

PARcans figure strongly in Chelton's lighting rigs, allowing him to frequently revise the setting, particularly important when working with a repertory rig. They also provide a low-tech tool that is user-friendly. Chelton used 70 in his design of *The Magic Flute* (plot, right; 1, 2)

Les PARcans tiennent une place importante dans les éclairages de Nick Chelton, ce qui lui permet de modifier les effets fréquemment avec un plan de lumières de base. Les PARcans sont d'une utilisation très simple et facile. Chelton en a utilisé 70 dans son plan pour The Magic Flute. (plan, à droite; 1, 2)

Chelton macht starken Gebrauch von PARcans, die ihm erlauben, häufig das setting zu verändern. Besonders wichtig wenn man mit einer Repertoire Beleuchtung arbeitet. Sie sind benutzerfreundliche low-tech Instrumente. Für *The Magic Flute* benutzte Chelton siebzig PARcans. (plot, right; 1, 2).



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and novel. The Royal Opera's *Un Re in Ascolto* benefitted from Chelton's developing interest in HMI, high wattage discharge lighting which flattened colour dynamics and simplified shadows on stage in a way that was impossible with conventional lighting. His use of Pani 2.5kw fresnels with automatic dimmer assemblies proved a new technique for broad brushstrokes of light.

PARcans figure strongly in Chelton's lighting today— for both *The Magic Flute* and *Parsifal* he used 70 PARcans in the rig. They permit him to flow with the tide of frequent revisions, particularly important when working with a repertory rig, as in the major opera houses. *Rusalka* at the ENO — a production very highly regarded by the opera and design fraternities alike — was lit in two hours per act.

When PARcans were first introduced into the UK, with the American productions of *Cabaret* and *Hair* in the late 60s, Chelton, then a 21-year-old lighting designer for the Northcott Theatre in Exeter recognized their potential. The dense beam, intensely bright punch, and ability to accurately push down colour from a distance onto the stage, offered him the chance to really control intensity and colour, and furthered his cause to sweep even the largest stage in strong beams of light. His lighting for the beach scene in the current West End and Broadway productions of *Shirley Valentine* uses one 5kw fresnel and a dozen PAR 64 narrow spots — all in open white.

Chelton's favourite theatre is The Royal Exchange, Manchester—the "lunar module" structure that is free-standing within the vast exchange building in the North of England. Shows there are either nearly or completely in the round. "What is fascinating," says Chelton, "is that full visibility is not necessary because of the di-

mensionality of the space. I provide three sides of lighting with a rig that is offset by thirty degrees from the centre line. Small, punchy profiles and fresnels allow me to give good dramatic lighting from short

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throws, but the space gently organizes the designs so that it is neat and tidy."

Until recently there was little movement between straight theatre and opera for either the audience or design teams, but the recent spectacular musicals in London have drawn away the showiest set designers from the field of opera. The good lighting designers have remained, and those, like Chelton, who have a strong reaction to the music have found the discipline of opera production rewarding.

Chelton taught himself to read music. "Lighting designers were not allowed a score, because none of them could read it. We used to be given a libretto which we would mark up with our cues, most of which happened between the lines." Today, the designer, along with the other members of the creative team, receive scores interleaved with blank pages. Chelton develops his ideas away from the theatre by shutting himself away with the CD of a new opera, and storing up images for when he enters rehearsals. His notes are copious, and he scribbles over plans in order to assemble what is essentially a "shooting script" for what the audience will see. "Three-quarters of what will happen exists in note form before the