



Teacher Resource

Interview with Lighting Designer Chris Davey

[What has been your starting point for the lighting design concept for Great Expectations? What's the first step in the process?](#)

The starting point has been Dickens novel itself and getting to grips with the epic story. It's huge in all aspects from its locations to time span through social class structure so the first step is to understand the sheer scale of the story.

[How important are conversations with the director and with other members of the creative team?](#)

It's really important the audience sees a clear vision and approach when watching Great Expectations. Director Lucy Bailey and Designer Mike Britton have a very specific sense of the story so it's extremely important that the lighting supports that and their approach to the piece.

It is also very important that Sound Designer Emma Laxton and I talk constantly so we are telling the same story. For example; that I provide a lightning fork at the same intensity as Emma's sound effect for it to be believable. In more subtle areas such as atmosphere for example we may both be building to help support a very heightened tense part of a scene so we need to work together so that we don't overpower the scene and that we are both telling the same story through sound and light.

What have been your main sources of inspiration when designing for this production?

Dickens description of locations and atmosphere is extremely vivid. You really can see the world he is describing. Also the adaptation is more like a film script in its detail which is amazingly helpful. Also Mike Britton's set design drips with atmosphere. You are always aware of Pip's background and that he never forgets his roots.

How would you describe the lighting design concept for this production?

Epic and drastic atmosphere!

Has the theatre space (Quarry) influenced your design?

The Quarry Theatre with its great sweep of an auditorium is an epic amphitheatre space which will support this epic story perfectly. It's a fantastic space to light though it can be tough as the audience sightline is very large. In a proscenium theatre, everyone is looking through the picture frame in one direction so the image is easier to control however in the Quarry, the extreme seats are a very wide viewing angle so it is important to think about those extreme seats when lighting a scene.

Could you talk us through one brief moment from the production and describe your lighting concept for it?

We are only at the start of the rehearsal process so it is early days but as the set is beautifully sculptural I hope to use the structure to cast huge shadows on the white cyclorama (the cloth surrounding the set), also trap doors in the raised floor can become windows for a shaft of light into Pip's bedroom at the Gargery.