theatre managers? It seems the change has been widely noted with approval. It follows the pattern set by Broadway as it established a new, modern image for itself half a dozen years ago to win back lost business and begin a new era.

Explained a spokesman for the Society of West End Theatre: 'We supported the scheme assiduously, pushing hard for it to get underway after the strike by rubbish men a few years ago. At the time, Ian Albery spoke out about the squalor, following complaints from theatregoers who were sickened about having to pick their way through the rubbish. I think the strike brought things to a head.

'It's added a wonderful community atmosphere to the place with people from all walks of life fighting to keep it clean . . . for ourselves as much as for visitors.

'There have been lots of positive comments, too, even from visitors outside London, like regional theatre managers'.

Cleaner London News (West End Edition) exhorts us all to take part, with such stirring headlines as 'When The Tide Of Filth Stopped . . .'; and 'Citizen Power' above their stories of skirmishes and battles with the foe. The way we are going it will become an emotional experience to walk down Charing Cross Road. If anyone drops a match absent-mindedly, he is quite likely to be set upon by howling hordes of antilitter evangelists. Things are improving!

## Look Back in Angst

To riffle back, squeezing the memory, through a bunch of theatre programmes of only about ten years ago does not improve one's temper.

For one thing, they are all shyly priced on their covers at one shilling (that was, if you remember, just 5p) for a good clutch of 24 pages. For another, the River Restaurant at Stratford, now patronised exclusively by Japanese businessmen, was hopefully offering 'an excellent 3-course luncheon for 15/s'. But, far more poignant, is the evidence they offer of the sheer *diversity* of entertainments available, the lavishness of their casting, and the complicated nature of their staging (with Theatre Projects, survivors if you like, turning up nearly as often in the technical credits as Charles Chaplin in those of his films).

One of the more morbid aspects of inflation as we have known it in the decade due to close with a whimper this Christmas has been the deflation of enthusiasm for the sort of follies, extravaganzas, routs and divertissements that all the expensive technology we have invested in was designed to serve. It must be hard, we would think, to stimulate the amps in a sophisticated memory-board if a one-man show in a single abstract-expressionist set is the only canvas it is called upon to paint with light. Specially if the ultimate in hardnosed marketing might be simply the sale, at a guichet in the foyer, of the book of the digest, and the realease thereby of the auditorium for the more profitable reception of a morticians' convention.

By all means let us be more efficient at selling tickets and getting somebody to underwrite our investments. And let us, by all means, move towards a better understanding of what the theatre can do that TV can't (roughly, we think, the difference between 'Sweeney Todd' and 'The Sweeney').

But accountancy is different from accountability. And profits are different from prophets.

Meanwhile the Romans are in Britain — 'all very castrum' said a classically-educated friend — and, since Christmas is coming and the geese are getting thinner, 'God bless us every one' said tiny Norman St John Stevas, last of all.

## Basic Wood and Technological Trees

PERCY CORRY

The inventive ingenuities of the technological boffins do not necessarily guarantee a balance of benefit for mankind. In the main their gadgets are designed to do differently and less laboriously the things we have done quite satisfactorily without their aid and without their side effects. For example, in the industrial field there have been persistent efforts to devise systems of automation that aim for maximum production with a minimum of human effort, killing much individual craftsmanship in the process. At the same time there is a formidable increase in the world population of people who are, or will be in the fullness of time, in need of something to keep their idle hands out of mischief and out of pockets that cannot yield the wherewithal to purchase the goods that are churned out in ever increasing quantities and diminishing qualities.

The theatre has its own gadgetry especially in the use of light and of sound amplification. The introduction of electric light into the theatre towards the end of the nineteenth century started something of a revolution in the methods and scope of pictorial presentation. Adolphe Appia was probably the most outstanding of the pioneers who saw the new possibilities of a more flexible control of light. Writing in 1899 he said 'Light is the most plastic medium on the stage. . . . It is able to reveal vividly, in its most expressive form, the eternally fluctuating appearance of a phenominal world.' We are often inclined to think that this was a prophetic forecast but should not forget that even in his day, when the facilities were comparatively primitive, there were artists in the theatre who could add dramatic significance to their stage pictures by the use of expressive light. Even in the fifth century B.C. the Greeks could use the rays of the setting sun to add dramatic emphasis to their classical

When introduced into the theatre the electric lamps were used to replace the gas jets which had superseded the candles which provided overall visibility of limited intensity, augmented by individually manned limelights (superseded by carbon arcs) to emphasise selected areas and performers. The electric lamps merely did rather more efficiently what had become established practice. Developments were not rapid. They are succinctly summarised by my friend and former colleague Frederick Bentham in his book *The Art of* 

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