

TOYAH

CARRYING EMOTION WITH LIGHT



According to the ubiquitous (and sometimes outrageous) Toyah Willcox, 'I am never instantly aware of the lighting but there is no doubt that it carries my emotions'. As a stage, film, TV actress and Rock singer she is on the receiving end of theatrical lighting more often than most.

And while good theatrical lighting can help to improve an actor's performance, Toyah has little doubt that second-rate lighting and lack of thought during the lighting of rock venues can ruin a performance for both a band and its audience unnecessarily.

She was speaking at the National Theatre on London's South Bank, where she is currently appearing in an ecologically-sound family show, *Whale*, which runs until February. *Whale* is the factual story, with incidental music, of the international rescue operation mounted in October 1988 to save three grey whales trapped in the Arctic ice.

Taking a break in rehearsals, and while lighting designer Mark Henderson wrestled with the problem of 'Coming to grips with lighting the ice and snow of Alaska', Toyah reflected on the meaning of light to her as an actress.

She explained, 'In the theatre, lighting is designed before you actually come in to rehearse and to be quite honest, I am perfectly happy to work around that.'

'I did *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Birmingham last year and the design was by the lighting designer from the Royal Shakespeare Company. His lighting was very, very moody and also very effective.'

'We had these massive slow, sensuous sunsets and his lighting probably affected my stage performance more than any other has ever done.'

'The other lighting worth mentioning is Derek Jarman's lighting on *The Tempest*. Again, that was very moody indeed. It all had a blueness to it and you felt as if you were under water. It had a very womb-like quality.'

Lighting configurations for a rock concert are very different, she feels, and for these, Toyah makes a point of becoming directly involved — where she can.

But she explained, 'When you are touring with a band you usually get into a town two hours before a show and you don't have your own lighting man, so you have to explain to the resident lighting engineer what you want for each show.'

'In rock venues they tend to use every colour they can, all at once and pulsing at a different time to the music you are playing.'