

## CREATIVE COLOUR MASTER CLASS

In the London area the opportunity to attend a post-graduate level "topping up" course is rare, so this attempt by the east London Half Moon Theatre last December to offer a seminar on the use of colour in theatre lighting must be given a warm welcome.

The two-day course was advertised as "Colour in Theatre Lighting: Towards a More Creative Approach." The stated aim was to encourage a more creative and original use of colour in lighting by lighting designer/technicians in small and mid-scale venues.

There were five lecturers, all active lighting designers — Chris Corner, organiser of the event, doing the obligatory scientific revision; Francis Reid representing the orthodox view; David Lawrence, who makes his own lights (and his own rules); Dee Kine with a woman's view, intuition, plus experience on a shoestring; and David I. Taylor, one of the new wave rationalist designers trained in the USA.

Criticism of the course content must be limited to a few personal views. First was this really a master class? The publicity was evasive, what I read said a seminar/master class, and it would indeed be difficult to run a full-blooded master class if this presumes an audience already fully trained and experienced and seeking only those elusive virtuoso refinements for their technique. But even if the audience/students could only be presumed to be semi-experienced (and the lack of any recognised scale of training and competence and the first come-first served method of selection makes any other presumption naive) the course material must avoid the trap of including the trivial, otherwise there will be no time for the fascinating details. Only Chris Corner had to face this problem squarely, both as

course director and as the lecturer on colour physics. His solution nearly succeeded in that, although he did spend time on the spectrum and basic color mixing, he also had time to pay reasonable attention to the less familiar concepts of black body radiators and colour temperatures. But he missed however, all the phenomena of adaptation, critical in understanding how the eye sees colour. The others, talking about lighting as an art, assumed common ground from the start and spent little or no time teaching their grandmothers, so if not the master class, certainly not school for beginners.

Second, and I think serious, is a place for demonstration in the teaching of teaching. With honorable exceptions, the lecturers relied on speech and slides to put across their points. I think they could have done better.

Francis Reid just talked. Competent, informative, always entertaining and to the point. But surely some slides of other illustrations would have guaranteed even more impact on an audience whose qualifications must include good visual memory.

David Lawrence provided the best and most spectacular demonstrations. His approach to lighting has benefited from his study of television and film techniques and he has discovered that he can often use their special lighting equipment to good effect. His slides illustrated their impact. He talked a lot about the Munich Kammerspiele theatre and its innovative lighting director, Max Keller, who lights his stage exclusively with 6000K 2.5kw and 4kw HMI TV discharge lamps and the like. Lawrence also uses these when funds permit, but finds that fluorescent tubes, mercury, and sodium street lights and home-made low

voltage miniature lamps suit his needs. All these supposedly anti-theatrical lamps were demonstrated to great effect.

Dee Kine, apparently accustomed to working with companies on a budget, specialises in creative use of colour filters going beyond the usual shades of warm and cold off-white. Her special contribution to the course was a demonstration of the suitability of different colour pairs when used to cross white or dark skin tones.

David I. Taylor completed the two-day course with fine photographs of his own lighting in small studio theatres. David gave students a general insight into his lighting method and the extensive analysis he judges necessary. Using, and admitting preference for cool near-white white lights (Lee 201 full CT blue filter got the most plugs from all speakers and seems to have entirely supplanted the old Strand 17 and the like for cool cross lighting) his opinions on colour were all about subtleties quite beyond the ordinary imagination. Again, how one wished for the chance to see the effect demonstrated.

Overall then, an interesting, informative and infuriating two days. Infuriating to me because there could have been real demonstration of the subject and there was not. Interesting that while earning a living by interpreting the written word into a visual happening, the theatre technician when teaching is not noticeably better at visual presentation than anyone else. If, as I hope, there is a demand for more Master Classes, please will the organisers remember that the eye is so much more powerful than the ear when attempting to understand visual design and strive to finance the project accordingly.

BOB ANDERSON

## CUESHEET

### MARCH

**ABTT/Glasgow**, Scottish Exhibition and Convention Centre, Glasgow, Scotland. 14 - 16 March. Contact: Ethel Langspreth, ABTT, 4 Great Pulteney Street, London W1R 3DF. 1/434-3901.

**Arts Without Frontiers**, Scottish Exhibition and Convention Centre, Glasgow, Scotland. 14- 16 March. Contact: Conference Profile Ltd., 3/4 St. Andrew's Hill, London EC4V 5BY. 1/236-4938. Fax: 01/236-1889.

**Musikmesse Frankfurt International**, Frankfurt Fairgrounds, Frankfurt, West Germany. 21 - 26 March. Contact: Messe Frankfurt Ltd., PO Box 970126, 6000 Frankfurt 97, West Germany. 69/75750. Fax: 69/75756433.

### APRIL

**SIB/MAGIS 90**, Rimini Trade Fair Centre, Rimini, Italy. 1 - 4 April. Contact: Rimini Trade Fair Corporation, P.O. Box 33, 47037 Rimini, Italy. 541/782000. Fax: 541/774313.

**USITT Conference and Stage Expo**, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. 11 - 14 April. Contact: David Diamond, USITT, 10 W. 19th Street, #5A, New York, NY 10011. Tel: 212/924-9088. Fax: 212/924-9343.

### MAY

**ShowTech Berlin**, International Trade Fair and Congress, The Berlin Trade Fair Complex and ICC International Congress Center, 8 - 10, May. Contact: AMK Berlin, Messedamm 22, D-1000 Berlin 19, Tel: 030/3038-0. Fax: 030/3038-2325.

**Hong Kong Luminex 90**, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre, 23 - 26 May. Contact: Benjamin Ng, Hong Kong Exhibition Services Ltd., Suite 2101 Cindic Tower, 128 Gloucester Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong. Tel: 5 8933336. Fax: 5 8345026