



CLAUDE BRICAGE

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lighting. The 300 lights used in Avignon have been reduced to 180 for touring purposes, including four Juliat HMI profiles with Color Wiz colour changers that travel with the company.

The 37-year-old designer began his collaboration with Marin in 1984, when she was looking for a technical director for her company, as well as a lighting designer. He first redesigned the lighting for several earlier Marin works, including *May B.*, *Babel, Babel*, and *Hymen*, then in 1985 designed the lights for *Calambre*, the first new work he did with the company. He has since designed many of Marin's works, including *Eden* (1986), *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1987), and *Coups d'Etats* (1988). Colomer appreciates the fact that Maguy Marin is more than "just a choreographer" and describes her as "the director of a company that does large-scale theatrical works incorporating dance and music."

Colomer had been working as a lighting designer for both the theatre and film since the early 1970s. "My great-grandfather was an opera director," he explains, "and that gave me the bug for show business." With no formal training in lighting, Colomer met Gérald Gelas, the director of a resident theatre company in Avignon, whom he describes as "one of the few directors who at that time was concerned with the lighting on the stage."

With Gelas, Colomer began to work as an administrator and impresario, but, as he admits, "Gelas saw that I was better suited for lighting, and after one week of on-the-job-training, he gave me pretty much total independence.

"Gelas was very concerned with the quality of the image on the stage, and spent six to eight months in rehearsal with the lights, costumes, and decor," says Colomer, who once designed as many as 300 light cues for a 90-minute production. "No one has the luxury to work like that today." Colomer describes the seven years he spent working with Gelas as "a gold mine in terms of trial and error."

Having studied art history and painting, Colomer uses the palette of an artist in his designs, and feels that his love for painting was the best training for lighting design. For several years he strayed from the theatre into the cinema, which turned out to be another valuable experience for his career. "I met a Turkish cinematographer, and began working with him as a director of photography, doing camera work, lighting, as well as some editing and directing." When Colomer returned to the theatre, he brought techniques of film lighting to the stage, and feels that French lighting is generally more cinematic in atmosphere. He is one of the few French designers to use high wattage

HMI lights with cinema gels. His palette includes Lee filters in gray (211, 210, 209), chocolate (156, 230, 231), blue (201, 202, 203) and Rosco 114 for frost. "Gray in front of a high power HMI is more interesting. It makes just one shadow instead of many," says Colomer, who uses fewer, but higher powered light sources to create his effects. "One or two powerful lights create more magical shadows."

When Colomer accepts a design job, he first looks at the maquettes for the decor and the costumes in order to get a feeling for the atmosphere of the piece. "For me," he notes, "the decor is the most important element. Once that is lit, you can add the actors, the costumes, the music." For Colomer, time is the challenge in any new project. "The time allotted gets shorter and shorter," he notes. "For Maguy's new piece we only had four days on the stage of the Cour d'Honneur. We had to treat it more as a tour." Fortunately, the company had rehearsed for months at the Maison des Arts in Creteil, where Colomer was able to complete his designs.

"When I enter a space for the first time, I choose a colour and choose an angle. Confronted with the time problem, there is no room for error, everything has to be ready when you get on stage. I work in my head and on the plot. The number of risks taken is in relation to the time allowed."

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