

Sixpence and Strife

New Lumière *Rachel Cleary* on her first three months



Rachel is delighted to have been picked for the Lumière scheme, giving her a unique opportunity to work alongside and learn from top lighting designers. She loves travelling and makes the most of any spare time on the road by exploring whichever city she happens to be in!

I couldn't believe it on the Wednesday afternoon when I got the phone call asking me if I would like to be the next Lumière! I was so happy and grateful to have been picked. I couldn't wait to get started and it wasn't long before I was boarding a train down to Chichester.

I started at an interesting time at the theatre. It was the week of previews

for *Half a Sixpence*, and although it was somewhat winding down there was still the feeling of anticipation before press night. Starting at this time gave me the opportunity to get to know the team, who were all very welcoming and helpful. I also met Paule Constable, walking for her as she put the finishing touches before opening night. I was very excited

to be invited to the opening night and party. It was great to see the show and to see how the space worked. Having worked wholly in proscenium theatre it was interesting to see how a thrust space with no fly tower worked – how different looks could be achieved and how the set and scenery changes were done purely using automation in place of flying. It was a great atmosphere at the after party; you could feel the relief and the sense of achievement from the whole team.

As soon as *Half a Sixpence* was up and running it was time for me to get stuck in to my first show, *Strife*, written by John Galsworthy and directed by Bertie Carvel. I would be working with Rick Fisher. Rick traditionally hand-draws his plans, and it would be my job to transpose his plan into Vectorworks. Before I could do this I needed to have a crash course in the software from Tom White. Having been a venue technician for most of my career, when I did have the opportunity to light a show I had tended to use free software such as Claude Heintz Design's LX Free or demos of other programs. So although I had some experience with design software, Vectorworks was totally new to me. Tom proved to be a fantastic teacher, giving me a great formula to work from and showing me all aspects of the software including the 3D elements. Although I was slightly apprehensive when he left, I soon felt very comfortable as I worked



The Chichester Shakespeares lighting team (left to right): Graham Taylor, Sam Garner Gibbons, Jenny Roxburgh, Oliver Fenwick, Rachel Cleary, Eden Thornton, Theo Chadha and Charlie Lee

Strife
Chichester Festival Theatre
Directed by Bertie Carvel
Design by Robert Jones
Lighting design by Rick Fisher
Photograph by Johan Persson



my way around the software. He gave me a list of things to work through myself and his comprehensive notes were easy to refer to. I also knew he was only an email away if I got stuck and would get back to me as soon as he was able. There were a few stumbling blocks (including half my symbols turning into rectangles when I interchanged a symbol) but I soon overcame them. Rick was also great to work with and was very patient with me as

I worked out how he preferred to have the plan arranged. *Strife* was a very interesting production to work on. Not only was it the first production I would work on in the thrust but also the first one with a mirrored floor! As Rick said, although it brought us many challenges, it also gave us gifts in some of the reflections and the looks that it helped create. I kept notes of any issues that we worked on each day and made sure the plan was up to date, and

Rick would ask my opinion and for me to write my own notes during previews which I was very grateful for.

Over the next few weeks I will be working on two different productions by the RSC: *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Love's Labour's Lost*. I have been attending the production meetings and have already met the lighting designer, Oliver Fenwick, who I am very much looking forward to working with. 🍀

Lumière scheme part two

Rachel Cleary sums up the last three months

On this half of the scheme I was to work with Peter Mumford on *Stepping Out* at Bath Theatre Royal and The Vaudeville Theatre, Neil Austin on *Buried Child* at Trafalgar Studios and Prema Mehta on *Made in India* at the Belgrade in Coventry.

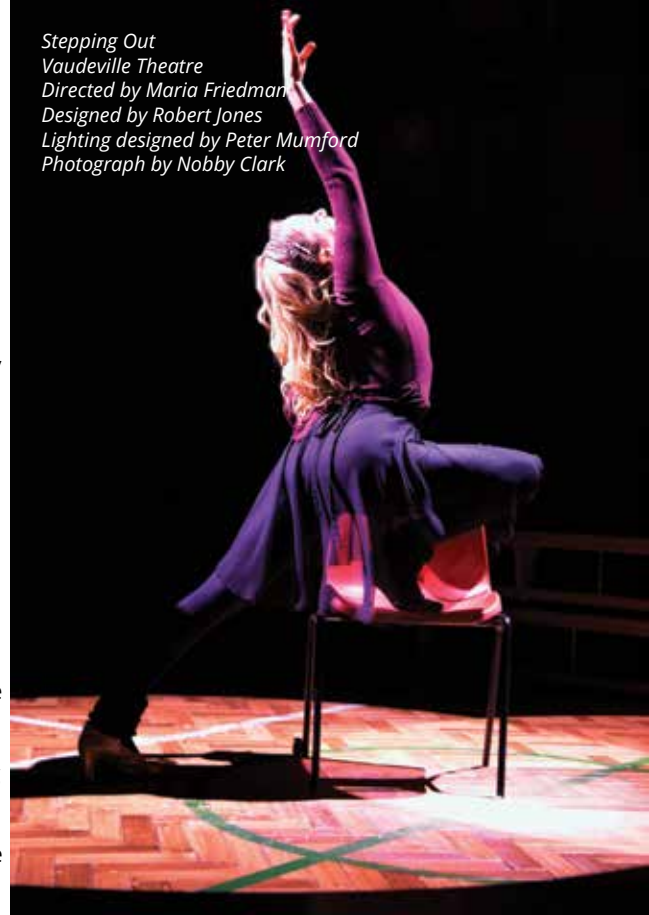
Starting on *Stepping Out* I quickly slipped into the team. I had plenty to do making notes in focus for the focus plot, keeping the plan and cue synopsis updated and making sure working notes got done. One of the tools I thought was used excellently at Chichester was Wunderlist, a free list sharing app that meant as soon as a work note was mentioned it was with the relevant people and in a lot of cases could be actioned straight away rather than waiting for a tea break. With most people willing to download this free app it has helped to take the divide away from the production table to the rest of the team and ups productivity so I have tried to use it whenever possible.

At the end of the run in Bath, *Stepping Out* was due to go out on tour. Most of the houses they were visiting were end on theatres but one happened to be a thrust space which was Chichester! As I had spent some time there Peter thought it would be

good for me to translate the plan into this space, which I did. After checking he was happy I sent it off to Sam and Graham in Chichester, who are always wonderful with visiting companies making sure they achieve what they need to achieve.

Finishing in Bath, we wished the company well on tour and I headed back home for a couple of days before going down to London to work on *Buried Child* with Neil Austin. My first task was to focus the rig. We worked out that it would be best to do half a bar each as a lot of things were mirroring due to the nature of the set. It was a wonderful thing to do as it made me a lot more precise and taught me to rely more on hand signals. So often now it seems that things can be happening in focus that can distract and mean that you cannot be heard – and also working in different countries where there may be language barriers hand signals can become vital to relay what you need to happen. As I was going on to light a couple of pantomimes over Christmas it was a good opportunity to use the skills I had learned.

Stepping Out
Vaudeville Theatre
Directed by Maria Friedman
Designed by Robert Jones
Lighting designed by Peter Mumford
Photograph by Nobby Clark



After Christmas I was due to start on *Made in India* at the Belgrade in Coventry, some exciting new writing by Satinder Chohan. A very poignant piece focusing



Buried Child
Trafalgar Studios
Directed by Scott Elliott
Designed by Derek McLane
Lighting designed by Neil Austin
Photograph by Johan Persson

on surrogacy in India, it tracks the story of three women: a doctor, a surrogate and a woman desperately seeking motherhood. With three different sets of screens as moveable set pieces, set designer Lydia Deeno used different fabrics on each set starting with threads of wool and moving into thicker woven materials. As the piece was set in a thrust space the idea was to use the screens as gauzes to bleed through them in certain places and also as surfaces to project onto for video designer

Shanaz Gulzar. The show was also set to tour, ending at the Soho Theatre in the upstairs space, which meant there were some specific parameters to stick to including 24 dimmers and the consideration that there is a very low ceiling in the upstairs space. To combat this Prema and I worked on a separate plan together to go into Soho where Prema would be there to help relight. Laura and Emma, the stage managers on the tour, were very experienced in putting

shows into smaller spaces, which helped, and we did the focus plot together. As it was quite a small rig I used the demo version of Lightwright. As I had used MLA at Chichester it was good to be able to compare the two pieces of software.

To end my Lumière I was set to finish on the transfer of *Stepping Out* into the West End's Vaudeville Theatre. As Peter was busy on another tap dancing show – *42nd Street*, just around the corner – which I would also be going on to after *Stepping Out*, I would be mainly looking after things at the Vaudeville. We got in on the Wednesday and Peter came in to focus on the Saturday. We then spent the Sunday relighting the show. Set in a village hall, the main states were bright village hall with light coming from the outside world through the high windows to denote the time of year. The transitions were all to be simplified from what we had on the tour and we went through these with the director. Peter then left me to carry on and was only around the corner if I needed anything. It was great to work with the director and the whole team on the show, and although it was mainly small changes just to do with positioning of the cast

Lumière scheme part two

Rachel Cleary

and levels there were a couple of bigger changes in the transitions. I was delighted to be credited as an associate on the show.

It has been an incredible experience to be part of the Lumière scheme. It has been fantastic to work with so many different people and very interesting to see how everyone has their own way of working. It gives you an opportunity to look at the way you work yourself and to experiment to find what the best and most efficient way is for you. These are skills you pick up not only from designers but also programmers. It is amazing to see how fast they work and keep everything in order.

I am very grateful to all involved in the scheme, especially Katharine Williams who organised the scheme introducing me to the lighting designers that I have worked with. Having now come to the end of my Lumière I cannot believe how lucky I am to have been part of this wonderful new scheme. Being able to work on a variety of different shows and with so many amazing people has been such a fantastic opportunity! 🌸



*Made in India
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
Directed by Katie Posner
Designed by Lydia Denno
Lighting designed by Prema Mehta
Photograph by Robert Day*