

Scale drawing of standing rig at the Royal Academy of Music, as set for "Midsummer Nights Dream"

is simply not enough cash to recolour for each show. Fortunately the new high temperature colours will last a long time and RAM recolours its cyc about once a year at a cost last time of just under £100.00 The emergence of colours combined with frosts could cut this down since I never light cycs without frost everywhere. Generally my taste is for a combination of a good deep Mediterranean blue with other washes of deep (but not vibrant) pink, and again some Brechtian feeling too from greens, chocolates and browns. I have never had enough equipment to light a cyc properly and so there is a tendency for the wash to fade away at the edges; this is acceptable to most designers anxious for a chiaroscuro effect. Another part of any standing cyc rig for me is a number of fresnels – frosted, to give the centre no-mans-land a bit of extra punch. This allows top and bottom washes to be checked a little and the whole made more interesting.

Of course there are specials and all standing rigs need a pool of various items either loose – to be rigged as required – or already rigged in likely positions. I am lucky in that both RADA and RAM's FOH are all accessible without ladder so specials and those left as spares can easily be focussed, often during technical rehearsals when lighting is the last thing on a director's mind. Again this saves time.

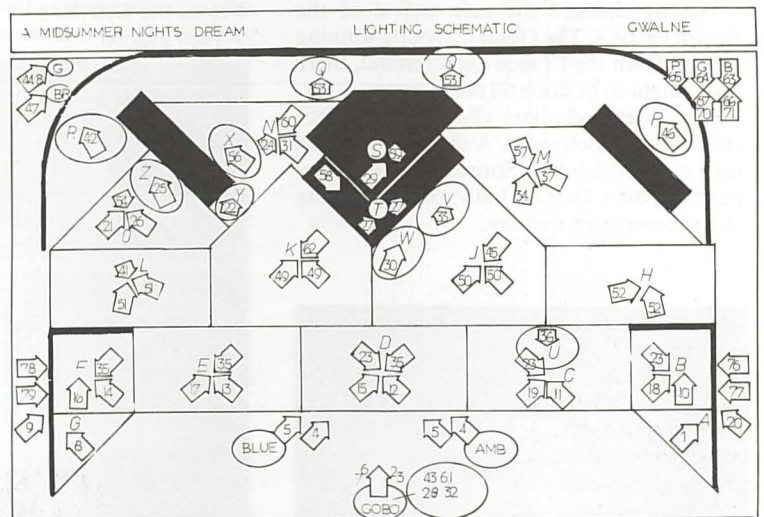
Planning from a standing rig, at least for me, involves a slightly different technique. I always draw a scale plan as normal – this ensures that I use the rig, not the rig me! The standing rig should be an aid not a strait-jacket. Next I do an area plan with angles and numbers marked in. I find this easier to light from since so many productions now need tight areas constantly changing and

there is just not enough time (or the fee) to work this out in minute detail from watching rehearsals. If the stage is broken down into areas – each served by two good front lights and a back light – and all this clearly marked, then you know that you can hit anyone anywhere, no matter how much the set or the action may move about. This technique I find most useful in opera where one is often engaged so late that directors have little time for discussion and personal schedules can't be changed to accommodate more than one run-through. I have been told so many times 'Don't worry, there are no cues, it's very simple' – 90 cues later we are still at it. Only a good grid/area rig, very familiar to the designer can get one out of trouble at times like this – and against the clock too.

Let us demystify our profession and not be

guilty of Tyrone Guthrie's accusation that we hide our incompetence behind jargon. At the Palladium so many times did we labour into the night to replace our rig with one that was newer but capable of little that was innovative. Is it really necessary to spend the night hours moving a luminaire, or a hundred luminaires, just two or three feet? Is it really necessary to replace that very soft focussed profile by that fresnel? Is it also necessary to spend more night hours arguing over half a point when you know it will go higher tomorrow when the cast come in?

No it is not – and if we want to save our jobs, our audiences and our theatres, we will have to learn to do it – on time, on budget. I know that a standing rig has helped me do that – and without compromising the result. What do you think?



Schematic based on rig plan showing areas, direction of light and dimmer number involved. It is often easier to light from a drawing like this than the rigging plan.