

Dyslexia-friendly Transcript for Discover Central Ep4:

Nick Moran



Host: Scott Bellamy

Guest 1: Student Pedro Pendaó

Guest 2: Nick Moran

Article and podcast links:

<https://www.cssd.ac.uk/discover-central-podcast>

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[theme tune plays. SCOTT starts speaking]

HOST - SCOTT BELLAMY:

Welcome to Discover Central, the podcast that gives you a behind the scenes look at the life of students, staff, and alumni at London's Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

[theme tune fades out]

SCOTT:

Today, we'll be talking to Nick Moran about Central's 2020 online Theatre Practice exhibition, an annual exhibition which provides a chance to share and celebrate the accomplishments of graduating students from all our courses within the Theatre Practice programme. But first, here's first year Production Lighting student Pedro with his top tip for lockdown.

GUEST 1 - STUDENT PEDRO

Hi, my name is Pedro and I'm a first year undergraduate of Production Lighting at Central and my tip for staying healthy in this lockdown is board games: board games with family with your friends, and with your flatmates. They're very good way to stay socially active and to be able to have fun and have a sane mind.

SCOTT:

I'm back with Nick Moran. Nick is a professional lighting designer, lecturer, researcher and author. He is a Senior Lecturer at Central where he is also the course leader for production lighting and lighting design. He's a founding board member of the Association of Lighting Designers sits on the board of Skill Scene, and is the author of Performance Lighting Design, Electric Shadows, and The Right Light. Hi Nick, welcome, and thanks for joining us.

GUEST 2 – NICK MORAN:

Thanks for asking me.

SCOTT:

So this year's Theatre Practice Exhibition was disrupted as a result of lockdown. Tell us more about the Theatre Practice Exhibition, what it is and what it represents for final year students.

NICK:

For most of the final year students on the Theatre Practice course here, the exhibition is an important launch platform for their professional careers. Be that in theatre, film and TV, concert touring and events, or what we sometimes called the experience economy: that's theme parks exhibitions like Harry Potter World in Watford and in Dubai, which incidentally, are two projects that now appear on the CVs here

quite a lot of Central Theatre Practice graduates. It's part of the Future Practice unit, which is an innovative unit, unique to Central, that helps the students research and prepare for life as practitioners making a living doing what they've been trained to do, or something else that uses those skills, building a career and a professional profile. So you can see the exhibition plays an important role in giving them a place to show off their skills and abilities.

SCOTT:

And in response to the lockdown the exhibition was very quickly moved online and is now being delivered digitally, which was a real achievement, particularly given the tight turnaround time. Tell me how was this accomplished?

NICK:

Well, we were able to use our extensive industry connections to find a sympathetic design studio with proven experience in building an online exhibition with up to 100 exhibitors. We're also very fortunate to have quite a lot of curation experience on the TP staff team, Simon Donger and Andreas Skourtis have both designed exhibitions for the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, for example, and have extensive experience curating online experiences. We worked closely with the students to make sure that the visitor experience for the exhibition was what they wanted, and their individual exhibit pages could do for them what they wanted to do. That's how we came up with the brief for the design studio. We also work closely with the students and course leaders, and all the visiting professionals that help to educate the students, to make sure that the right people are invited to the exhibition, whether it's online or in our studios at Swiss Cottage.

SCOTT:

It's a monumental achievement that it has been done so quickly. So that's the exhibition; in terms of course delivery, how's that being managed remotely?

NICK:

Well, as soon as we saw what was happening in China and other parts of the world, we started working on how we might be able to deliver the same quality of learning to all the students even though we were not going to be on site. So thank goodness for Zoom and for Microsoft Teams. The ever-resourceful TP course team came up with the idea of working on a family friendly festival for this term. Some courses in the TP family have been making at home. Some have been very focused on a particular area for example, designing and planning a multipurpose social space. The lighting students have been working in teams to plan the lighting and video for the whole site, which is quite a task. Every team across the course has been working with experienced professionals whose day job would normally have been at places like Glastonbury, at V, at WOMAD, at Latitude, or at Secret Cinema or in the open air theatre in Regent's Park, or many of the opera festivals throughout the country. Many of these professionals are Central TP alumni, and they and the course team have been really impressed with the level of engagement and initiative shown across the programme with plenty of offers of work made once things get back to normal.

SCOTT:

And you yourself are the course leader for the Production Lighting and Lighting Design courses at Central. You touched on it a little bit a moment ago, but tell us a little bit more about what your students are currently working on during lockdown.

NICK:

Well the lighting students are working in four teams of Lighting Designers and Production Lighting students, with four professionals, who between them have worked in leading roles on festivals all over Europe and beyond. The students are learning a huge amount about planning and organisation, about power and data distribution, about what LDs and Production Lighting people can and can't do when working outside or in a tent. And most importantly, about working as a team, problem solving together. All of this is going to be really useful to them when we get back on site making work together and it will put them in a very good place when it comes to getting work later, too.

SCOTT:

And I guess it goes without saying that the theatre, live performance and events industry are likely to be impacted by COVID-19 for some time to come. How do you think this will affect the industry and what alternative delivery methods are available?

NICK:

Well, I expect most people will be aware of the various live streaming platforms and live streaming events that have happened in theatre and in the music business. Right now, it looks like the most feasible way of putting performance in front of an audience involves cameras. So that's an area we'll be focusing on in the autumn. We'll be making sure that all our LD students understand lighting for camera, as well as for a live audience. And we'll be looking to give our production lighting students more skills in video production, too.

SCOTT:

And more broadly, how would you say theatre practice training at Central prepares students for professional work in circumstances such as these?

NICK:

Well, I think the strong connections to the industry become really important at moments like this. We can work with industry professionals to change practice to suit whatever the new environment turns out to be. Underlying all the Theatre Practice training is that it's a preparation for a career, not just a job. It involves giving the students a deep understanding of the industries that they want to work in, and an appreciation that their career is a marathon, not a sprint, and that they can get through downtimes as well as prepare themselves for more positive and more expansive times within the industry.

SCOTT:

And I guess that with these industry connections, it means that during this quite difficult time for different kind of live event industries, we're going to be you know, in contact with those people who are at the forefront of what we might call 'the new normal', how things are going to be. Would it be fair to say that actually now, more than ever, is a really good time to start the training element of your career?

NICK:

I think you're right. I think there's going to be lots of professional expertise around almost available to anybody who phones up. For example, one of our third years who is interested in going into the management side of concert touring, this month has had extensive phone conversations with the Senior Production Manager from Glastonbury Festival, who's been doing it for 25 years. Now, in a normal

year, he just wouldn't be able to have that amount of time to talk to a student. And that's just one case, one isolated case in, in many, there's lots of examples of that kind of thing. So it is a really good idea to right now be building skills so that when there is a live audience for what we do, we'll be able to move into that space with new skills and traditional skills.

SCOTT:

Thanks for taking the time to speak with us today, Nick.

NICK:

Thank you, and good luck.

[theme tune starts, crescendo at Scott starts talking]

SCOTT:

And thanks to production lighting student Pedro. We'll be back next week with more tips from Central students and more discussions with our community about the exciting and innovative work they've been undertaking during these unusual times. For now, from all of us at Central. Thanks for joining us, and we'll see you next time.

[theme tune ends, diminuendo]