Left and centre photos: Techplan

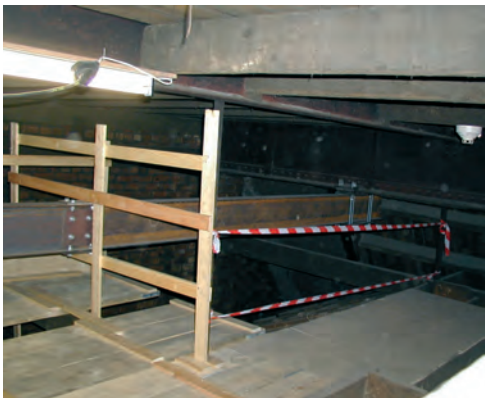

Photo: Total Fabrications

Theatre grids – left: Steel channels in the Milton Keynes Theatre, centre: grille decking in Kwai Tsing Theatre in Hong Kong (note the hazard markings), and right: an unsatisfactory temporary protection barrier.

Three safety experts look at the practical aspects of working at heights, starting with an explanation of risk assessments and their application, moving on to practical advice regarding safe systems, training and rescue, and access equipment. After warning about the forces that can occur in conventional safety lines, there is some background to new designs of accessible trussing.

that their riggers do wear harnesses – but they do not enforce the use of the lanyards or that they be clipped to anything! They enforce just the *wearing* of harnesses. The third is maintaining a safe distance from edges. Safety nets are the last thing in the hierarchy, for reasons we'll look at later.

Control Measure Hierarchy - First level

The right-hand picture above shows some hi-tech edge protection – good old tape! You can see what that is indicating, but it's not actually very effective as protection. k backwards into that quite g the other end of the n that you were wandering r maybe even forwards if pened to turn the work lights n example of poor edge , done properly, barriers first level of the safety ause you don't need to rely

re Hierarchy - Second level

vel can be illustrated by the bourne using harnesses. The necessary because rigging on the lighting bars can be a bit hazardous. If you kneel down – as I'm sure a lot of us have done – and you just want to reach back to that barn door when you've been told it isn't quite correct, and there is a fall hazard – you could slip through the gaps. It's not practicable to have mesh guards or kick edges or anything like that in such a situation.

The advent of tension-wire grids has changed this in some venues. However, these chaps, with their Petzl equipment (we're not the distributors!) are using their fall-arrest equipment in addition to walking on a very secure platform, because the risk of falling still exists. It's not difficult, these days, to rig the safety equipment; there are suitable anchor points around. The lighting bridges are a big steel construction with an ample safe working load; its something like 6 tonnes on the structure, and they have with good access. So this is an example of belt and braces, I suppose, to use an old analogy.

Something which is not particularly new, but its application in the theatre and entertainment business dawned on me a few years ago, is the Vertical Rope Fall Arrest System. By installing one of these you can use your harness and your hooks but you also have a separate and secure fall arrest system. I've seen people clip onto the back of the 1" (25 mm) bits of steel framing on scenery flats that haven't any chance of stopping you from falling; all they're going to do is pull the scenery apart and you'll still

Photo: Total Fabrications

Technicians using safety harnesses on the lighting bridges at Glyndebourne Opera House in Sussex.