan Miller, who ran Rosco, then a colour filter supplier to the film industry.

This meeting was pivotal in Michael's career. In 1976 Michael and Stan opened Rosco in London. With a minimal staff it grew swiftly from just a gel company into a major supplier of dance floors, gobos and scenic paints. The range of colour filers became extensive and helped a revolution in lighting design. Rosco was an exhibitor at the first ABTT trade show in 1976 and remained constant supporters for almost 40 years.

When the company moved from the South Bank to Sydenham, he built a paint frame for hire in their new warehouse, filling a gap in the market and ensuring that scenic artists always had a ready supply of paint!

Michael was a Kentish man and retained a keen interest in bird watching throughout his life, along with keeping pet dogs. On his retirement he and his wife converted a 500-year-old barn into a home. Here, Michael had an extensive library and his collection of Magic Lanterns and slides. The lure of lighting and colour kept Michael involved as a consultant to Rosco. He was a keen supporter of the ABTT and he became an active member of its Historical Research Committee. He wrote and published a number of personal memoirs on colour, painting and lighting, as well as producing articles for *Sightline*.

Michael also had three books published by Entertainment Technology Press: *Light and Colour Filters* (with Eddie Ruffell), *Gobos and Image Projection* (with Julie Harper) and *Miscellany of Lighting and Stagecraft* (again, with Julie Harper). At the time of his death, he had other writing projects in progress.
















Michael never wavered in his love and support for the technical theatre industry. He died aged 87 on 25 September 2021.

He will be sorely missed by friends and colleagues alike. 🌹



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