

Concerts, Ballet & Dance, Mime, Musicals, Variety, Carobaret, Magic, Circus, Puppets, Pantomime, Jazz & Pop, and Happenings & Events. Plus a useful chronological table, a chapter on Roots of Performance (a quick flash history of the development of performed communication). And a perceptive Foreword by Sir John (for a performer with an art like his, who needs a surname).

*PERFORMING ARTS* does not have an author. It has Michael Billington as Consultant Editor, and a distinguished posse of Contributing Editors: it is quite fun guessing who wrote what.

They have covered the field well. From Epidaurus through Olimpico, Farnese, Drury Lane and Bayreuth to Sydney Opera, Concrete National and Manchester Exchange. There is Streetcar, Jimmy Porter, Maggie Smith and the Pattern 23. Opera from Melba to Hockney. We are informed that 'several tricks of the magician's art have now become so familiar that it is time to reveal how they are done'. Panto, Bette Milder, unicycling, Dame Edna, buskers, Vesta Tilley and the logistics of the 1978 European tour of Genesis. It's all there.

But if there is a reference to that latest genre of the performing arts – *Performance Art*, well I failed to find it. So I will read the whole book again over Christmas. And that will be a great pleasure.

*Performing Arts* is the type of book that is easier to read when rested on a table. With Martin Gottfried's *BROADWAY MUSICALS* there is no alternative. It brings a new meaning to the description 'coffee table book'. Give this volume four legs and you have a solid practical coffee table. 13 3/4" by 10 3/4" in format. 1 1/2" thick. And it turns the bathroom scales at half a stone. While we are on statistics, it might be interesting to note that the 350 thick pages carry 400 illustrations, 112 of them in full colour. Many of these pictures are full page. Therefore this book, like most Broadway imports, carries a heavy price tag.

Now it so happens that I regard the Broadway musical as perhaps the greatest contemporary performing art. I love old operas. I cherish moments of great classical acting. I enjoy television plays of today. But for the ultimate evening of *twentieth century* performing art, give me a Broadway Musical. Preferably on Broadway. The Broadway musical does not travel well. Naturally a great art will survive transplant, but only on Broadway does the musical have that ultimate edge. That crisp attack. It is perhaps something to do with the wide proscenium openings and correspondingly wide houses which bring a goodly proportion of the necessarily large audience close to the stage. And a lot of the magic comes from the orchestras which are (blessedly) kept large by union assistance and contain players of technical virtuosity. The brightness of American orchestral playing can be a drawback in symphonic music but it is a glowing asset in the theatre pit.

The push forward into an integrated art form can often go wrong, but the general

direction is certainly forward. However, like everything else in the arts, any view is very subjective. I was certainly not alone in finding *Pacific Overtures* to be unacceptably pretentious. And how will history rate *Sweeney Todd*? Both in New York and in London I always found greater pressing priorities than a visit to it. But then – heresy, perhaps – I personally find more contact with Ebb and Kander than with Sondheim. And therefore, not surprisingly, the director credit of choreographer *Bob Fosse* is enough to draw me in a straight line to any box office, with a fistful of dollars waving hopefully.

So with a history of loving the American musical – big and small – and the experience of working on the European versions of several of them, I naturally drool over the pictures in this book.

I just cannot make up my mind about the text. There is a lot of useful fact. And Gottfried's subjective judgements are always interesting even when, frequently, one disagrees with him. But my eye kept wandering from the text to these wonderfully emotive photographs. Bringing back memories, in particular, of *Cabaret*, *Dancin'*, and *The Wiz*. Of Gwen Verdon and Chita Rivera in *Chicago*, Dorothy Loudon in *Annie*, Richard Kiley in *Man of La Mancha* and Avon Long in *Bubbling Brown Sugar*. And these fascinating glimpses of the 1930s that we can only now get the feeling of from old movies.

A big book for a big art.

*Multivision* is a word that is gaining usage to describe a performance where projected photographic images dissolve, merge, transpose and superimpose in conjunction with integrated sound images. These performances may be classified as *recorded* rather than live, since the timing is not normally dependent on audience response. The jargon of *Multivision* is the jargon of the marketing industry rather than the entertainment industry: a world of 'specific objectives', 'group communications', and 'Joe Public'. This is appropriate language for a communication medium that has a recent history of fast successful growth in exhibitions, conferences, seminars and other allied presentation techniques.

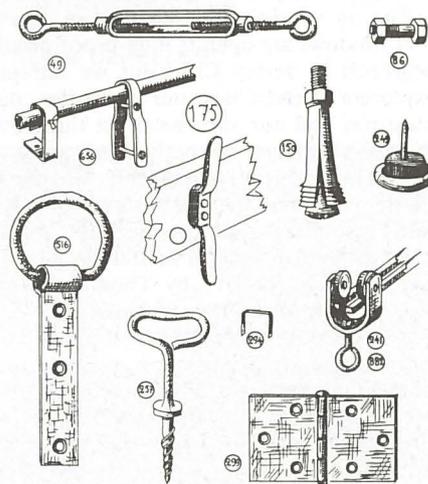
The basic tool of this type of audio-visual presentation is the *Kodak Carousel* – or rather, stacks of carousels with sophisticated control systems which increasingly involve microprocessors. These projection techniques have been incorporated in the scenography of several conventional stage productions. (I particularly recall *Bubbling Brown Sugar* which used most of the standard cuts, dissolves, composites and flip/flops that form the basic language of microprocessed carousels). John Lewell in his new *MULTIVISION* mentions only (and in passing) the musical *Beatlemania* because his book is geared towards the non-actor *presentation* type of show.

The book, however, is full of information for anyone who wants to learn the fundamentals of 35mm slide projection.

There are obviously useful technical chapters with titles like 'Projecting the Image', 'Rear Projection Screens', 'Slides', 'Control Systems', and 'Encoding Systems'. But there are also good discussions of matters which are peripheral to the technology, although essential to getting the show on the road: matters like scriptwriting, graphics and presentation.

The nice thing I can say about this book (and I think it would probably be the nicest sort of thing to be able to say about any technical book) is that, as a result of reading it, I no longer feel afraid of programmed carousels as a tool of theatrical production.

A belated word of praise for *TEATER ORD* published in 1975 but only just come into my possession (as a departure gate farewell present). 924 technical theatre words are equated in five Scandinavian languages plus English. They are cross-referenced and illustrated. The word list and pictures would form a splendid basis for a much wider international vocabulary and dictionary.



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A typical page from *Teater Ord*.

Would you believe that, the very day after writing the above, I read in the *ABTT News* that a new edition has been published in collaboration with OISTT. It contains 1000 words in nine languages – English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Swedish, Hungarian, Czech and Russian. A Japanese appendix is available on special order.

*PERFORMING ARTS*. An Illustrated Guide. Consultant Editor: Michael Billington. Published by Macdonald Educational Ltd. £9.95 (UK).

*BROADWAY MUSICALS*. Peter Barkworth. Published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York.

*MULTIVISION*. The Planning, Preparation and Projection of Audio-visual Presentations. John Lewell. Published by Focal Press £10.95 (UK).

*TEATER ORD*. Theatre Words. Published by Nordiska Teaterunionen, Stockholm.