



*Practical session with Kodak Computer Aided Display Maker.*

Apart from the practical demonstrations held in the university theatre, evening talks took place in a lecture room. This combination of lectures, practical sessions and discussion groups worked very well indeed, although it did add up to rather a long day, often starting at 10.00 am and ending around 9.00 pm.

During the first evening session Alan Stevenson of the Arts and Entertainment Technical Training Initiative led a very lively discussion about retraining programmes for theatre technicians. And the possible grading and assessment of technicians proved quite a controversial point with almost all of the course participants. On another evening, Ian Connor of Thorn EMI gave a very interesting talk on theatre lamps, but like Strand, concentrated on their historical development. John Watt, safety officer for the RSC, discussed health and safety practices for the theatre and technicians' awareness of the dangers of working on stage.

*The industry desperately needs more training and re-training courses . . . especially with computer-based equipment getting more advanced.*

Although the evening sessions raised some very valid discussion points, it felt as though Stagehands had used them as a stop-gap in the schedule. The time could have been put to better use. It is all very well being told that technicians need retraining; it is all very well understanding why a lamp blows after 300 hours; and it is all very well being told one must use outriggers on a tallescope; but

why on a course of this nature? Surely these subjects belong on a basic training course rather than on one dealing with the latest advances in theatre technology.

The highlight of the week must have been the trip to Lighting and Sound Design of Birmingham. Managing Director Simon Ousten escorted the group through their huge warehouse, which housed various manufacturing units making Parcans, Trussing, colour scrollers, and almost anything used in rock and roll lighting. Later we were transported to the National Exhibition centre to be shown around the stage set for the rock singer Prince. The biggest indoor lighting rig ever, they told us. Participants were then able to spend a whole hour talking with Prince's lighting designer, Roy Bentley, about the difference between theatre and rock lighting.

On the final morning, Patricia Webb, Director of Stagehands held a post-mortem to discuss participants' feelings about the course. The general feeling was that the course was on the whole worthwhile but that future courses should include sessions on sound design, recording and mixing. (Sound was hardly mentioned during the



*Hands-on session with the Laser controller.*

week.) And that lighting designers might be invited to lecture on design work, choice of equipment, etc.

Furthermore, the feeling was that it might be more appropriate to invite hire companies to bring equipment from a cross section of manufacturers so that side-by-side comparisons might be made rather than inviting the manufacturers themselves. The possibility was also discussed of working towards a technical presentation to put all the separate items of equipment through their paces at the end of the week.

It was obvious from the discussion that all participants gained something from the course, though the less experienced members gained most both from the lecturer

and from working with the more experienced. The technicians likely to gain most from a course of this nature, given the present format, are those who are fairly new to the business. Stagehands might possibly rethink exactly who the course is aimed at.

Stagehands would probably be the first to admit that some mistakes were made during the conception of this new course. It was after-all the very first of its kind and they must be given due credit for attempting such a project.

The industry desperately needs more training and re-training courses to cope with the increasingly frequent changes in equipment design and specification. This is especially so with computer-based equipment getting more advanced, cheaper and therefore becoming more easily accessible to ever more theatres and venues around the country.

Stagehands have plans for a second course in August 1989. Probably at the same venue and possibly costing about the same. Surely £250.00 is not a great deal to pay to keep up with the times.

*Paul Need is a member of the Association of Lighting Designers and has lit shows in theatres as different as London's Royal Court and the Liverpool Playhouse. He has just completed a spell at RADA teaching lighting design and stage electrics.*

#### LATEST TECHNOLOGY FAMILIARISATION COURSE

### We'd like to say thank-you...

to all those who supported the first course of its kind in Britain and helped to make it such a success. It proved the need for this type of event where practitioners can explore the possibilities offered by new technology; and manufacturers have the chance to see some practical problems involved in its application. (Special thanks to: Strand Lighting, Laserhire, CCT Lighting, Light & Sound Design, Kodak, Thorn EMI, AETTI and John Watts at the RSC).

### ...and see you again next year.

Stagehands has developed and extended its course for next year. We look forward to more healthy debates and seeing old faces alongside the new at Birmingham next August. So let us fill you in by contacting us at the address below - and why not put forward your ideas, too?

*Meanwhile, there is still only one agency for all kinds of technical staff. Let us show you how we can help - and save you money. Ask for Patricia Webb.*

## STAGEHANDS

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