



## Living History that is Drottningholm

Francis Reid continues his Cue series on visits to theatre museums, considering their interest to the casual theatric tourist, rather than the academic researcher.

Drottningholm must surely represent something approaching the ideal theatre museum—or at least the centrepiece of such a museum. Abandoned—softly cocooned in a century of dust—from its age to our own. Preserved from the inevitable periodic refurbishings that would have been required to modernise the theatre in conformity with developing ideas on staging. Oh that many more such moments in theatrical evolution had been frozen in this way!

The Drottningholm Theatre opened in 1766 in the grounds of the Royal summer palace on the Island of Lovö in Lake Mälaren some eight miles from the centre of Stockholm. It is the second theatre on the site: the first, built in 1754, burnt down in 1762.

The Adelcrantz (he was the court architect) 1766 theatre enjoyed a period of particularly successful activity from the accession of King Gustav III in 1777 until his death in 1792 as a result of being shot at a masquerade in the Stockholm Opera House. When the king was in summer residence at Drottningholm, the opera personnel were ordered to follow and were billeted in the numerous small rooms behind the stage and in the surrounding buildings.

A memorandum dated August 8th 1779 relating to *the provision and upkeep of His Majesty's chapel and opera inside the Royal precincts* reveals that the opera company at Drottningholm that year contained at least 150 persons. It describes at which table the actors were placed and the amount of wine to which each was entitled, *each getting one bottle of wine—Uttini (the conductor)*



*The 1980 footlight uses modern technology to recreate the effect of 1766. Each of the 30 reflectors holds 3 Cima electric candles. The auditorium candelabra and sconces now also have Cima candles (compare with the cover photograph showing the small lamps and shades used until recently).*