



# West End Creative Learning

Inspiring passion in theatre

## ATG West End Technical Work Experience at the Donmar Warehouse – April 2014

Written by George Bach

I was recently fortunate enough to be offered the chance to do a work placement at the Donmar Warehouse as part of the Ambassador Theatre Group's new work experience scheme, masterminded by Ellen Bott, ATG's West End Creative Learning Manager. The new scheme aims to allow young people who are passionate about pursuing a career in technical theatre the opportunity to experience working in a professional environment.



With only six months to go until the end of my training at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, where I study on the Postgraduate Diploma in Stage Electrics and Lighting Design, this opportunity could not have come at a better time as it enabled me to consolidate what I had already learned through periods of casual work in London, Edinburgh and while at University in Lancaster and through my training at RADA. In addition, the prospect of working in a new, energetic and highly prominent venue and meeting people who are working in the sector that I hope to work in when I graduate, was something that really excited me from the very beginning.

After meeting Ellen at ATG's Head Office, receiving an enlightening history of ATG and its venues and discussing my expectations for my time at the Donmar and what I hoped to achieve while there, I was soon introduced to David Griffiths, the Donmar Theatre Manager and then to George Dives, the Chief Electrician and his deputy, Tom Wickens. I had started at the beginning of the final week of the current show, *Versailles*, which gave us a week to prepare for the new incoming production of *Privacy* and its get-out and fit-up the following weekend. As such, for much of that week, my duties included preparing in-house lighting equipment for the next show, cutting colour and preparing the venue for the demands of the new production. In addition, I had the opportunity to meet Richard Howell, the Lighting Designer for *Privacy* and sit in on a meeting between him, George and Tom as they discussed the final details of the rig ahead of the weekend fit-up. This proved a very valuable few days as it enabled me to get a feel for the venue and how it operated before the weekend. For the fit-up itself, I worked the whole day with the other freelance electricians to install the lighting infrastructure for *Privacy*. This gave me an opportunity to talk to other professionals about their experiences and their journeys into the industry; something that was very useful and gave me a real understanding into the different routes that one can take into technical theatre. Following the fit-up on Sunday, I was able to participate in the lighting focus with Richard and the other freelancers, enabling me to get an insight into his very clever and creative design, while feeling that I was being useful to the team at the same time. In addition, I shadowed Tom as he programmed the lighting for the show with Richard in the days following the focus and thus saw the production process right through from the fit-up to the days following the opening night.

Before starting with ATG I had previously found it difficult to 'get my foot in the door' in the west end; a problem that I hear is not uncommon and it is for this reason that this new work experience scheme is of paramount importance and why the work that Ellen and her team are doing is of great significance and really will make a difference to any young people who are seeking employment in this sector. For me, my time at the Donmar proved a very useful learning opportunity as it gave me my first real insight into what it takes to work in lighting in a professional west end venue. I was able to work as part of a welcoming and highly skilled team throughout my placement and gained an awareness of the different skills needed in order to work in such a distinguished environment. It is my desire to become a freelance Production Electrician when I graduate from RADA and my time at the Donmar has definitely reaffirmed this aspiration, and as such I am grateful to David, George and Tom for spending the time to make this experience as useful as possible for me, and to Ellen for creating the opportunity.

To express your interest in the opportunity to be part of this scheme please email Ellen Bott, West End Creative Learning Manager [ellenbott@theambassadors.com](mailto:ellenbott@theambassadors.com)