



## **ABTT AWARD FOR EMERGING EXCELLENCE: 2020 CANDIDATE**

### **Jamie Vella:**

"I wish to nominate **Jamie Vella**, LX technician at Derby Theatre. Derby Theatre operates a small full time technical team so whilst Jamie is employed as the LX technician, he works flexibly across all aspects of the technical department in what is a busy producing and receiving venue.

At the age of 16 Jamie began touring as Lighting Designer with a medium scale tribute band, which toured into some of the largest theatre's in the UK (outside London), such as Manchester Opera House and Blackpool Opera House, whilst also studying '*Technical Events*' at the Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies.

Since joining Derby Theatre he has designed, rigged, programmed and operated lighting for many diverse shows applying all different skills for both produced and received productions, whether that be simply focusing fixtures for a designer, soldering LED tape into props and/or scenery or recommending lighting positions to enhance productions.

Where Jamie has excelled has been through his fast paced problem solving in order to fix an immediate issue alongside working with senior members of the team to lead on long term changes within the department. His has shown an ability to strategically address these practical issues, whilst maintaining a high performance in his day to day activities.

Jamie, is a very proactive member of the team and has been very supportive in helping the team gel together, all with professionalism, good humor and patience.

Derby Theatre is owned by the University of Derby and operates to a Learning Theatre model where learning is at the centre of all of our operations. Jamie is fully engaged in supporting the students on the Technical Theatre degree courses, specifically helping to develop the practical skills of individuals who work as part of our casual team. He is happy to share his knowledge and experiences with the students and is a mentor figure to the next generation and cohort coming through after him.

Jamie is constantly developing his skills, with a mixture of online learning, formal courses, discussing with other technicians and keeping up-to-date with recent developments in all aspects from intelligent lighting to mechanical rigging. Currently he is developing a strategy for the theatre to embrace a future change to LED lighting fixtures. He is also looking at the use of OSC and Midi Timecode, to enable us to reduce the number of operators on our produced work after technical as the show goes into its run.

Since taking on the role at Derby Theatre he has reviewed all of the LX department systems making huge improvements to how the LX department operates, including the storage and preparation of lanterns, cables etc. which has led to more efficient ways of working. This also includes improvement to our system infrastructure (e.g. DMX, Ethernet etc.) so we can operate more efficiently particularly in receiving shows.

When working as a small team it is important that our systems are easily understood by other technicians where it isn't their main skill, Jamie has developed a standard set up and a fixed rig, so all the technicians can all use the LX system with confidence when Jamie isn't on shift. If we get stuck he is always willing to talk us through, even the most basic issues, with good humor and patience.

Jamie also supports a number of local amateur performance companies, over a wide range of genres covering dance, musical theatre and plays, in addition to his full time role at Derby Theatre. We believe Jamie deserves the recognition from his peers for outstanding contribution to Derby theatre, our students and wider Theatrical community of the city and region."

**Simon Birchall, Technical Manager Derby Theatre**

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#### SUPPORTING STATEMENT ONE:

"I first met Jamie in 2017 when he undertook the lighting design and operation of our production of West Side Story, our first production at Derby Theatre, our regular lighting designer was not available, Jamie very kindly stepped in quite late on in the production process and I was very appreciative of his involvement.

Since 2017 he has been our regular 'contracted' lighting chap but it would be totally unfair to see him as just 'another lighting guy'. When he joined us in 2017, it became very obvious that not only was he a first rate lighting designer, but he has immersed himself totally in our productions and the narrow definition of 'lighting designer' does, in no way, cover all he has done to help us with our productions: he likes to be involved right from the very start of our productions, keen to come along to any relevant production meetings and help us out in the many technical aspects of our productions.

Nowhere better was this exemplified than in our 2019 production of BARNUM, by far our most ambitious production to date in terms of set and technology. Jamie was never bound by the tight restrictions of our 'contracted time and responsibilities' agreed with him as he helped us out with so much of the technical side of the production, the manipulation and organisation of the set requirements and many other aspects of this complicated production.

The lighting, of course, was highly impressive and added so much to the success of our performances, attracting high acclaim from our audiences, being not only colourful but highly sophisticated and atmospheric: here he has a real passion and love of theatrical lighting and was often to be seen in the lighting box refining and improving his lighting operations, even after the first performance, when, in fact, his job would have been restricted to operating the lights during the performances. But such is his genuine loyalty and commitment to a production.

Without his contribution (and in fairness without all the technical help given by DT technical staff), in all technical areas outside his strictly lighting profile, I do not feel that, with the limited knowledge of our own internal production team, we could have mounted this production. I am pretty convinced that, in addition, he worked a lot 'behind the scenes' in ways of which I was unaware to guarantee the success of the show.

In conclusion with Jamie we not only managed to get a first rate and professional lighting designer and operator but also we got a key member of the external production team whose objective has always been to ensure that our performances are acted out against a professional background of theatrical excellence brought about by his immense technical involvement which always goes far beyond any initial requirements. His vast contributions over the past few years have certainly allowed him to become an honorary member of DYMT!"

**Peter Waters Director/Chairman Derby Youth Musical Theatre**

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#### SUPPORTING STATEMENT 2:

"Jamie went above and beyond in his support of my developing lighting design for 'One Man, Two Guvnors' at Derby Theatre last year. He worked tirelessly and with great focus to help deliver the lighting concept, which he really took the trouble to fully understand and appreciate. His programming skills were precise and excellent, his support through the focus sessions was intelligent, and his ability to gauge how best to offer support to the overall production was well judged, selfless, and assured. All this with a resolute stamina and continuous sunny disposition – a real pleasure to work with."

**Tim Skelly, Lighting Designer**

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#### SUPPORTING STATEMENT 3:

"Working with Jamie is always a real pleasure, not only is he a fantastic programmer but his logical, problem solving brain means he is always one step ahead when it comes to getting practical jobs done. He really understands his craft and how he can support a designer, he can also keeps up with the daft chat which, to be honest, is usually a priority after tech session two"

**Emma Jones, Lighting Designer**