

# CORRESPONDENCE

*From Mr. Richard Pilbrow*

Dear Sir,

The Loretto School Theatre is the latest in what must now be seen as a worldwide trend towards a rediscovery of the courtyard form of theatre epitomised by the Shakespearian theatre of Elizabethan times but which continued in various manifestations through the Georgian period into the 19th century.

During this century and up to the theatre building boom of the 50s and 60s, proponents of theatre architecture battled over such questions as should the proscenium theatre survive, the role of the open thrust, arena or end stage, and so on. The general tendency, partly influenced by cinema design of the 20s and 30s, and partly because of the post-war theory of social equality, was for theatres to be single, or at the most two tier, and it was considered undemocratic to have the many level theatres of previous generations. The result, coupled with an enthusiasm for perfect sightlines and so-called perfect acoustics, led to a series of fan-shaped auditoria, both in this country and, on a far larger scale, in the United States.

Two buildings of significance then emerged. The Eden Court Theatre in Inverness by architects Law and Dunbar Naismith and auditorium design consultant Iain Mackintosh, which returned to a multi-level horseshoe shape for its auditorium, and Christ's Hospital, Horsham, where architect Bill Howell, with ourselves as consultants, successfully expanded the capability of Bill Howell's previously triumphant Young Vic Theatre into a flexible courtyard form. Out of these two successes there came 'a professional marriage' with Iain Mackintosh joining this practice and being responsible for the basic design study and concept of the Cottesloe Theatre in the National. This theatre, so much more than the common 'black box' experimental space, is a pure courtyard form theatre which allows, in the Georgian playhouse manner, both a highly satisfactory end stage or proscenium form as well as a completely variable space in a potentially flat floor stalls surrounded by a considerable proportion of the audience on galleries. We regret the coat of black paint that covers it overall, but perhaps, like so many things, black paint is merely a theatrical fashion and one that is perhaps in its last days of this current theatrical cycle.

Your writer, Francis Reid, has the good fortune to work in a gem of this type of theatre at Bury St. Edmunds. The travels of members of this practice around the world have over the last few years led them to what was initially a surprising discovery. The courtyard theatre that we believed belonged in England to Shakespeare through to the Georgians was not in any sense unique to this country. It was seen across Europe, the Middle East and the Far East, and in nearly all countries it was the prevalent form of theatre at a time when each country's Drama was at a peak of creative quality.

The courtyard form which is, of course, capable of many variations of style and scale, offers great intimacy, flexibility, economy, and, most valuable of all, a three dimensional relationship between performer and all the

spectators that heightens, in a unique and immediate manner, the essence of the theatre, which is the aliveness of the event.

We now have the good fortune to be designing various types and sizes of courtyard form theatre in several places around the world. Their ancestry crosses nearly all civilisations. Many others are pursuing the same path. We are delighted that your reviewer makes such flattering references to the newest and perhaps most modest of its manifestations at the Loretto School and we congratulate 'Law and Dunbar-Naismith (not to forget their man Ross)' on so excellently realising this concept.

Yours sincerely,  
RICHARD PILBROW,  
Chairman,  
Theatre Projects Group of  
Companies,  
10, Long Acre,  
London, W.C.2

*From Mr. Colin Ross*

Dear Sir,

May I first of all say how much we in Edinburgh appreciated Francis Reid's article on the new theatre at Loretto School. May I also confirm that the following organisations played their part in its design and execution:

<i>Architects:</i>	Law and Dunbar-Naismith
<i>Theatre Consultants:</i>	Theatre Projects Consultants Ltd.
<i>Services Consultants:</i>	Blyth & Blyth (M&E)
<i>Structural Engineer:</i>	Blyth & Blyth Associates
<i>Acoustic Consultant:</i>	Paul Newman
<i>Quantity Surveyor:</i>	Jas. D. Gibson & Simpson
<i>Main Contractor:</i>	Campbell & Smith Construction Co. Ltd.
<i>Stage Lighting Control:</i>	Rank Strand Electric
<i>Sound, Communications, Stage Equipment:</i>	Northern Light
<i>Seating:</i>	Auditoria Services Ltd.

With best wishes for the prosperity of Cue magazine in the New Year.

Yours etc.,

COLIN ROSS,  
Law & Dunbar-Naismith,  
16, Dublin St., Edinburgh

*From Mr. M. R. Dormer*

Dear Sir,

First may I congratulate you on an interesting and informative journal. I am an amateur 'lighting designer', which encompasses everything from designing and building scenery,

through to playing in the occasional production, with a constant eye on the switchboard! The level of information is very useful in planning future lighting rigs and creating effects.

In several of the articles in Sept./Oct. issue colour codes are quoted from the Strand range, which I have used more or less exclusively. However several references are made to colour media commencing with a digit 8 in a three figure code number. I would be grateful if you could inform me which supplier provides such a range of colour media. Reading the item without knowing the actual colour referred to is somewhat frustrating as I expect you can imagine!

Hoping that you can help, and looking forward to the next and future issues.

Yours etc.,

M. R. DORMER,  
61 Courtenay Road,  
London E17 6LY

*A fair point. We will try to use less shorthand and jargon in future. The prefix 8 refers to Roscolene. (Editor)*

*From Mr. Tim Burnham*

Dear Sir,

I have been reading with great interest your product news column in the November/December edition of Cue and there are one or two inaccuracies which I should like to put straight concerning the Berkey Colortran Mini-Ellipse.

Firstly, there seems to be some confusion in your reviewer's mind concerning the lamps available for this unit. I quote: 'When the long-life version of the lamp arrives in 240 volt rating, this should indeed be a good shuttered profile . . .' Well, for heavens sake, I should have thought that two thousand hours was long enough for anybody! There are, in fact, two lamps currently available for the Mini-Ellipse, designated as JD500. The 240/250 volt version, which is readily available from Berkey, Valiant or ourselves has a rated life of 2000 hrs and is priced at £9.87. Reports from users indicate that, in normal conditions, these lamps last and last. The second lamp, for use where light output is more important than long life, is the 220/230 volt JD500, which, when over-voltaged at 240 volts, gives approximately 25% more light with an increase in colour temperature of 80° Kelvin and an estimated 1100 hour life. The price is the same as the 240 volt version.

Secondly, I should like to point out that, although Berkey market the Mini-Ellipse as 30/40/50 degrees, it is extremely simple to re-arrange the lenses to give a beam angle of 20 degrees. It will, in fact, shortly be possible to buy a straight 20° Mini-Ellipse, for about the same price as a Patt. 23! Must be value.

Judging by the success of the Mini-Ellipse in our rental department, I'm certain that it has a great future, but it would be a real shame if this was marred by inaccurate presentation in the trade press.

Best wishes to Cue,  
Yours etc.,

TIM BURNHAM,  
Tim Burnham Associates Ltd.,  
381 St. John Street,  
London EC1V 4LD.

*Good news that the 2,000 hour life lamp to which we referred is now available. (Editor)*