

# Competing with a Legend

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**“Die Frist ist um;  
The Time is up; (the Dutchman utters his/  
first words)  
Once more seven years have passed.  
Full, weary, the ocean casts me up on land.  
Ha! Proud ocean!  
Shortly you shall bear me again.”**

— Almost the feeling as one hesitatingly steps from the Inter City arriving in Leeds at 9.15 a.m. on a bleak October morning. The first day of Fit up for E.N.O.N.'s first anniversary.

**“Your challenge varies,  
but my torment is eternal.  
The grace I seek on land  
I ne'er shall find.  
To you, tides of the ocean,  
I shall be true,  
until your last drop be dry.”**

Basil Coleman producer, David Lloyd Jones conductor, Charles Bristow lighting design and myself for the next ten days have the task of transforming a few bits of polystyrene, several lumps of steel and 10 square yards of Jap Silk into the legend of Wagner's 'Flying Dutchman'.

Peter Kemp and his engineers have been kept busy over the last month constructing the hydraulic system + hull which will enable our Dutchman's ship to rise up from Charlie's swirling mists.

**“Scornfully I challenge the pirate,  
in savage combat I hoped for death.  
“Here,” I cried “Show your mettle.  
With treasure my ship is overflowing!”  
Alas! the sea's ferocious son  
crossed himself in fear — and fled!”**

Hoping these are not the feelings of the stage crew as they leave exhausted after a get in lasting all day, we break for the night.

**“How oft into the ocean's deepest depths  
have I yearning hurled myself!  
In the fearful graveyard of ships  
I drove my vessel on the rocks.  
Nowhere a grave! Never Death!”**

Living up to a legend as great as the Dutchman is no easy task. Being the kind of opera which is open to many interpretations we had bravely decided to attempt to reproduce Wagner's original vision. Having noticed that Charlie's ELEX crew had hung more than a dozen projectors, I felt we were in with a chance.

It was planned to project four separate images of the ship for the arrival of the ghost vessel, with each slide having a slightly larger image. The battery of projectors were mounted on a mobile tower situated behind the O.P. Rocks and simply blasted their pictures on to the backcloth. A

fifth projector, with moving mist, was focused over these images, thus concealing the slide changes and enabling our ship image to look as if it was advancing down the wind, straight towards the audience.

Cued precisely to coincide with the last projected image the constructed hull (which lay hidden behind the rocks U.S.L.) started to roll down it's track, rising slowly into perspective as it advanced.

The mast tops disappeared high up into the darkness as the ghost sails unfurled from the flies. The bow sprit when fully extended came to rest approximately 6" from the front gauze. — A hell of a lot of

cues going on at once with a large team of people working in close unison in very little light. It took the E.N.O.N. crew amazingly little time to achieve this sequence perfectly!

The visual image had now achieved a life of its own. Even although I'd spent a lot of time on the model designing the arrival of the ship — the many days in the photographic studio and endless meetings with the engineers, carpenters, scenic artists and costume makers were all now a thing of the past. With David Lloyd Jones spiriting such wonderful sounds from his orchestra and confident that our crew were at the helm one was able to sit back and be totally captivated by the magic.



The Norwegian crew shelter from the storm in the Fjord.



The Ghost Vessel arrives.