

**SPOTLIGHT – Jack Wigley,
Automation Operator
Tues 21 February 2017**

Tell us a bit about your role in Matthew Bourne's production of *The Red Shoes*:

My role as the Automation Operator is to control the movement of the scenery using motors. If you have seen the show already then you will probably remember the big moving curtain. Well, that's me. Using a variety of motors and a fancy control desk I can move that curtain to anywhere on the stage. I operate during the show and when we are not doing a show, I am busy maintaining the system to ensure it works correctly every day.

Have there been any other highlights in your career so far, if so what are they?

Highlights of my career? Other than opening the world premiere of Matthew Bourne's production of *The Red Shoes*? Well I would have to say it would be my last job, prior to starting on *The Red Shoes*, working for Disney. I spent 7 months sailing around the Caribbean working on board a Disney Cruise Ship, as an Automation Operator. The sun, the characters, the shows, everything you need to make it a great opportunity that I'll never forget.

What advice would you give to someone looking to do something like your role in the show?

Although automation has been used on shows for some time now, it's still very new. It's a very exciting department to be in however it's also a very technically challenging department. My advice would be to learn as much as you can and to keep on learning. Automation is always changing, always growing and always getting better so you can never know enough. Stage Technologies who provide all the automation equipment for *The Red Shoes* are one the leading automation companies in the world. They do courses that will teach you the ways. I would also say don't be afraid to get in touch with different productions. Often the only way to see an automation system is to go see it in use on a show.

How did you get to where you are today?

I started my automation career as a technical swing on another touring show. A technical swing will, very much like a performer swing, learn various backstage show roles and cover for time off/illness etc. One of the departments I covered was Automation. I'd never used it before and didn't know anything about it. However, I used the two years on that show to learn as much as I could about the system and how it worked. I did courses at Stage Tech and visited other shows to learn more about how automation works. Three years later I am now looking after my own automation system right here on *The Red Shoes*.

What is your favourite moment in *The Red Shoes*?

The Sand Dance in the Music Hall. I remember first watching them do it in rehearsals and it made me howl. And still every show I sit there giggling away to myself.

Are there any fun facts that you can share with us, in relation to your role?

There are 6 different motors used to control the movement of the proscenium. Each one controlled individually to make the movements look seamless.

