



JOHN HAVNES

5



DEE CONWAY

6



LESLIE E. SPATT

7

■ "The Strand Galaxy is the lighting console I like best," says Henderson, who does his basic design work in his living room. Equally at home in lighting dance or theatre, Henderson has worked with the National Theatre (5, *The Changeling*), London Contemporary Dance Theatre (6, *Shadows In The Sun*), the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet (7, *The Swan of Tuonela*) and the Royal Shakespeare Company (8, *Measure for Measure*).

● "Le Strand Galaxy est le jeu d'orgue que je préfère," dit Henderson, que réalise son travail de base chez lui. Aussi à l'aise en tant qu'éclairagiste pour le théâtre ou la danse, Henderson a travaillé avec le Théâtre National (5, *The Changeling*), le London Contemporary Dance Theatre (6, *Shadows in the Sun*), Sadler's Well Royal Ballet (7, *The Swan of Tuonela*) et la Royal Shakespeare Company (8, *Measure for Measure*).

▼ Strand Galaxy ist das von mir bevorzugte Lichtbord, sagt Henderson, der sein Basisdesign in seinem Wohnzimmer entwirft. Gleichermassen zu Hause bei der Beleuchtung von Tanz oder Theatre, hat Henderson mit dem National Theatre (5, *The Changeling*), mit dem London Contemporary Dance Theatre (6, *Shadows in the Sun*), mit Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet (7, *The Swan of Tuonela*), und mit der Royal Shakespeare Company (8, *Measure for Measure*) gearbeitet.



8

CLIVE BARDA

Theatre where lighting *Transformations* transformed his career. From there he went on to become chief electrician at the English National Opera in Leeds, at which point he began to dabble in freelance lighting.

Since then, Henderson has lit well over 200 theatre, dance, and opera productions throughout the United Kingdom. In addition to *Follies* his West End credits include *The Dresser*, *Mutiny!*, *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial* and *The Corn is Green*. He has lit over a dozen shows with the RSC including *Kiss Me Kate*, *Macbeth*, and *Measure for Measure* and with the National Theatre his credits include *The Changeling*, *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* and most recently Richard Eyre's production of *Hamlet*. He has also designed for the Scottish Opera, the English National Opera, London Contemporary Dance Theatre, and Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet.

"What I like best about lighting has to do with every show being different," he says. "You're constantly learning—constantly working in a completely different environment, with different people. Each theatre is different in size and shape. There's no kind of set pattern, and that's what I like best.

"What I dislike are the hours. I dislike working 14 hours a day weeks at a time. A theatre can only afford to be dark for so long—shows have to go up as quickly as possible. There's a lot of pressure to get the job done, get it done well, and get it done fast. Luckily I have a girlfriend who understands."

Something that Henderson understands is the up-to-date technology afforded today's lighting designers. Being a member of the newest generation of lighting designers, Henderson is, designer-speaking, computer-literate. "I was lucky in that I started working in the field when computers were beginning to be used. They give me an incredible amount of freedom.

"Generally when I work on a modest-sized production I'm forced to use the controls in-house. But when it's a large-scale musical, for example, then I go to town. I choose which controls I need and I'm generally provided with them. The Strand Galaxy is the one I prefer because it allows me to do everything I need to do as simply as possible."

Henderson recalls his greatest theatrical challenge and design success, the 1985 musical *Mutiny!*. "It was the most difficult show I've done because the whole set was the boat. The set was just a mass of movement. It rocked around the stage with this thirty or forty foot mast on it. Finding safe positions to put the lights in was incredibly difficult, because the lights would just get clobbered by the ship. In every scene the boat

would be in a different position. What would work for one scene I couldn't duplicate for the next. Eventually I found the odd position here and there where I could slot a light where it could do some good. It was not the ideal situation. The boat had the run of the stage."

Henderson has seen lighting design grow from a secondary theatrical feature to a major artistic component. He attributes this to a variety of factors, one of which is named David Hersey, the man responsible for the lighting of such blockbusters as *Cats*, *Chess* and *Starlight Express*. "He's done so much to build the stature of lighting design, he's lifted it to a priority in the theatre."

Another factor that has brought lighting to prominence, according to Henderson, is the public's familiarity with special effects in film and music videos. "Audiences now are used to good lighting. They want something spectacular, so lighting is playing more of an important role."

In regard to his process for approaching a new project, Henderson explains, "First I look at the set model and then I read the play. Next I talk to the director and the designer." Henderson then settles into his living room where he designs the basics for his lighting plot. "I tend not to work too much at home because I find my concept changes when I'm in the theatre anyway. What I tend to do is work out an idea of how things should look and then explore the ideas once I'm in the theatre. Once things are worked out, the colour goes in at the last minute."

When not designing, Henderson likes to get away from the theatre altogether. "I find I can switch off," he says, "and go to the countryside. I like to go to Suffolk on the East Coast."

Even at the young age of 31, Henderson is obsessed about his future. "I think about it all the time. I could go on lighting theatre and dance for as long as people wanted to hire me, but I'm not sure I want to. You spend your whole life in the dark" he quips. "It's not the ideal way to spend your life. I'd love to branch out and not limit myself to theatre. I'm interested in interior design and building interiors. At the moment, I'm also working with designer Roger Glossop on a museum project in the Lake District."

Although he would like to branch out, Henderson's work continues to please directors, designers and critics who find his lighting atmospheric and effective. His most recent West End project, *Sherlock Holmes—The Musical*, once again proves that for Mark Henderson lighting is, dear readers—elemental!