

situation and merely record my fundamental belief that, for starters, (1) actors will just have to start working on Sundays (with a day off in lieu) and (2) managers will just have to discount their daily remainders from a central selling point like Broadway's TKSTS in Times Square. When I speak to people in the TKSTS queue, I am convinced that this is an *extra* audience from the one that buys full-price tickets. TKSTS shifts more than 10% of the total seat availability and rain seems to make little difference to the queue length. London theatre could use a drop of this quality of audience enthusiasm.

The Sound of Beecham

For personal reasons which I prefer not to reveal (although they will be obvious and understandable to those at the heart of the matter) I am reluctant to comment on the sound of *Beecham* at the Apollo. However I have been horrified by the response of some people whose opinions I had hitherto respected. I refer to those who claimed that it was a mistake to use old Beecham recordings with a *Fi* sometimes somewhat less than *Hi*. These insensitive idiots would have selected recordings on the basis of technical quality irrespective of conductor. They would then have blasted the music at us from an orchestra of loudspeakers. Theirs is the sort of technological assault on the Arts that we must all continually be on our guard against. Fortunately Director Patrick Garland was on our, the audience's, side and ensured that we only *overheard* the music . . . keeping the *decibels* and the *presence* until a quite magnificent Coup de Theatre encore.



Regular readers of these ramblings will know that Mr. Timothy West's acting is much admired by this Plinge. I never met Beecham but I heard him many times in the concert hall, once in the opera house, and his recordings now pleasure me more than do most of the flash-in-the-box-office glossy gents currently beating time. And I built up a picture of the man from conversations with many of the original R.P.O. players. *Timothy is Tommy*. The show has gone but the performance must remain. Fortunately the scenery was but an intrusion – the play would look better with just podium, chandeliers, and a collection of music-stands, chairs and percussion starkly downlit against black nothing. So, surely we can look upon his like again.



Burlesque Babies

The only really hot ticket on Broadway this spring seemed to be *Sugar Babies* – like it took me three visits to the box-office to get accepted as a standee. It's great. It's 100% me. It seemed to be 100% everyone in the audience. Mickey Rooney and Anne Miller lead a company of old comics (supported by young glammers) through a gorgeous collection of historic cross-overs and black-out sketches. That so many of the jokes (or their variants) are familiar only adds to our pleasure at this finely tuned display of timing and pointing. Anyone who shares my joy in television's re-runs of old showbiz movies will understand my rapture over such matters as Anne Miller's first entrance atop a barrowload of luggage and lines like *I feel a song comin' on*. As this is a technical magazine, I should perhaps add that a window has been knocked through from the cloakroom so that, amid the coats and hats, there was that symbol of the Broadway lighting revolution (straight from 1920s piano boards to 1980s microprocessors, with no in-between) a memory console – in this case, a *Kliegl Performer*.

They're Miming our Song

They're Playing Our Song just survives (but *only just* survives) big theatre treatment. This elegantly constructed little piece, with its crisp Neil Simon one-liners and compelling Marvin Hamlisch duets, would be lovely in a small playhouse. From the *Imperial's* first shelf it was like a mime. The show's album is orchestrally overblown but I have become severely addicted to it.

Short Sammy from the Oxford

A delicious 1893 programme of *The Oxford* music hall now costs the old price of ten best stalls (or fifty visits to the pit or gallery). I never knew *The Oxford* but during the late fifties there was a rather hectic couple of months when I doubled the roles of Stage Director of the English Opera Group and Aldeburgh Festival with that of Chief Electrician of the Scala (the one in Charlotte Street, not the one in Milan). The splendid brass and mahogany shoes that were used as splitters by the Scala stage electrics were known as *Oxfords* since they were reputed to have been acquired from the famous old music hall down the road. And in the centre of number one spot bar (between the two pairs of focus spots) was a short length of batten known as *The Short Sammy*. Sammy was, of course, short for Samoilloff but I was never able to discover whether that famous Professor of Colour ever used this particular sammy for his colour conjuring. I was maestro of the splendid tracker-wired liquid-dimmer bank feeding the battens and dips. Interlopers like spotlights and 'The Short Sammy' were, however, relegated to the slider dimmers of *Bogey's Board*. Bogey was a splendid gentleman. If the lighting were criticised, he would always protest 'But I'm only the boiler man', whereas any query over the auditorium temperature would be countered with 'But I'm only the electrician'. Dispute the logic and his cue light was liable to be interpreted as a signal to stoke the boiler.