

A Magic Touch

BY DAVID I. TAYLOR

A bank of cyclorama floodlights and groundrows blast through a wall of Egyptian hieroglyphics, one of the more dramatic moments in Nick Chelton's lighting for *The Magic Flute* at the English National Opera. It is this daring that enables Chelton to push against English stage conservatism and build a lighting style that brings him to the notice of Britain's most innovative stage and opera directors.

In the fall 89 production of *The Magic Flute*, Bob Crowley's vast set sparkled under Chelton's direct and reflected light, with 2kw CCT silhouettes in a high, side front-of-house position reflected from a mirrorlex-type floor. Made of plastic with laser-etched cut-outs, the wall of hieroglyphics had a golden glow, achieved by the use of six Iris 1's with Rosco supergel 19 and 79 plus open whites, with a Svoboda light curtain, whose narrow beams provided a strong shaft of light that gave a bright edge to the cut-outs, giving the wall its metallic look.

Chelton is also not afraid to extend his designs outside of the realms of conventional theatre equipment. His vast design for the ENO's *Parsifal* included two massive low-pressure sodium streetlamps held securely behind the proscenium on each side. The orange lamps were powered up and covered with giant "socks" until the required cue. At the crucial moment of the opera, the light sources were revealed, flooding the stage with an intense, monochromatic light that washed out everything it illuminated. The whole scene was instantly changed in a way that was disturbing

■ Nick Chelton designed the lighting for *The Magic Flute* (left), for the English National Opera at the Coliseum in London. The Coliseum's large lighting rig is a far cry from Chelton's operatic beginnings with Kent Opera, but his skills were as present then as now.

● *Nick Chelton a créé les éclairages pour The Magic Flute (à gauche) pour le English National Opera à Londres. Sa rampe d'éclairages est beaucoup plus importante que celle de ses débuts avec le Kent Opera, où son talent était déjà apparent.*

▼ Nick Chelton war der lighting designer für *The Magic Flute* (links) der English National Opera im Coliseum in London. Die Beleuchtungsmöglichkeiten konnten nicht weiter von denen entfernt sein, die Chelton in seinen Anfängen in der Kent Opera zur Verfügung standen, doch sein Können war damals so sichtbar wie heute.

■ LIGHTING ● ECLAIRAGE ▼ BELEUCHTUNG
**NICK CHELTON HAS DESIGNS
ON THE ENGLISH STAGE**