



by Rob Halliday

# THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK AUSTRALIA

## Background Information

Adapted from the original novel by John Updike, and perhaps more directly from motion picture which featured Jack Nicholson, Cher, Susan Sarandon and Michelle Pfeiffer, Cameron Mackintosh's musical production of *The Witches of Eastwick* opened at London's Theatre Royal Drury Lane in mid-2000.

Deliberately conceived as an old-fashioned 'musical comedy' rather than the epic blockbuster show the producer was more famous for (-*Miss Saigon*, for example, occupied Drury Lane for the ten years prior to *Witches*), the show tells the story of how three bored, lonely housewives summon up the man of their dreams in the person of one Darryl Van Horne; he seduces each of them in turn giving them the power of witches. Together, they cause chaos in the little New England town of Eastwick until their dreams turn to a nightmare as events spiral out of control.

The show was written by the young American team of John Dempsey and Dana P Rowe, a team who Mackintosh had first brought to public attention in the UK a few years earlier when he produced their show *The Fix* at the Donmar Warehouse. Around them, Mackintosh assembled a team including American director Eric D Schaeffer, set designer Bob Crowley (the Tony Award winner for *Aida* on Broadway, amongst much other work), and lighting designer Howard Harrison fresh from his success with *Mamma Mia!*

The Drury Lane production of *Witches* was bigger in every way from the production that now arrives in Australia, with a completely different set design that filled one of London's biggest theatres to bursting point - including spilling out into the auditorium as the musical sought to re-create the film's famous flying sequences when the devilish seducer Darryl Van Horne launches his three witches into the air. A down-turn in London thea-



tre audiences meant it couldn't last, though, but where a lesser producer might have let the show go, Mackintosh re-assembled his created team to create a new version of the show at the more intimate Prince of Wales Theatre. The show worked better for it, allowing the audience to focus on the show's mad-cap world and crazy characters; the *Witches* flying sequence also worked better since the smaller auditorium meant that you could almost touch the *Witches* as they passed. Things were looking up - and then the tragedy of September 11th 2001 occurred. As with many other shows in London, *The Witches of Eastwick* was forced to close a short time later.

Now with the new Australian tour, the show has another chance - and has grabbed it and is running with it, with a new cast led by Paul McDermott, Marina Prior, Pippa Grandison and Angela Toohey, and a slightly re-worked production directed by James Powell, who was the resident director on the London production. The creative team have been in Melbourne re-working the show once more, and the Australian audiences are loving it. An Australia tour will follow the Melbourne season; the rest of the world may follow that. It's been a long road, but thanks to the tenaciousness of its producer, the world is now discovering the crazy world of *The Witches of Eastwick*.

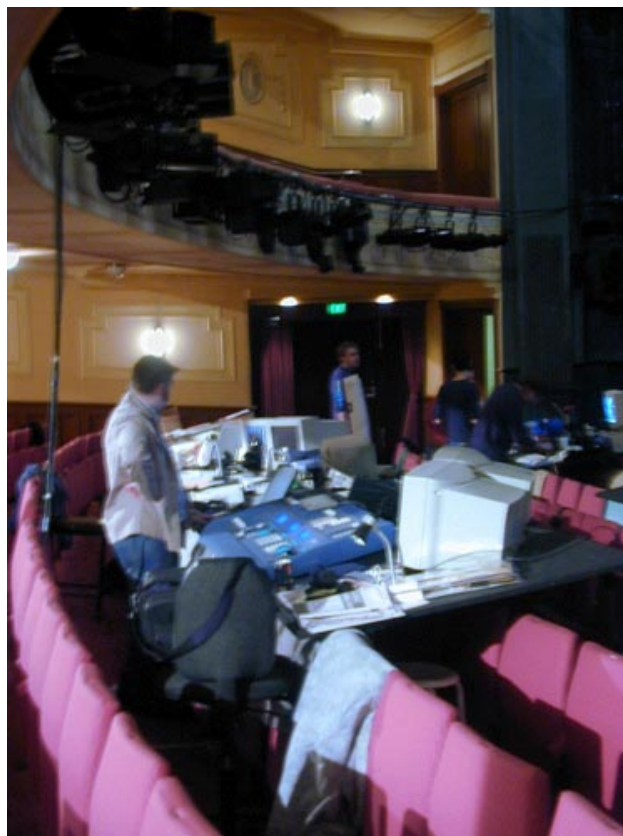


## Lighting Information

Howard Harrison's design for the first production of *The Witches of Eastwick* featured one of the largest automated lighting rigs ever seen in the West End - over 110 moving lights, plus a sizeable conventional rig with scrollers, plus many other 'tricks' (confetti drops, rotating violins and cellos and many practical lights) controlled by the lighting desk. The rig's size was made necessary by the size of the venue, the diverse range of scenes and scenery in the show, and the need to make the lighting 'magical'. The rig contained a diverse range of equipment, each chosen for a particular purpose: Vari-Lite VL6Bs as spotlights, VL5s as washlights, City Theatrical Autoyokes and Strand Pirouettes as roving specials from front-of-house, and DHA Digital Light Curtains, with one line of DLCs the pitching version, providing a high-intensity moving backlight. Four DHA Digital Beamlight 2s gave moving on-stage specials, with three VL7Bs with their shuttering system allowed lighting to be trimmed precisely to scenic elements. A particular challenge was that the follow-spots would not be able to see the flying *Witches* for most of their flight; nine High End Technobeams were therefore fitted around the auditorium connected to Wybron's AutoPilot automated follow-spot system. The conventional rig was largely ETC Source Fours, with Rainbow colour scrollers.

The size of the rig meant that a decision was taken to have two programmers create the show, one dealing with the conventional lighting and one with the automated rig. However, the plan was to drop down to one operator, and it seemed to make little sense to have one operator and two consoles. The show therefore used a networked Strand control system, with a 510i as the main 'processor' for the show; a 520i and a 530i were then connected to this as the 'real' consoles, and Strand's channel and playback partitioning were used to effectively give each operator control of their own lights. Once programming was completed, partitioning was switched off and the show ran with one operator; after opening, one console was taken away leaving a 'main' and 'backup' console - but with the ability to partition the system again if further changes were required.

For the *Prince of Wales*, the rig was reduced - there simply wasn't the space - or the need - to fit in all of the equipment. At the same time, upgrades were made to reflect new equipment that had appeared since the original production. In particular, Vari-



Lite VL2416s replaced the VL5s, while the AutoPilot system was upgraded to AutoPilot 2. Control remained by Strand, now controlling new effects including bubble machines!

The rig design for the Australian tour again reflects advances in equipment in the eighteen months since the *Prince of Wales* production opened, and the equipment available in Australia: Vari-Lite VL6Cs have replaced the VL6Bs, giving vital extra punch as well as much cleaner beams, while the VL2416s have been replaced by the more compact, and versatile, VL2402s giving a total of 72 moving lights; Strand's AutoMod facility made making these substitutions a quick and painless process. The rest of the rig just refines the London version to reflect the Princess Theatre's slightly larger stage and some extra scenic items. AutoPilot is gone - the followspots have much better coverage here - but the Technobeams remain, since they proved to be capable of creating fantastic gobo animation effects. Control is simplified, too, with the entire rig run from one Strand 530i, with a second 530i as a backup, the consoles running over 350 cues plus many, many effects! The rig still requires five streams of DMX - down from the seven of the Drury Lane original! As on other recent productions, including *Oklahoma!* in New York



and Oliver! in Sydney, Strand's versatile networking system was put to good use during the production period, with SN nodes used to distribute data and Macintosh computers used to allow the lighting designer to arrange his production desk channel display to his own satisfaction.

## Lighting People

### **Howard Harrison** **Lighting Designer**

A regular visitor to Australia over the years, Howard returns to Melbourne where last year he continued his association with the smash-hit musical *Mamma Mia!*, having lit the first production in London and every subsequent production - in New York, Toronto and on tour in America. He was the recipient of a 2001 Green Room Award for his work on the show in Melbourne. His other work in Australia includes *The Barber of Seville* and *Beatrice and Benedict* for Opera Australia.

Howard has worked extensively in theatre, opera and dance in the UK and around the world. He has lit productions for the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal National Theatre, the Donmar Warehouse, the Royal Opera, English National Opera, English National Ballet, the Kirov Opera and the Metropolitan Opera in New York, amongst others.

As well as *Mamma Mia!*, his recent work includes *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *The Seven Year Itch* (West End), *Private Lives*, *Look Back In Anger* and *Sleep With Me* (Royal National Theatre), *Tales From Hollywood* and *Privates On Parade* (Donmar Warehouse), *It Trovatore* and *I Masnadieri* (Royal Opera), *Albert Herring* (Opera North), *The Makropoulos Case* and *Nabucco* (Metropolitan Opera), *Putting It Together* in New York and *Martin Guerre* in Minneapolis and then on tour around America.

Howard lit both the original production of *The Witches of Eastwick* in London, a design for which he received a nomination for the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Lighting Design.

**Rob Halliday**  
**Associate Lighting Designer / Lighting Programmer**  
Rob began his lighting career with the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain and has subsequently worked on productions throughout the UK and in Australia, American, Japan, Korea, Singa-



pore, Russia, Lebanon, Belgium, France and Germany. As Lighting Programmer, translating a lighting designer's vision for a show into the practicalities of modern-day automated lighting rigs, his shows include *Oklahoma!*, *The Coast of Utopia*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Miss Saigon*, *Putting It Together*, *Martin Guerre*, *Cinderella*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Hey Mr Producer!*, *Tess*, *Lenny*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Blood Brothers* as well as events such as the Edinburgh Festival Tattoo and Jessye Norman's Sacred Ellington concerts.

Rob also works as a lighting designer, with his favourite productions include *Groping for Trouts* in a *Peculiar River* (BAC, nominated for the London Fringe Lighting Award) and *Is There Life After High School?* at the Bridewell Theatre. He writes about the technical aspects of theatre for specialist magazines such as *Lighting+Sound International* and *Lighting Dimensions*.

He was last in Australia earlier this year with *Oliver!* at the Lyric Theatre in Sydney. His other work in Australia includes *Pan* in Sydney in 2000 and the 10th Anniversary Production of *Les Misérables* in 1997; he has also programmed *Les Mis* in London, on tour in the UK, in Antwerp and for the 10th Anniversary Concert at the Royal Albert Hall in 1995.

### **Richard Pacholski** **Associate Lighting Designer**

Richard Pacholski - R2 as he is known to everyone for reasons increasingly lost in history! - graduated from The Centre for Performing Arts in Adelaide in 1982, moving straight to working at the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust. From 1985 to 1986 he toured with the Australian Ballet. In 1988 he



joined Cameron Mackintosh Pty Ltd as Lighting Manager; over the next eleven years he toured extensively with their productions of Cats, Les Misérables, Five Guys Named Moe, The Phantom of the Opera, Miss Saigon and Rent. He has also toured with Aspects of Love and Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat for the Really Useful Company. Richard lit the Cats run away to the Circus tour and is the Associate Lighting Designer for the Australian productions of Les Misérables, which has played in Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Shanghai, and Seoul, and the smash-hit ABBA musical Mamma Mia!.



### Lighting People

Head Electrician: Dale Mounsey

Electricians: Andrew Sunderland, Tim Knutt

Princess Theatre Head Electrician: Sue Saunders

Other Show Staff:

Production Manager (Australia): Malcolm White

Production Manager (UK): Jerry Donaldson

Associate Set Designer: Mike Britton

Associate Sound Designer: Shelly Lee

Production Sound: Gillian Cowie, Paul Hitchens, Amanda Stead

Production Stage Manager: Graeme Haddon

Stage Managers: Lisa Webb, Daniel O'Connell, Claire Reid

Head Mechanist: Matthew Norman

Head of Automation: Greg Gowans

Production Automation for Stage Technologies:  
Paul Angell, Richard Kent, Paul Hollingberry, Alex Hitchcock

For The Witches of Eastwick Australian Tour:

Directed by James Powell

Choreographed by Stephen Mear and Bob Avian

Designed by Bob Crowley

Lighting by Howard Harrison

Sound by Peter Grubb for System Sound

Associate Choreographer: Geoffrey Garratt

Australian Producers: Jacobsen Entertainment in association with Cameron Mackintosh Ltd.

### Lighting Equipment

Predominantly automated lighting rig including:

- 32 Vari-Lite VL6C spot luminaires
- 12 Vari-Lite VL2402 wash luminaires
- 10 Vari-Lite VL5B wash luminaires
- 4 DHA Pitching Digital Light Curtains
- 4 High End StudioBeam wash luminaires
- 4 High End StudioColor wash luminaires

- 10 High End Technobeam moving mirror luminaires
- 6 Martin Mac300 wash luminaires

Conventional lighting rig of ETC Source Fours (around 180 units), Source Four Pars and PAR cans, with a mixture of Rainbow and Wybron colour scrollers.

UV effects from Wildfire units fitted with Wybron Eclipse dimmer shutters.

Lightning effects using twelve High End DataFlash strobes and one Robert Juliat D'Artagnan HMI profile spotlight.

Four Robert Juliat Aramis 2.5kW followspots, fitted with custom gobos (by The Gobo Factory) for the show's Witches Flying sequence. The performer flying is by Stage Technologies from the UK, using their Pathway control system.

Control from Strand 500-series lighting control system running over 1800 DMX channels. Main console is a 530i with a second 530i as a backup. Five streams of DMX are distributed around the theatre using Strand's ShowNet Ethernet system,

Radio-controlled dimming, fibre optics and neon moons from Howard Eaton Lighting Limited.

MDG Ice Fog-Q Low Smoke Machines used to create dry ice effects. MDG haze machines. Look Solutions Tiny Fogger smoke machines hidden in scenery. Plus smoke, pyro and bubble machines!!

Lighting rig supplied by Bytecraft.