

the large windows of the foyer. On the first floor foyer where the view is even better there is a bar where drinks will be served before and after the show and during intervals. As with the auditorium, the foyers also feature columns which have both structural and architectural purposes. These spaces are used by small groups of people chatting informally together, there is no need for clear sight lines and the columns help to divide the space up into smaller scale areas emphasising the informality of the activities there.

For fire protection reasons the steel stanchions which are hollow tubes are cased in fibrous plaster and this material has been used to make light fittings in the form of bowls cast around the top of the columns. The floors are carpeted to a design by the architects and all the box office and bar fittings have been designed to harmonize with the character of the building which is one of simple materials enlivened by colour. Walls are generally common bricks painted with emulsion paint in various shades of green,

the joinery timber is all stained dark green to show the natural grain of the softwood, concrete is painted with white textured paint and the woodwool slabs of the roof are painted dark green in the public areas and left unpainted elsewhere. All the structural steelwork and the plastered columns are painted a bright pinky red.

Apart from an area of false ceiling over the ground floor foyer and the fire proofing of the columns, there is virtually no plastering in the building. Back stage the walls are in common brick and the partitions in concrete blockwork painted white, the ceilings are unpainted and the floors are black asphalt.

All this austerity is in order to keep to a very tight budget. Having accepted that all materials must be economical we had to wrest a character from them by the design of the details. Within these limitations the main contractors, Haymills, have achieved a very good standard of finish and the first impression of the building will not be one of frugality.

Externally we used a good quality light red facing brick with dark brown mortar, plain concrete sills and lintels, softwood doors and windows stained with green preservative, and blue-black asbestos 'slates'. We would have liked to have used natural slates but the cost would have been prohibitive.

As architects we wish the theatre company many successful years of creative endeavour and the public many years of exciting entertainment. The struggle to find the money for the project (less than half the price of a footballer) has been a hard one and we hope the people of Ipswich will be as proud of their new theatre as we are to have designed it.

Architects: Roderick Ham and Finch
Quantity Surveyors: Davis Belfield and Everest
Theatre Consultants: Carr and Angier
Structural Mechanical and Electrical Engineers: Edwards & Blackie
Main Contractor: Haymills (Contractors) Ltd.

Find me an ASM

DOROTHY TENHAM

In a publication like 'Cue' which is obviously going to be read by working theatre people, there is a danger that I am about to preach to the converted. To the converted, I apologise in advance. To the yet unthinking few, I ask you to consider the evidence and hopefully arrive at more positive and constructive conclusions than the converted have done to date.

Why do so many good Stage Managers, at all levels of Stage Management, leave the theatre? With all the good training courses now available, why is it so difficult to find good SM's? What can be done about it all?

These are questions put to me at least once a fortnight by people who seem to think that, because of my previous attachment to one particular SM Course, I can wave a wand, give them constructive answers and solve their staffing problems. Conditions have improved considerably for Stage Management in the last decade. Their terms of employment and salaries are no longer shameful. Much hard work over many long hours has been put in by the representatives on the Equity sub-committee which deals patiently with SM's problems.

It does seem to me, though, that as fast as these improvements have come in through the door, a great deal of what my generation used to recognise as job satisfaction has flown out through the window. No longer can an ASM expect to do the interesting variety of jobs that we did. They no longer get the thrill of pride in a job well done that comes with having had to make some of the equipment to do the job with in the first place. They are no longer required to be mini inventors. Some of my own past ASM's are now authorities in their own right on specialised technical inventions used as everyday equipment by their suc-

cessors. What a lot we have to answer for - it's called 'Progress'!

Specialisation is almost held to be a necessity these days and from student days onwards, would-be SM's are led to believe that there is something special about specialising. I repeat what many have heard me say before - what's so very wrong and ignoble in specialising in Stage Management? Why should sound consultants and lighting designers be encouraged to invent their own mystique; talking their own Americanised, electronic-type language and blinding newcomers with their science of abbreviations and initials rather than using plain English? No wonder it bores the pants off many young ASM's so that they wonder where the magic of working in the theatre has gone. They must feel very bewildered and find themselves facing a straight choice of either being thought limited and old fashioned - 'good in the rehearsal room!' - or having to join in the specialist race and become someone they don't really want to be - excellent sound operator/board operator/mic. controller etc. If this is where their gift lies - fair enough. But I can't help feeling that a lot of young ASM's are morally pressurised into this choice and a lot of good ASM's are lost to the theatre in this way.

Surely it is possible to relax a little and allow the SM team to share once more the fun of being competent at more than one aspect of their work. The undoubted improvement in the technical machinery used in most theatres surely has been acknowledged loudly and long enough for the HOD's who are in charge of it to feel frightened no longer that some young ASM will cause wilful damage. Their specialised knowledge is no longer beyond the comprehension of most intelligent young people.

This generation takes computers and their like for granted. They would very much appreciate someone letting them have a go on the swings instead of always being given the job of looking after the roundabouts. Or is this what the established members of the fairground are afraid of? Could it be that somewhere along the line, some of these people, who are 'only ASM's', may prove to be better all-rounders than their predecessors? I think it is a risk worth taking.

The 240 volt Par 64

In our last issue 'Walter Plinge' whilst enthusing about the Par 64 lamp in general was not so complimentary about the 240 volt version compared to the 120 volt one.

This was, of course, a subjective view of the writer, albeit based on considerable experience, and we have since heard from one of the manufacturers of the 240 volt version, Thorn Lighting Ltd., that they have carried out tests proving that their 240 volt lamp matches 120 volt versions in terms of life, light and robustness. We have not yet seen the test data but we look forward to publishing a more precise assessment of Par 64 lamps shortly.-(Editor)

Cue in Greenwich

Readers in Greenwich are blessed with another theatre publication of the same name. Our namesake is a well produced calendar of plays and events published by the Greenwich Theatre, Crooms Hill, LONDON SE10 at 25p. Each having discovered the other we have agreed to live in harmony but wish to make it clear that neither is the other.