

Five Questions For Loren Keith Barton, product specialist, TMB

By Ellen Lampert-Gréaux



Loren Barton will be participating in the Broadway Projection Master Classes [<http://livedesignonline.com/masterclasses/projection>] on Thursday, May 12 for the session "Choosing Projectors, Media Servers, Projection Surfaces," along with designers Zachary Borovay, Elaine McCarthy, and Jake Pinholster, plus René Berhorst of MA Lighting and Adam Dunaway of Digital Stage Chicago.

We caught up with him to discuss how he joined TMB [<http://tmb.com>].

1. How did you come to join TMB?

I was a mentored student at the 2007 BLMC/BPMC, where I met up with TMB. I entered TMB's Intern Program a month later. During my final semester at Carnegie Mellon, I returned as an intern and started full-time after my graduation a year ago. As a product specialist, I primarily educate customers and provide training on TMB's exclusive products. I manage and teach the two-day "Hippo School" classes in North America and Asia and travel almost full-time in support of that program. I also support special projects that come up and have a hand in some of the new products.

2. What is the best professional advice you've ever heard?

I have found experience and others' trust to be more valuable than any specific advice. My best breaks were the many opportunities to take responsibility offered to me at an early age. In those years, local industry professionals in my small hometown of Corvallis, Oregon fostered my interest and trusted me with significant work in concert and theatre production.

I began playing with lighting equipment in fourth grade by building my own 8-channel dimming board with my dad and started volunteering at the small local theatre shortly thereafter. My mentor, Phil Macbeth, now of Portland, Oregon, had the most influence on my early theatre experiences; his guidance and trust in my abilities built the strong foundation I now rely on every day.

3. And the worst?

"Don't get into the business." Maybe it was the best advice I ever got, but right now, it seems like the worst; ask me again in 20 years. Maybe it was something TMB's Tommy Stephenson or Chris "Chippa" Curran told me. All kidding aside, this line of work demands a tremendous amount from a person, but I find it to be exceptionally rewarding, and it's hard for me to imagine doing anything else.

4. What production have you designed lately that was interesting visually?

In October, I designed projections for *Samson and Dalila* at Pittsburgh Opera. I used a combination of photographs and visual art to create the backgrounds and then animated the scenes to follow the story of the opera. The subtle changes in the background over the course of each act helped tell the story of the gradual seduction and betrayal of Samson. The creative team worked together to create scenes that stayed within the same visual language so the stage pictures were consistent.

5. What is the future of projection technology?

The media toolset has become a staple for production designs in all aspects of entertainment. There are so many new avenues being explored that will no doubt lead to increasing use of media servers in a widening range of creative applications. For example, complex motion and scenic tracking will change the way projection interacts with the environment, allowing dynamic realtime masking, reacting to changing conditions on stage. I see a groundswell of new developments in areas such as interactivity, which will have a huge effect on scenery, lighting, and audio, as we know them, in addition to projection.

Screen and display developments, from OLEDs to flexible and micro displays, will provide endless options for multi-resolution media to be integrated into sets, virtually transforming them into digital environments. Meanwhile, projectors are getting brighter, smaller, and cheaper, partly because media servers can more effectively control many of their output parameters. This will likely lead to some unconventional placements, for example, and perhaps even allow for projection-or true digital lighting-to take on a larger role in stage illumination itself.

New developments in media server features and functionality will allow tremendous improvements in workflow and creativity, cost-effectively replacing much of the current video equipment.

