

Mark Simpson

Arts Manager & Lecturer



Having spent a large part of my career as a Stage Manager and Company Manager, including twelve years at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, I am now building on the knowledge and skills I have developed over my time in theatre; enjoying new directions in teaching, writing and research.

CURRENT

In 2008, I started lecturing at Rose Bruford College. I was awarded a Masters Degree (with distinction) in Theatre Practices through the same institution in 2009 and more recently, a Post Graduate certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education leading to a fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA).

Teaching management theory & technique, stage management, score reading and web design, I am also responsible for Professional Preparation across all Production programmes and co-ordinate the academic studies for our International students.

As part of this role, I was instrumental in the rewrite of the stage management programme at Rose Bruford and in addition, I am the external examiner for the Technical Theatre and Stage Management programme at East 15.

Keeping in touch with industry contacts over the last couple of years, I have worked with both British Youth Opera and Music Theatre Wales as Company Manager. I have also lectured at the University of Kent and more recently have worked closely with the Royal Shakespeare Company on their OPEN STAGES initiative, running skills exchange workshops up and down the country.

Alongside this work, I am also conducting research at doctoral level exploring collaboration in the performing arts, management and the creative mind.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY IN REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

2006-08

Late 2006 through to July 2007, I became Company Manager for Garsington Opera. This exciting opportunity, being based around the Summer Season at Garsington Manor near Oxford gave me the chance to continue exploring diverse interests at other times of the year.

During the Autumn of 2007, I was Company Manager for British Youth Opera's residency at the Peacock Theatre with productions of Mozart's THE MAGIC FLUTE and Britten's ALBERT HERRING.

Late 2007 through to the Summer of 2008 saw me on national tours of Philippe Boesmans' JULIE and Harrison Birtwhistle's PUNCH AND JUDY as Company Manager for Music Theatre Wales, both of which took me back to the Royal Opera House, this time in the Linbury Theatre.

2005-06

March through July 2005 saw me touring as Stage Manager on Deborah Warner's production of JULIUS CAESAR. Starting at the Barbican Theatre as part of BITE 2005, we took a massive set and a cast of 30 to Paris, Madrid and Luxembourg, picking up 100 new extras in each venue!

In November 2005, I travelled to DOHA, QATAR as part of the Stage Management team running the opening ceremony for the brand new ASPIRE Sports Academy, flying straight back to be part of the team running the ITV ROYAL VARIETY PERFORMANCE at the Millennium Centre in Cardiff.

From December 2005 until August 2006, I was Company Manager for CHEEK BY JOWL on their production of THE CHANGELING. We toured into France, Germany, Luxembourg and Spain with seasons in Warwick and The Barbican Theatre.

2004-05

Deciding to move back into the commercial sector, in September 2004 I was Show-caller for BBC/Disney's Family Prom in Hyde Park. This was broadcast over Christmas that year.

I also free-lanced at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts – teaching Score Reading for Stage Managers (also examining for the Stage Management Association).

December through January I spent as Company Manager for Paul Elliot and Qdos Entertainment on PETER PAN at the Mayflower Theatre in Southampton, with responsibilities for Company liaison, discipline, welfare and representation; scheduling and budgeting.

A natural progression from Stage Management, Company Management took me further into the realms of administration. As the senior representative for QDOS Entertainment at the Theatre and quite apart from maintaining the quality of the production on stage, my duties were wide and varied and on any one day would include negotiations with the Theatre Management, Marketing, Box Office, Press and Broadcasting Media; Arranging public appearances, transport and accommodation for the Principal Artists; And organising anything from charity collections to prize holiday give-aways.

2003-04

Having gone as far as I could in one position at the Royal Opera House and with no immediate possibility of a move within the Organisation, I decided to take the opportunity of a career break, using it to travel around Egypt and to explore new avenues of creativity fused with technology, particularly web design, digital graphics and photography.

1992-2003

I became Stage Manager at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in 1996, having joined as a Deputy Stage Manager in 1992. Based primarily in the Main House with the Royal Opera, I was responsible for the technically challenging production of FALSTAFF that re-opened the building in 1999.

Primarily, my duties, in conjunction with my team and in liaison with other members of production staff, were to ensure the smooth running of rehearsals and performances on the main stage. In a repertory environment like this with so many people involved in any one production, time is of the essence and every second lost can result in huge amounts of overtime. Hence time management and negotiation skills were vital to ensure the success of each project. Maintaining accurate records for each production was also a priority for the survival and revival of the repertoire, as were up to date and accurate risk assessments.

Here, I also gained a wealth of experience in National and International touring & residency - France, Germany, Scandinavia, Holland, Sicily, Edinburgh and London venues including the new Sadler's Wells, the Barbican, the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal Festival Hall and the Shaftsbury Theatre. Other responsibilities included liaison and Floor Management with National and International TV and Radio companies along with additional work in the other performance spaces at the Royal Opera House. This position also gave me the opportunity to work with The Royal Ballet, touring nationally and to Japan and China.

1989-92

I worked mainly in the West End on productions of STOP THE WORLD I WANT TO GET OFF, PRIN and THE PHILANTHROPIST interspersed with work at the Theatre Royal, Windsor and the Churchill Theatre, Bromley on productions of REBECCA, SISTERLY FEELINGS and BREATH OF SPRING. I also toured with Triumph Productions on productions of THE COCKTAIL HOUR and THE PHILANTHROPIST.

Whilst at the Theatre Royal, Windsor, I also played PRINCE CHARMING in CINDERELLA for a week – the Principal and his cover both suffering from the same virus!

Other events in this period included Showcalling the EVELYN LAYE Tribute Gala at the London Palladium and part of the team running the MCLAREN F1 'end of season' party at the Royal Albert Hall with Rock Bands and Street Performers.

1987-89

I worked extensively with Trends Management on tours of GUYS AND DOLLS, PETER PAN and on their Christmas shows, I also toured with Kent Opera for their final three seasons at that time, firstly as DSM on productions of COUNT ORY and DON GIOVANNI and then as Stage Manager on productions of PETER GRIMES, THE RETURN OF ULYSSES and FIDELIO.

1986-87

Trying my hand as an Actor, I appeared on stage in productions of GODSPELL, THE DEEP BLUE SEA, MURDER ON THE NILE, on screen in WISH YOU WERE HERE and on TV in HOWARDS WAY. This period also saw me open a bar in Brighton and re-evaluate my career path, realising that I still had plenty to offer as a Stage Manager.

1982-86

I started as DSM and was then promoted to Company and Stage Manager at the Connaught Theatre, Worthing, working on a varied repertory of plays and musicals with occasional ballet and opera from visiting companies. During this period I also took charge of the Connaught's Theatre in Education (TIE) programme.

1980-82

I started as Assistant Stage Manager (ASM) and then moved up to Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) on a variety of Productions at The Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford; The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham and The Civic Theatre, Chesterfield.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

To 1979

I attended King's School, Rochester, where I attained seven O levels and two A levels. I was also awarded the Drama Prize in my final year. I then went on to Guilford School of Acting where I studied under Peter Jackson and was awarded a Diploma in Stage Management along with the Stage Management Prize.

2009/2011

More recently I was awarded a Masters Degree (with distinction) in Theatre Practices and a Post Graduate certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education through Rose Bruford College/Manchester University.

OTHER

SKILLS

I am highly motivated with excellent interpersonal and organisational skills. Specific fluencies include score reading; plans & technical drawing; computing and word processing: Microsoft OFFICE; Adobe DREAMWEAVER, FIREWORKS, PHOTOSHOP and AutoDesk AUTOCAD. I have a full, clean driving licence and have undergone training in Health & Safety and First Aid.

TECHNICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

These include liaison and Floor Management with National and International TV companies recording and relaying staged productions; re-lighting productions whilst on tour; sound rig installation and operation; touring carpentry & prop making; technical liaison with touring venues (including overseas); scheduling and budgeting. Within several engagements I have acted as Staff Director, rehearsing second casts and covers. I am also familiar with the control systems used at the Royal Opera House and elsewhere.

OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INTERESTS

At times in my career, theatre work has been interspersed with other quite diverse occupations. These include opening and running a Bar in Brighton with a friend and business partner – giving me a chance to hone my culinary skills, cooking being something I very much enjoy. I had success creating graphics, signs and letterheads for various businesses in and around Brighton and am happy to take on commissions for web design, artwork and graphics. I also maintain strong interests in interior design, painting, photography, jazz and contemporary music, ancient Egypt, religious history, Grail history and the English language.

On top of all of this, I write words and music, enjoying and taking inspiration from a wide range of musical styles. As well as a substantial catalogue of songs, ‘miniatures’ and longer instrumental pieces, my work includes the composition of a full score of incidental music for a production of AS YOU LIKE IT at the Connaught Theatre, Worthing and the composition of a full length Musical entitled THE CITY. I have also worked as Musical Director for a production of LUCKY BASTARDS at the Albany and on Keyboards for a production of PETER PAN – again at the Connaught Theatre, Worthing. I have had a short work performed in the Crush Room at the Royal Opera House as part of a Concert for National Aids Day and am currently working on settings for the poetry of W.B. Yeats alongside the soundtracks for two short films.

REFEREES

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MCAS Spring 2014