



by Rob Halliday

Oliver! the musical

This production of *Oliver!* began life at the London Palladium in 1994. It was directed by the up-and-coming Sam Mendes, who subsequently went on to win the Best Director Oscar for his movie debut, *American Beauty*, and choreographed by Matthew Bourne, the man behind the acclaimed male-swallow version of *Swan Lake*. The sets and costumes were designed by Anthony Ward, who is now arguably the UK's leading designer of musical theatre having recently completed *Oklahoma!* in New York and the new production of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* in London. The show's lighting was designed by David Hersey, whose work over the years has



included such musicals as *Cats*, *Starlight Express*, *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon* as well as countless productions for the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and others. More recently, David's design for the Royal National Theatre's production of *Oklahoma!*, currently playing at the Gershwin Theatre in New York, has won the New York Outer Critics Circle Award for best lighting, and has been nominated for the best lighting Tony Award.

This production played at the Palladium for four years, clocking up the longest ever run at that theatre. After it closed, the basic design of the set was re-worked and re-packaged for a British tour which opened at the Theatre Royal in Plymouth. The aim was to make the set a self-contained touring 'package' that could move into any theatre without being reliant on any of the facilities of that theatre. The set - the raked showdeck and scenic towers - therefore contain all of the automation motors necessary. What looks like a scenic header upstage is in fact a service truss containing all of the show's dimmers, automation control racks and amplifiers, so removing the need to have these items occupy what (in most British touring theatres) is very valuable floor space and also minimising the cable runs required from the

rig to the dimmers. Although expensive to create, the set was designed to tour quickly, with the aim being to get from the last night in one theatre to the first night in the next in ten days or less.

After touring the UK, this production travelled to Toronto for a season and now on to Sydney. Here the design has been modified slightly again with the creation of a "passarelle" forestage to bring certain parts of the action forward into the house.

The time between the first production of this show at the Palladium in 1994, and the tour in 1998, marks a remarkable watershed in lighting technology. The Palladium production was amongst the last of the 'old-style' productions lit with large, high-wattage lamps; it predated the arrival of the ETC Source Four in the UK. It was also typical of shows of the time that had moving lights (in the case of the Palladium, twelve Vari*Lite VL6s - which made their first theatrical appearance on the show - and twelve VL5s), but only enough to provide additional detailing, not enough to light the entire show.

When planning for the UK tour, lighting designer David Hersey, his associate, Jenny Kagan, lighting programmer Rob Halliday and production



electrician Alistair Grant decided to take a different approach. For the UK tour of *Les Misérables*, which opened in 1997, they had replaced most of the conventional lighting equipment with fourteen High End StudioColour moving washlights, carried in custom-designed pre-rigged swing-wing truss. With the truss hung in the right place in each venue, and the lights then effectively focussing themselves automatically, the amount of time that needed to be spent with a dark stage focussing the lights was dramatically reduced. The swing-wing nature of the truss allowed safe climb-on access, so allowing the few remaining conventional lights to be accessed relatively easily.

The same approach was taken for *Oliver!*, but using a selection from the much wider range of equipment that was then becoming available and allowed moving lights to be selected according to the particular strengths of particular units rather than just because they could move! This led to a diverse rig that included Martin PAL1200s (chosen for their framing shutter capability), High End StudioColors (for their brightness, variable beams and good colour mixing), Amptown Washlights (for their tungsten lamps and so 'friendly' beam quality), Martin Mac500s (as reliable spotlights with indexing gobo capability), DHA Digital Light Curtains (as intense 'sheets' of light) and Irideon AR5s (an architectural light, here deployed as moving footlights, to provide the darker, 'shadowy' feel that director Sam Mendes was seeking for the tour). The result is an overhead rig that is almost entirely automated; conventional lights remain as front cover, and as a colour-changing coverage to Anthony Ward's dramatic cyclorama skycloth. On tour, with the trusses always rigged in the same relationship to the set (an advantage of touring a self-contained set), the amount of refocussing work required on the moving lights was kept to the very minimum, and where changes were required they could easily be accomplished from the ground.

Lighting control had also changed dramatically in the four years since the Palladium production; there the conventional lights were run from the theatre's Strand Galaxy 3 while an Arri Imagine 3 controlled the moving lights and scrollers, and an Apple Macintosh ran the Digital Light Curtains; two operators created the show. For the tour, there



was so little conventional lighting that it did not seem worth having a second person hanging around to fade the cyc up and down, so one programmer ran the entire rig from one console. The console chosen was a Strand d 530, this range of console having proved itself around the world on shows such as *Les Misérables*, *Martin Guerre*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and many more.

For the Toronto production, the entire rig was shipped from the UK lighting suppliers, White Light and The Moving Light Company. For the Australian tour, which begins at the Lyric Theatre in Sydney, the rig has been supplied by Chameleon Touring Systems and some amendments have been changed to reflect the products available in Australia and also the advances in technology that have taken place in the four years since the tour began. The Amptown Washlights are not available in Australia, and so have been replaced with the Vari*Lite VL2402 washlight which proved itself on the new UK tour of *Miss Saigon* and on *Oklahoma!* in New York. Some of the PAL1200s have been replaced with Martin's new MAC2000 Performance spotlight, which offers framing in a moving-head design which allows improved stage coverage. Control remains from a Strand console, this time from a 520i running Strand's latest software release, v2.5e.

Lighting People

Head Electrician: **Ed Cymerman**

Deputy Head Electrician: **Paul Mulcahy**

Production Electrician **Alistair Grant**

Associate Lighting Designer (Australia): **Richard Pacholski**

Lyric Theatre Electricians: **Andrew Richards, Ange Sullivan**



Lighting Equipment

Predominantly automated lighting rig including:

- 5 DHA Pitching Digital Light Curtains
- 8 DHA Digital Light Curtains
- 6 Martin MAC2000 Performance framing moving spotlights
- 4 Martin PAL1200 framing moving mirror lights
- 13 Martin MAC500 moving spotlights
- 14 Vari*Lite VL2402 moving washlights
- 6 High End StudioColor moving washlights
- 6 Irideon AR5 moving washlights

Conventional lighting rig formed from ETC Source Fours, Altman Shakespeares, Selecon Pacifics, PAR cans. 80 units fitted with Rainbow scroller colour changers. Four 5K fresnels and one 4K HMI fresnel fitted with Rainbow scrollers also used.

Cyc lighting is predominantly from 1K floods, MR16 battens and Source Fours fitted with scrollers to allow sections of the cyc to be lit without lighting the scenic sliders that cross in front of the cyclorama.

Cloud and snow effects from White Light Toccata effects projectors with VAFX animation disks. Cloud effects use custom cloud disks from DHA Lighting, created for this production.

DHA gobo rotators used for fire and water animation effects.

Four Broncolour photographic flashes (a high-intensity flashgun based on a Strand Cantata) used to provide projected lighting effects.

Six followspots: two Robert Juliat Aramis front-spots in the spot booth; four R&V 500W beamlights with colour scrollers on the side-stage scenic towers.

Overhead lighting rig on custom-designed swinging truss that allows lights to travel pre-rigged while also allowing safe walk-on access for maintenance and focussing. A commercial version of this truss is now produced by Tomcat.

Radio controlled dimming from Howard Eaton Lighting used in the 'food' tables, controlling low-voltage floodlights.

Rosco 1700 smoke machines and City Theatrical AquaFog 3300 dry ice machines are controlled from the lighting console. Look Solutions Tiny Fogger miniature smoke machine in set.

ETC SmartRack dimmers built into the upstage service truss. Dimmers feed a hard-wired patch that feeds multicore outlets with dimmed power and hard power for the moving lights. The service truss also feeds the stage and wing work- and show running lighting system, and includes automation racks and sound racks.

Control from Strand 500-series lighting control system running over 1400 DMX channels. Main console is a 520i with a 510i as a backup. Four streams of DMX are distributed around the theatre using Strand's ShowNet Ethernet system. The consoles are running the latest version of Strand's control software, GeniusPro 2.5e, which allows easy updating of multiple position presets and many other enhancements. Approximately 300 lighting cues.

Strand's off-line editor software running on an Apple Macintosh was used to provide independent remote video to the lighting designer during the production period.

The complete lighting rig supplied by Chameleon Touring Systems.

