

two—and coffee in their rooms after breakfast and dinner. All male and female dancers other than those in the corps de ballet get one bottle of wine each, and female ballet-dancers half a bottle.

In 1791, the year before the King's death, the theatre received its only major addition: a neo-classic foyer to the design of Louis Jean Desprez. This foyer has an interesting all round ceiling gallery where musicians can play unseen.

After Gustav's death the Court continued to take up residence each summer at Drottningholm. There were a few performances but the last decade of the eighteenth century was a period of decline for the Drottningholm Theatre and it passed through the nineteenth century in a state of hibernation. Its slumbers were interrupted briefly for single performances in 1854 and 1858. Throughout this period the theatre was permitted to remain undisturbed although some of the smaller rooms, including dressing rooms, were used for guests and for the billeting of military personnel. For part of the time, the auditorium is reported to have served as a Sunday School, but in general the whole building was nothing more than a store house.

Hibernation lasted until 1921 when Agne Beijer and two officials from the National Museum in Stockholm were searching for a painting. On the way into the room where the painting was expected to be, Beijer relates that they passed through a narrow passage that was so dark that they could hardly grope their way through it. *Time after time we rubbed in the dark against tremendous wooden frames with strangely cut profiles. These wooden frames were the wings, and the passage was part of the Drottningholm Theatre stage. Underneath a three-foot pile of dust lay the very original material for which I was searching. It appeared so insignificant in the condition it was in that it was quite understandable nobody had bothered to look at it previously.*

Agne Beijer set about discovering what lay under the thick carpet of dust. On the stage he found about thirty complex sets from the time of Gustav III—wings stacked in pairs and cloths close hung from the flies. The machinery was undamaged and unchanged from the eighteenth century. *To put it into working condition said Beijer the only things required were innumerable coils of rope for attaching by expert hands to the pulleys.*

Reorganisation rather than restoration was all that was required to put the theatre back into working order. *Nothing was changed or added to says Beijer either in the interior or to the settings.* The only innovation was the introduction of electricity: it was decided that a return to candles presented an unacceptable fire risk.

Drottningholm Theatre reopened on 19th August 1922 when, in the words of Beijer *The scene changes which were made with the curtain up proved to everyone's general surprise to be noiseless and quick. The highlight of the demonstration was when the theatre's "gloire"—the expressive 18th century technical term for the cloud machinery of revelation of the gods and*

*goddesses—slowly and ceremoniously floated down from the fly loft and enveloped the garlanded pale pink coloured palace decorations painted by Carlo Bibiena in 1774 with a shimmering golden wave of cloud. In its midst was suspended a special cloud carriage on which was perched two tiny rococo Cupids from the ballet school.*

Since then the theatre has been in regular use and now houses a summer opera season. I have not yet had an opportunity to attend a performance at Drottningholm: that is one of the pleasures of life still to come. An experience high on my list of things to live and strive for—and an experience that will, I feel certain, place some strain upon my emotional stability. But although I have not yet experienced a summer opera, I have inspected the theatre from cellar to loft on a crisp November morning—under the guidance of Drottningholm's current lighting designer Torkel Blomqvist.

Entering the auditorium was an experience so totally traumatic that I do not think that I can describe it in mere words. But I must try. From time to time in my life there have been *click moments* when I have suddenly *understood*. In a moment of great clarity some event has suddenly—quite dramatically—linked together a series of earlier experiences (visual, aural, literary, sensual) to allow an understanding that has been hitherto elusive.

I am no stranger to eighteenth century theatre. I am very familiar with the highways and byways of its opera. I drool daily over the prints of the period. I have read my way through a great deal of literature: certainly most of the historian's analysis plus an increasing scrape at the pile

of primary material. For the past eighteen months I have spent my working day in a theatre which is so rooted in the eighteenth century that I nightly observe the house through the spyhole in a proscenium door. For years I have sought out early theatres and rejoiced in the ambience of their architecture. But something has been missing—something to pull it all together.

That missing catalyst has been provided for me by the *auditorium lighting* at Drottningholm.

Light is surely the most important single influence in creating ambience. I do not think that I believe this just because I am a lighting designer. Certainly any lighting designer is more likely to analyse the lighting component in any situation and perhaps be aware of lighting level and source in a conscious rather than subconscious way. But the selectivity which light imposes upon our perception of space must be a major factor in experiencing the original atmosphere of a historical interior. When Drottningholm was first refurbished, the lighting was by yellow coloured bulbs with shades. In 1980 the candle sconces and chandeliers were refitted with CIMA candles. These sources are, of course, closer to original candle power and do not require shading. The slight *tremolo* of the spring filaments recreates what one would imagine to be the ideal never quite achieved by a master wick trimmer (doubtless someone somewhere is at work on a microprocessor programme to pulsate individual candles in simulated guttering mode in random sequence). But the effect in this auditorium of light level, position and multiplicity of source is magic.

The auditorium is not a conventional horse shoe of tiered boxes. Although there

