

Revista BackStage – May 2008
South Pacific – Lincoln Center – Part 1

It was suggested that I start this first article with a short biography of myself. But after 34 years in the entertainment industry, I just didn't know where to begin. So I'd like to start by saying "thank you" to my publisher, Nelson Pereira, for allowing me this opportunity to speak my mind about what I know and love; theatre & dance lighting.

Many artists, designers, actors and dancers around the U.S. yearn to live somewhere in Manhattan to pursue their dream in the arts. I was more fortunate because I was born there. And in the 1970's you could still find cheap places to live in NYC. Today, most people in the arts are forced to live outside Manhattan because rentals are too expensive to live and work there.

So growing up in New York, I was able to get my career started by doing showcase productions. This type of production had no budget for salaries. You worked for free for the opportunity to have your work seen by the public (and producers too.) Once you got noticed (and that was not an overnight event) you started getting bigger shows with larger budgets. But until then, you struggled with your art and your limited budgets.

When my career began in 1974 it was one of the last years in which film stars would be seasonally contracted to work during the summer in a type of theatre known as "Star Package Summer Stock". The U.S. has a history of summer theatre that present comedies and musicals in everything from converted barns to major regional theatres. Some of the stars I worked during that time included John Carradine (Father of David Carradine), Sylvia Sidney (Beetlejuice), Broderick Crawford (That Championship Season), Patty Duke (TV Star – 1960's) and John Astin (The Addams Family TV Show).

In summer stock, the stars would perform at a local theatre for one week and then travel on to the next theatre. The scenery would be built from drawings that were sent in advance of the cast and then completed in time for the actors to begin their technical rehearsal and performance schedule. They were big stars even for me at the extremely old age of 20. But what they taught me was invaluable to my future. I discovered that most big stars are just people. And most of them were nice, honest, down-to-earth human beings.

When I took on stage management I made it part of my routine to speak with my director, actors, designers and staff on a one-to-one basis, treating them all as individuals. Today I follow the same basic rule whether I'm in charge of a project or not. I speak with everyone. I share my experience with anyone who wants to know. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

Over the years I have held many different jobs in the performing arts. To this day, I still work as a lighting designer, art director, stage manager, production manager and even as a stagehand. As a result, I have first-hand knowledge of equipment & labor costs, as well as techniques and materials used in the creation of a production or event. And I always try to keep up with the latest technologies whether it's the newest moving light, LED or conventional light, or a new gel color or paint.

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At this point you must be wondering why a native New Yorker would be writing for a Brazilian publication. Well, I have been coming to Brasil for almost 40 years. And I consider your country to be a second home to me. In fact, I have more family in Brazil than I have in the U.S. And each time I come to Rio de Janeiro, I bring a new piece of theatre technology, such as the latest gobos, gels and the occasional roll or two of Gaffers' Tape with me.

In the U.S., as in many places around the world, it is almost impossible to specialize in just one area of the arts and be financially successful too. For myself, I have concentrated on lighting (as a designer or electrician) and management (as production or stage manager). Over the years I expanded from my theatre and dance roots to include television production as well. But theatre is where I get the most satisfaction whether I'm designing or managing a staged presentation or event. But that is enough talk about my career for now.

I am standing at the corner of Broadway and 66th Street, just outside Lincoln Center. As I got out of the subway I was hoping to get a photo of the Lincoln Center complex. But they are in the middle of a major renovation here. There are tall barriers surrounding the fountain and in front of many of the theatres. Oh, well. No flattering pictures would be taken of the outside of the buildings. Even the Vivian Beaumont and the Mitzi Newhouse theatres have large fences blocking these beautiful buildings from the public.

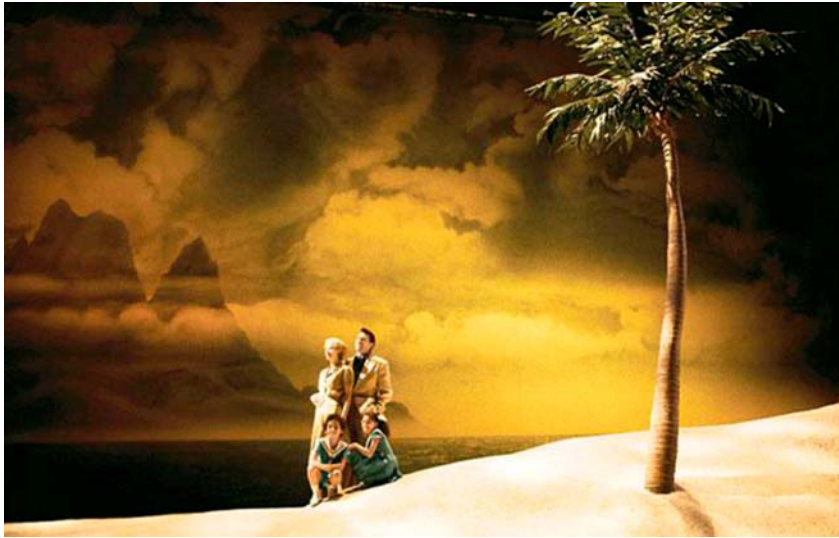
For those who do not know about Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts I will give you a brief history of this jewel of NYC. Have you seen the movie, Westside Story? If you have, then you have an idea of the former neighborhood, known as "Hell's Kitchen", where Lincoln Center now stands. It was an impoverished and run-down part of the Westside of NYC. It was also a high crime area during the 1950's and 1960's.

But in 1964 the ground was broken for Lincoln Center. It was a project that would not only change an entire neighborhood for the better but it also created another arts institution that the City of New York needed. Lincoln Center is a not-for-profit performing arts organization whose prestige (not to mention great productions) gives it access to Federal, State and City grants but it also has a tremendous following of corporate and private donations which are needed to run an organization of this size.

Lincoln Center consists of The Metropolitan Opera, New York State Theatre, Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, The Vivian Beaumont Theatre, The Mitzi Newhouse Theatre, Damrosch Park, The Julliard School of Music and the NY Public Library for the Performing Arts. For the performing arts aficionado it is practically paradise. You have your choice of dance, opera, theatre, music and film all within just a few blocks. And if none of that interests you, Broadway is a few blocks south.

But I am here today to view a new production of the Rodgers & Hammerstein's musical, South Pacific. And I was given a very personal tour by the head of Public Relations, Philip Rinaldi. With his assistance I was able to meet and speak with the technicians

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and designers about their jobs and the equipment they're using for this show. And for those who do not know the story, South Pacific takes place during the Second World War II on an island. Many of the songs have become world famous including; "Some Enchanted Evening", "There is Nothing Like a Dame" and "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair". This show has something for everyone. There are comic and dramatic moments; great songs; and throughout there is the undercurrent of the social prejudice that was normal for the times. And there is one more element of this show that should be noted. The role of Emile de Becque is being performed by Paulo Szot, a Brazilian Opera baritone singer.

Lighting:



Lincoln Center does not have an unlimited budget but it does have fantastic connections within the entertainment industry. And one of their partners is Electronic Theatre Controls, Inc.

The new ETC Eos boards are being used for South Pacific. They are using two boards; one for conventional lighting and DMX devices and the other

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for moving lights. Plus a master computer networked to both consoles which not only saves all the cues but also can be used as a back-up system to run all the lighting for this show in the event of a system operating crash by either Eos System.

Eos Features

- * 5000 channels (devices)
- * 4000 and 8000 outputs/parameters
- * Dedicated master playback fader pair
- * 10 definable motorized faders, with 30 pages of control
- * 999 cue lists
- * 200 submasters

- * 3 programmable grand masters
- * Dedicated pan/tilt or XYZ encoders, 4 pageable encoders
- * 2 15" LCD touchscreens
- * High-density live and blind displays
- * Electronic magic sheets
- * Net3 (ACN based) and ETCNet2 native
- * Multiple MIDI and SMPTE Inputs
- * Synchronized backup
- * Offline programming
- * Data-launders from Obsession, Express/ion and Strand 500/300 series show files via ASCII
- * 12 discrete on-line users

Lincoln Center is one of ETC's beta testers. So the stagehands at Lincoln Center work very closely with ETC to correct programming errors. But as far as the board operator, Bruce Rubin is concerned this board is great. It's very intuitive. And if you are familiar with ETC you can learn the new system easily. There wasn't enough time for me to get a "hands on" test of the Eos because I got there less than ninety minutes before the show. Everyone was busy setting up for the performance and the Head Electrician, Patrick Merryman were dealing with a 4Kw HMI Fresnel that was not working correctly that day. So I walked around and took some photos of backstage and some of the props of the show.



Wireless DMX, batteries and low voltage equipment are used extensively in this production. For example, there are 55 Gallon oil drums that contain a fire effect (a

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small high intensity lamp with a fan that moves a lit piece of cloth) and a small fogger that produce a beautiful effect. All controlled remotely by an ETC Eos board. It's a beautiful moment as the flames and smoke begin on stage followed by the stage lights which add to the ambiance of the scene. There is a truck and an airplane on stage that also use Wireless DMX for their lights.

To give you an idea of the complexity of the show, here is a partial list of the lighting equipment being used on South Pacific:

74 – Source4 10°	7 – 8'-0" S4 Multipar MFL 3ckt
92 – Source4 14°	6 – Mini-10 @ 750w
113 – Source4 19°	
181 – Source4 26°	2 – 8 X 13 @ 1kw
36 – Source4 36°	6 – VL 3500 Spot @ 1200w
18 – Source4 PAR VNSP	21 – VL 1000AS @ 575w
36 – Source4 PAR NSP	8 – Mac 2k Performance @ 1200w
31 – Source4 PAR MFL	12 – HES Studio Color @ 575w
31 – Source4 PAR WFL	
14 – PAR 64 MFL	7 – DHA Light Curtain Par56 VNSP
1 – Altman 2000L 10" Fresnel	115 – ColoRam Scrollers
5 – Arri 5k Fresnel	1 – DMX Transmitter
	1 – Opto-splitter @ 100w
2 – HMI PAR MFL	14 – DHA Light Curtain Controllers
5 – HMI 4Kw Fresnel	
	4 – Lycian 1272 @ 1200w
18 – 6'-0" MR16 Ministrip EYC	
7 – 9'-0" T3 Striplight 4ckt/12cell	24 – Q-Lights
14 – 4'-9" T3 Striplight 3ckt/6cell	
20 – L&E Broadcyc 3ckt/3cell	

END OF PART ONE

Part Two in June's Revista Backstage!