

Autolycus



Have bag will travel

Seeking the Bubble reputation in the Camden's mouth, as it were, CUE paid a visit to Bob Carlton, recently appointed artistic director to the Bubble Theatre Company, which Glen Walford inaugurated in 1972, and which, with some gentle puffing from the Greater London Arts Association, has been merrily bouncing along ever since.

The bubble itself, that remarkable amalgam of two Tensi domes, which provides seating for around 200 and green room and dressing room besides, was hibernating in a pantechicon down Guildford way, quietly gathering strength to blow itself up for its progress round the (mostly) outer London boroughs from June on. It takes about 40 people and 48 hours to get it up, and will go almost anywhere you have a space about 20 metres by 12 metres and a convenient standpipe and a convenient convenience (parks preferred). In a later issue, CUE hopes, Peter Bennett-Jones the technical director will be dealing with the what, how and why of its lighting and sound.

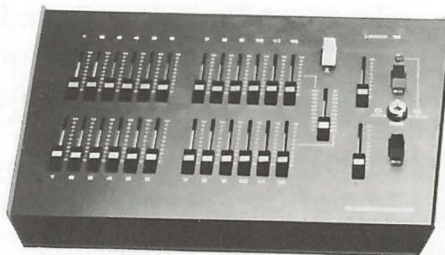
No question of subscribed-for season-tickets here, of course. The whole point and purpose of the Bubble Theatre Company is to go (or go back because they like it) to people whose attitude to a conventional theatre wouldn't be too different from their attitude to an operating theatre. As Bob Carlton says 'every night's a first night at the Bubble. We never know who we'll get, and they never quite know what they'll get'. Phil Whitchurch, who assists Bob, and devises some of the special entertainments for children, tells a nice story of a lad he heard saying to his companions after an interval, 'let's get back... the film's started'.

The company at the Bubble (and Bob Carlton is trying to make it a permanent company, which doesn't have to take refuge in commercials or playing cricket for Kerry Packer during the winter months) consists of 10 actors and 5 musicians. This

coming summer they're tackling plays as dissimilar as Ray Herman's 'They Shoot Horses, don't they?' and Francis Beaumont's (no *not* Binkie, Francis 1585 - 1615) 'Knight of the Burning Pestle'. What Southwark (where Francis used to hang out) will make of that is anybody's guess. But at least the audience will be a jolly one, the theatre will be a full one (they play to over 80% of capacity), and the feeling will be a good one (helped by some new 'intimate' seats, four up and a table for beer).

All of which is more than could be said of conditions in some parts of that House of Correction on the south bank, known as the National Theatre.

Grand Raffle and Draw



Among all the schemes for saving the British theatre nobody, as far as we know, has come up with the idea of a national lottery. CUE is not (yet) able to offer Covent Garden as a grand prize, but we *are* raffling, for a very modest investment, exactly the sort of stage lighting system that any small theatre, touring company, or happy band of pilgrims setting out to convert a disused non-conformist chapel for total entertainment, would certainly sell their souls for. It's the neat and splendidly portable combination of the CCT/Electro-sonic 12-way Linkit Desk and Flatapak rack, with a capacity, for the future, to

build up to 240 channels. It is worth over £600 (or you could win CCT lighting equipment to an equivalent value), but take out your subscription for CUE magazine before 15th May (hurry! hurry!) and you get the chance to own it free, gratis and for peanuts. We know, gentle reader, that you've already sent *your* subscription so your number is already in the hat. But tell your friends and give them a go too.

To everything there is a season-ticket . . .

Hands up those who remember the old 'twofer' shows of the Forties run by Payne, Jennings and Killick or, as they were sometimes known, Kill, Jennings and Panic. The idea was to encourage more people to visit the theatre by offering seats at two for the price of one. It worked to some extent. But the rub was that the actors had to take a cut in their wages in order to pay for all those free tickets. It was a crude method of encouraging full houses and not one which Equity would lightly tolerate today.

But it illustrates the point that there is nothing new in marketing the arts at a discount. Merely that today's technique, as espoused by American Danny Newman in his theory and practice of Dynamic Subscription Promotion, is much more sophisticated.

Mr. Newman, a sort of whiz kid in promoting the performing arts, has devised what amounts to an arts marketing man's bible and he was in London to preach extracts from it at a series of seminars in January.

The essence of his creed is that you can virtually eliminate empty seats in concert halls and theatres by persuading people to buy what amounts to a season ticket for a series of productions at, initially at any rate, a reduction of anything up to 33 per cent. The time has come for theatre managers and proprietors to re-think their whole attitude to the casual ticket buyer on whom they depend. Why are so many theatre people seemingly willing to accept that a proportion of seats will always be empty every night simply because potential customers have casually NOT bought tickets. Not only is this a luxury no theatre can afford, but, says Mr. Newman, it is a positive moral affront. The answer is to get people to take out subscriptions in much the same way that they would for a book club or a football club. The problem lies in persuading the theatrical establishment that its withering financial arm needs a shot of the old hard sell to get the money supply flowing again.

And this is where Arts Marketing comes in. It has acquired the British rights to