Extract One – from "Lighting"

The very end of the Festival, the third week of August, sees plays end in actual darkness. Crucially, though, the 'stage' and audience remain equally lit via portable lighting racks. This is the CSF equivalent of the artificial lighting conditions of the Blackfriars theatre, where, again, both stage and spectating areas were customarily brightly and steadily illuminated.

It is known, also, that a few experiments with changeable lighting were made at the Blackfriars. For example, torch light was refracted through glass vials containing coloured liquid to create a haunting atmosphere. The short period of darkness in the plays in the second half of the CSF similarly affords directors the chance to experiment with creating special lighting effects. Simon Bell recalls one of his favourite implementations of these from *Romeo and Juliet* 2011:

The bit where Romeo comes in at the end and looks at what he thinks is a dead Juliet, is actually not about Romeo at all. It is a big mistake to think so. Even though he's the one talking for ages, it's all about Juliet. So we set up the system as night fell that meant she was actually lit. It's one of my favourite effects. We set up this gauze tent on the podium on the stage. She's lying there and if you extend the light behind the podium the light bounces inside the white gauze and makes it glow. It's a most fantastic effect; it's a suffused light that you wouldn't get of a direct light source. And this beautiful white tent which was glowing with Juliet's wonder and it just bathed the audience.

We didn't light Romeo at all. He had a nice silhouette. I turned the lights off, and under the stars, everything looked lovely and I got Tom [Tom Synnott-Bell was playing Romeo that year] to walk behind the audience. I just said, 'you've just got to be a voice'. I instructed him to walk behind the audience and he was being their voice and they had no option but to look at how wonderful Juliet was. That atmosphere, you'd have to be outside for that. You can't ask an actor to go to the back of the stalls, it just becomes somebody at the back talking.